

SINKING SAND

How To Navigate Secular Worldviews

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Three Ideas that have Influenced Our Culture

- Skepticism
- Scientism
- Relativism

Colossians 2:8: “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.”

"Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered."

—C.S. Lewis, *Learning in War-Time*.

Skepticism: “Doubt Everything!”

- What is skepticism?
 - The claim that we cannot really know anything, or that our default position should be to doubt everything.
 - Influenced by the Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711–1776).
- How does it show up in our culture?
 - Knowledge equated with (mathematical) certainty.
 - Doubt elevated to a virtue.
 - Atheism (or agnosticism) believed to be the "default" position.

Scientism: “Follow the Science!”

- What is scientism?
 - The claim that there are no deeper explanations than those that science provides.
 - Influenced by Logical Positivism, a philosophical movement which began in the 1920s.
- How does it show up in our culture?
 - Non-empirical claims (moral judgments, beauty, existence of God, etc.) relegated to the realm of "opinion," or denied altogether.
 - Demand for *scientific* proof of the existence of God, miracles, etc.
 - Overreliance on science to guide our decisions.

Relativism: “True for You, But Not for Me!”

- What is relativism?
 - The claim that there is no absolute or objective truth.
 - Influenced by (among others) the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900).
- How does it show up in our culture?
 - Relativism is being overtaken by scientism.
 - Moral relativism.
 - Tolerance.

How Should We Respond?

- All three of these ideas are self-refuting in their strong forms.
- Skepticism:
 - There are some truths which are evident to us. We cannot doubt them.
 - Skepticism is frequently a cover for ignorance.
- Scientism:
 - The physical sciences do not capture all aspects of reality.
 - Science cannot answer the most profound questions that humans ask.
- Relativism:
 - Relativism is always selective.
 - Relativism makes tolerance impossible.