

# COLLOQUY

A CONVERSATION WITH GUTENBERG COLLEGE



Winter 2021

2 Skepticism, Scientism,  
and the Middle Way  
-Chris Swanson

6 Kitchen Reno:  
Thank you, Pindells!

8 Deadlines  
and Events



# Tutor Ron Julian

## Robby Julian

I am both the editor of *Colloquy* and the wife of tutor Ron Julian. I am sorry to convey sad news. On Thursday of the first week of the school year, Ron and I made a trip to the emergency room where he was diagnosed with stage-four rectal cancer. We were shocked because Ron had his regular colonoscopy in August 2019 with no indication of cancer. Ron's symptoms quickly grew worse, and he was not able to continue teaching. His colleagues stepped in sacrificially to teach his classes.

Ron had radiation therapy and some chemotherapy, which we hoped would slow the cancer's spread and allow him to return to Gutenberg. (Ron's interactions with the students that first week encouraged him, and he was looking forward to the year.) While treatment alleviated some symptoms, others emerged. The cancer has continued to spread, and now Ron is quite weak.

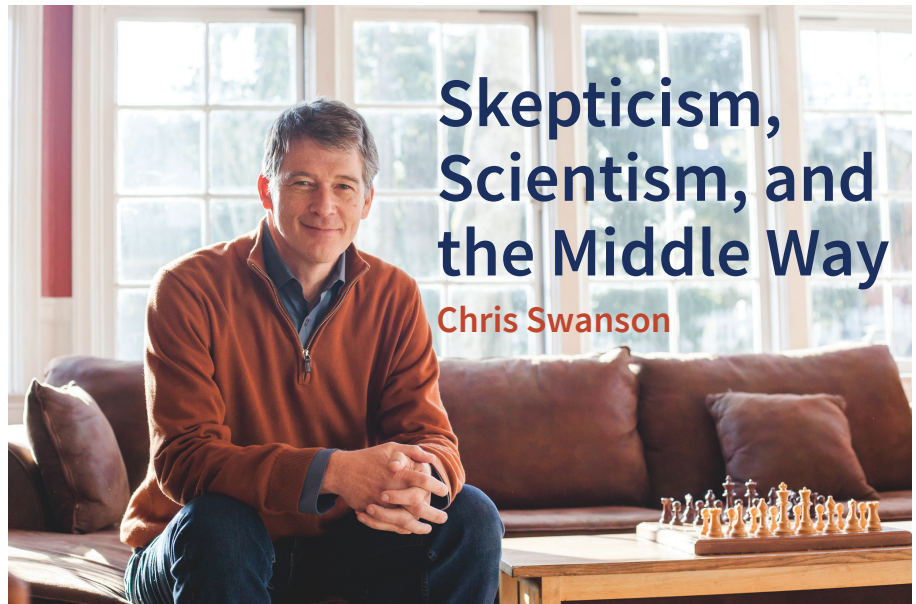
In the first issue of *Colloquy*, Ron wrote an article, "A Meaningful Life," in which he explored what a meaningful life is. In it he said, "Today, all our hopes are ultimately nullified by death. But believers have a hope and a goal that will not disappoint. We can seek, through the life of faith, to find our citizenship in the Kingdom of God." He ended the article with these words: "So where is the meaningful life to be found? In this age and the next, the truly meaningful life is found in the promises of God."

I met Ron when we were both eighteen, a week after he became a Christian. For forty-nine years, I have watched God's hand on Ron as he has lived out a life of faith. I have learned from him, as many others have. He is likely near the end of his race. But we know that God has promised good things to those who keep the faith and finish the course. Your prayers for Ron and our family would be greatly appreciated.

Follow Ron's health journey at [www.caringbridge.org/visit/ronjulian](http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/ronjulian)

Read "A Meaningful Life" at [gutenberg.edu/Colloquy/Colloquy\\_V1-1\\_2018-Fall.pdf](http://gutenberg.edu/Colloquy/Colloquy_V1-1_2018-Fall.pdf)

*Colloquy's* cover photo was taken by our son Brian (GC class of 2003) on his flight back to Boston after a recent visit.



# Skepticism, Scientism, and the Middle Way

Chris Swanson

**T**he coronavirus outbreak offers an interesting look at how our culture thinks about science. A host of scientific predictions, studies, and criticisms have been used to justify policy. Science has been extolled, but it has also been ignored. How, then, should we think about scientific claims?

Part of the COVID problem is the multitude of scientific complexity arising from tricky computer modeling, inexact testing, conflicting drug results, mutations, and a host of different vaccines. Few of us can review these complex scientific issues. Furthermore, non-scientific factors, personal and sociological in nature, add to the complexity. Scientific claims are viewed through the lenses of economics, global supply chains, political posturing, concern for loved ones, and world-wide suffering. Add partisan media to that, and our ability to judge is even more degraded.

To unravel and explore these complexities is well beyond my expertise. Instead, I want to explore the underlying attitudes toward science and knowledge that the COVID crisis has illuminated. How should individuals think about science in this context? And more broadly, what is a reasonable approach to science in general—especially if we are not scientists?

## Trust

First, we need to consider the role of trust in knowing. Much of what we know is based on trust. I trusted my parents to teach me words and manners. I trusted my schoolbooks to teach me about math, history, and language. I trusted my friends when they told me things they did or saw. If my trusted source was correct, then my beliefs were true. But if not, I was deceived. Trust is necessary for us to function. Without it, we would be forever lost in a cloud of doubt and misery because an erosion of trust leads, inevitably, to greater and greater anxiety, fear, and bewilderment.

Unfortunately, our culture is currently facing a rare crisis of trust. For most cultures in most times, there has been a wide consensus about who or what was worthy of our trust. Traditional institutions of family, religion, and civic activity may have faced criticism, but for the most part, they were stable. Whether people trusted the monarchy, the priesthood, the elders, or sacred writings, they grew up with most of the important questions of life answered for them by institutions they trusted.

Today, trust in institutions has diminished. In its place, a cacophony of conflicting voices vies for our attention, asking for our trust or loyalty. Advertising and novel forms of propaganda have filled the gap. As a result, we usually extend trust only to those with whom we have a common ideological outlook. It is remarkable to me, for instance, that people might make decisions on whether to take a COVID vaccine based on which political party recommends it.

This crisis of trust did not appear fully formed from nowhere. It has been cultivated and developed over the last few centuries. While the detailed causes of the process are too involved to examine here, two clear trends have emerged: scientism and skepticism. Scientism asks us to put unquestioned trust in science, whereas skepticism asks us to withhold trust—in some cases, even in science.

When faced with a complicated situation like COVID that lies beyond our expertise, most of us will form beliefs based on general impressions grounded in whom we trust. After all, who has the time, ability, or interest to read scientific papers on vaccine science and form expertise in the field? We decide based on our trust, or lack thereof, in various authorities. Or if skeptical, we abandon any hope of knowing what is right.

Having simmered for centuries in this soup of scientism and skepticism, few recognize that the broth is of our own making. Scientism and skepticism, like viruses and vaccines, are unseen, but they have a profound impact on how we look at the world. And the impact is not good; the soup is spoiled. We need to identify the extremes of our culture's confidence and doubt and find a middle way. To explore these extremes, I will use examples from science where the soup was first concocted. But the same extremes go well beyond scientific claims; they impact relationships, morals, and religious belief. We will see that neither scientism nor skepticism provides an honest account of knowing, and both lead to unhealthy and ultimately unloving ways of living life.

## Skepticism

Skepticism is fundamentally an attitude by which we deny our ability to know things. It differs from doubt, which is natural and appropriate. We all have doubts and withhold judgment in the face of competing or insufficient evidence. Skepticism differs in being a pervasive attitude rather than a specific judgment.

Skepticism comes in several varieties. The most radical form, taken up by some philosophers, claims that *no* knowledge is possible and that intellectual integrity demands we deny our ability to prove any claim is true. (Perhaps we are in the Matrix!) Lesser degrees of skepticism are focused on certain *areas* of knowledge, such as politics or religion. For instance, skepticism within the field of political journalism has become so heightened that now the point seems to be to “control the narrative” rather than to report events. In the scientific community, skepticism raises its head when we say that knowledge is forever provisional or that it merely *models* reality rather than describes reality. The idea that theories and equations correspond to true relationships is rarely held.

Skepticism is not purely academic, however; it affects our lives. Sometimes skepticism is innocuous, for instance, when it is assented to but not acted upon. But often, skepticism becomes a significant force in people's actions. It may be used as a reason to avoid undesirable claims or responsibilities. By casting doubt on some claim about COVID, I can justify actions I prefer to take. If COVID is a hoax, for instance, I can live without restraint. Skepticism can be used to avoid conflict as well. If I am presented with an argument I do not wish to accept, it is easier to retreat to skepticism than to address the argument. Skepticism may also paralyze us into inaction. Not knowing what is right, we take no action at all, which ends up being an action of its own.

While most of us do not see ourselves as skeptics, the opportunity for doubt is all too real. I know that throughout the pandemic, I have responded by favoring arguments and explanations that downplay the virus. Because doubt and skeptical attitudes are so prevalent, it has become very easy to distrust sources that lean away from our beliefs.

## Sources of Skepticism

Skepticism often arises from a breakdown of trust. If an important personal bond of trust is broken, we may doubt some or all of what we have learned. An uncared-for young person may rebel against the guidance of a parent. Parishioners may cast aside their faith if a pastor is caught in an affair. A breakdown of trust can also come from pervasive manipulation. If we conclude that everyone has an agenda, then we will be distrustful. Evangelists and “cause crusaders” are easy to distrust if they are seen to have an agenda. Political and media propagandists of all stripes have been the worst manipulators. They use extraordinarily sophisticated techniques to drive people to specific political actions. Most recently, internet-based social-media “attention traders” are manipulating



# COLLOQUY

A CONVERSATION WITH GUTENBERG COLLEGE

WINTER 2021 • VOLUME 3, NUMBER 2

**Editor** Robby Julian

**Colloquy team** Chris Alderman, Eliot Grasso, Walter Steeb, Chris Swanson

**Cover Art** Brian Julian (Class of 2003)

**Other Photography** Erin Greco (Class of 2010), Paul Pindell, Elizabeth Steeb (Class of 2009).

**Layout** Robby Julian

**Proofreaders** Bob Blanchard, Karen Peters (Class of 2012), Walter Steeb (Class of 2009)

**Colloquy** [kol-uh-kwee] is published quarterly by Gutenberg College.



**Gutenberg College** offers an outstanding four-year liberal arts education in the Great Books tradition in an environment respectful of biblical Christianity.

**President** Chris Swanson, Ph.D.

**Vice President** Eliot Grasso, Ph.D.

**Academic Dean** Thomas (Charley) Dewberry, Ph.D.

**Website** [gutenberg.edu](http://gutenberg.edu)

© 2021 Gutenberg College, Inc.

Permission to reprint in whole or in part is hereby granted, provided the following credit line is used: Reprinted by permission from **Colloquy**, a publication of Gutenberg College, [gutenberg.edu](http://gutenberg.edu).

**Subscription free upon request.**

Visit [gutenberg.edu](http://gutenberg.edu) to subscribe.

Gutenberg is supported primarily through individual, tax-exempt contributions.



# Giving Tuesday: Thank You!

From President Swanson

There is usually an adjustment period when students arrive on campus at Gutenberg College. They are on their own, and everything they are used to is gone: home, family, friends, school routine, and work. They step into a new living situation and a strange academic environment. They are in class with the same people they live with. It can be a little intimidating. Will I succeed in this challenging curriculum? Will other students respect me? Will I find friends? What if I say something wrong or stupid?

I watch with amazement each year as they make that adjustment and slowly learn to trust each other. When that trust does come, they blossom. They relax into each other and feel the freedom both in and outside of class to show themselves and explore new and wonderful ideas. Only when they trust can they risk asking the questions that matter most to them, the ones that will frame their futures.

As I watch students adjust, I think about how unusual and valuable this opportunity is for them. I am again thankful that God has brought Gutenberg College into being and sustained it. I am thankful to all the people who have invested their time and talents over the years. I am thankful for the incredible blessing it has been in my life and that others have been similarly blessed, encouraged, and educated in the faith.

I am particularly thankful for the many people who commit to support the college financially and join alongside the students to contribute and learn. Being responsible for finances and budgets, I am keenly aware of the amazing generosity that helps Gutenberg thrive.

This fall we were overwhelmed with generosity on Giving Tuesday and throughout the holiday season. We set a goal of \$25,000 and received over \$29,000! Thank you all for your gifts and prayers. We continue to do our very best to pursue this mission, but we could not do it without your support.

## Skepticism, Scientism, and the Middle Way

Continued from page 3

at an unprecedented level. It is no wonder that trust is hard to come by. It seems almost self-evident now that “knowledge is power” as the culture embraces expediency over truth and we slide into epistemological despair.

A second source of skeptical attitudes is intellectual confusion and complexity, a major factor in the COVID situation. On any subject, a multitude of voices arise from all sorts of experts. If the experts cannot come to a consensus, how can I possibly figure it all out? This sort of conflict without consensus can eventually lead to risk-based skepticism: asserting a belief could be socially risky because I could face criticism, or it could be personally risky because I may discover I am mistaken. In the face of unwanted consequences, we retreat to doubt and tentativeness. A stronger response to epistemic risk is relativism, in which truth is personal and subjective. I am freed to believe and act in a personally satisfying way (so long as it doesn't hurt anyone else!). This rejection of absolutes is rarely a rejection of *all* absolutes but rather those that could have negative personal or social consequences.

Lastly, a pervasive source of skepticism is our educational system. This is especially true in higher education where various forms of skepticism are seen, ironically, as a moral imperative.

What is common to all skepticism is the distrust of, or lack of confidence in, our rational faculties. Rationality is not sufficient. Communication, reflection, and analysis will only get a person so far; some things are simply unknowable. Belief in reason's inadequacy, which was focused on religion in the twentieth century, has spread even to science.

### Dishonesty of Skepticism

Often, skepticism is viewed as the morally brave position. The skeptic rejects the hubris and imposed assumptions of those in power by denying their universal claims. But a closer examination reveals a kind of hypocrisy. The skeptic denies universal claims while tacitly holding certain universal beliefs, as when he denies moral absolutes but lives as if hurting a disadvantaged person for selfish advantage is wrong for all. That is *not* to say that doubting or uncertainty are dishonest. But it is dishonest for professed skeptics to withhold public assent about things to which they are committed in practice.

It is impossible not to have beliefs, and we act on those beliefs and live our lives as if those beliefs were true. We do not give a second thought to most of the things that we believe. We even have beliefs about those issues about which we are skeptical—whether we admit that to ourselves or not. The professed skeptic cannot escape this reality.

Consider skeptical “pragmatists” who claim that “truth” is whatever makes our situation better. To such pragmatists, our ideas do not represent or describe reality but instead are tools we use to predict events or solve problems. Thus, a botanist may work for forty years within a framework of plant categorization and yet deny that these categories have any ultimate existence. In this view, a theory is not true in any metaphysical or absolute sense, but we use it because it helps us accomplish our goals. We might be fools to deny a theory in practice, but we cannot claim it is “true.” Even if such a theory is not considered “true,” pragmatists are often committed to it and will defend it against differences of perspective, saying it is not true while acting as if it were.

Given the practical commitments and actions of the pragmatist, what meaningful difference exists then between his position and that of the so called “naïve” person on the street who claims that a theory is true? Is it not dishonest to act as if a theory were true but say it is not? Is it not the case that both the skeptic and the person on the street “know” in the same way? My point is simply this: Despite their words of justification, pragmatists may believe a theory to be true, and their skepticism about the absolute status of the belief lacks significance.

This dishonesty seems to pervade skepticism. People make personal commitments that guide their thoughts and actions. To wrap these commitments in some sort of philosophical doubt is self-deluding.

## Scientism

Directly opposed to skepticism is scientism. Scientism refers to an unreflective confidence and trust in scientific assumptions, methods, and conclusions. To be clear, there is a difference between scientism and a healthy, thoughtful respect for scientific conclusions. Accepting scientific conclusions is entirely appropriate in many cases. The scientism I am referring to is a belief that science (and by extension mathematics) is a method by which we come to verifiable, demonstrable knowledge that *obligates acceptance* and can be extended to nearly every type of problem. The knowledge so gained is considered objective and independent of the scientist. In its extreme form, the scientist is simply a machine-like cog in the progression and advancement of scientific knowledge. Science, according to scientism, is areligious, apolitical, and most of all, unbiased, and its objectivity and methodology *require us* to believe. With the kind of authority granted to scientism, philosophical questions well beyond the scope of traditional science are adopted into the scientific fold. Scientists with no philosophical training who *assume* philosophical materialism are offering answers to questions such as “What makes us human?” and “Why are we here?” For scientists to have philosophical positions is perfectly appropriate, but scientism gives those perspectives unwarranted credence in the culture.

Scientism affects our lives just as much as skepticism but in opposite ways. In public and private life, a spirit of scientism can be used to squash argument or conflict. Rather than skeptical retreat from conflict, those influenced by scientism attempt to argue from authority, granting authority to scientists and technologists that may or may not be warranted. Similarly, a spirit of scientism discourages reflection about various scientifically authorized acts and commitments. Confidence replaces examining assumptions and conclusions that call for thought and effort. It has been interesting to see this dynamic play itself out in the response to COVID. Policy was justified by “science,” and those who disagreed with the policy were framed as science deniers. Such an approach uses scientific authoritarianism to circumvent policy debate.

## Sources of Scientism

Like skepticism, scientism is the result of a variety of causes. The most obvious is our culture’s success in technological problem solving. Surrounded by cars, electric lights, surgical centers, and cell phones, anyone who pauses to reflect can see that science cannot be too far off the mark or these technologies would not work. Some will argue that while philosophers have yet to reach a consensus on some of the most basic philosophical questions, everybody acknowledges that Newton’s laws of motion have been used to great effect for 300 years.

Furthermore, cultural assumptions supported by public outlets like TV, movies, books, and news bolster scientism. Star Trek epitomizes the attitude of scientism as do shows where crimes are solved by science. Our culture assumes that technology helps the economy grow, an obvious good. And when faced with a negative unintended consequence of technology, the follower of scientism looks to a technological solution as the only remedy.

Lastly, our educational system promotes scientism. The system reflects the modernist scientific traditions upon which public education and the research university were founded. Science does not hold the same high ground that it did in the 1950s and 1960s, but schools retain a strong scientific emphasis. In the last decade, for example, STEM (learning that integrates science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) has taken on national significance.

## Scientism versus Judgment

While science has been successful in solving problems, that success does not warrant an uncritical acceptance of all things science. Let’s use catching COVID as an example. The likelihood of contracting the virus and the severity of the ensuing illness involve complex questions and an enormous number of factors. Some factors increase risk, others decrease risk. Further, one factor cannot be accounted for no matter how many statistics are collected, namely, that each person is unique in his physical and mental health, genetics, and physical makeup. But scientists can only provide general guidelines like these: social distancing is six feet; older people are more susceptible; restaurants and gyms spread the disease. These are broad generalities. Why was six feet chosen, and how much safer are you

# Students and COVID

While the hope of the vaccine is on the horizon, COVID is still a source of uncertainty at Gutenberg College. This January, one resident at the house and one student living at home tested positive for COVID in the week prior to the start of classes. Fortunately, the house was nearly empty at that time, and the in-house resident was able to quarantine for the required time. The student at home also completed a ten-day quarantine and returned to campus after the first week. While one of the students had mild cold symptoms, the other was asymptomatic.

Erring on the side of caution, the school conducted its first week of classes online through Zoom, allowing some students to remain at home and others to be tested for COVID. As of January 15, no other positive cases have surfaced, and we are again conducting in-person classes and taking precautions. Our hope, along with everyone else, is that we will weather the period between now and when the vaccine is widely distributed so that we can return to normal operations. In the meantime, I am proud of all the students, faculty, and staff for maintaining good spirits and being conscientious about health and safety.





# Kitchen Reno: Thank You, Pindells

Few people have given more to Gutenberg College in terms of time and money than Paul Pindell, the Chairman of the Board of Governors. Not only does he take on significant responsibilities as board chair, but since last summer he has reprised his role of chief renovator! While Paul and his wife, Nancy, were house managers in the 1990s, Paul was a building contractor. He spent countless hours maintaining and improving the house. This summer, reminiscent of his early days, he launched an ambitious (he may not have known how ambitious!) project to renovate the kitchen during evenings and weekends.

What started as a project to paint the kitchen cabinets has shifted into a complete repaint and reflooring of the entire kitchen. With occasional help from student and staff work parties, the cabinets, doors, and windows have been stripped down to the wood—through at least seven layers. Drawer faces and cabinet doors have been remade and freshly painted, and the floor has been retiled. To put icing on the cake, Paul and Nancy have paid for all the materials necessary for the project. There are still some things to do, but we are all excited with the progress that has been made and thankful to Paul and Nancy for their generous gifts of time, expertise, and money to make this happen.



## Skepticism, Scientism, and the Middle Way

Continued from page 5

if you stand seven feet apart? How confident are scientists in their studies? Some group of scientists decided on the guidelines by considering statistics and “acceptable risk,” but we are not party to these statistics nor what risk is acceptable from either a sociological or an epidemiological standpoint. We are asked to relinquish our own judgment and simply act. The requirement that we must simply trust the scientific results reflects an attitude of scientism: scientists’ decisions are best. To be clear, I am not advocating a cavalier or skeptical attitude that simply ignores the scientists. I am saying that the spirit of scientism plays a significant role in how we respond to scientific requirements.

This example is like countless other aspects of modern life. Science provides answers to issues related to healthy food, child car seat safety, road and traffic design, human sexuality, evolution, psychological and physical health, school curricula, environmental regulations, and whether certain crimes are a moral issue or a sickness. Given that scientific claims and decisions pervade all manner of public and private life, how should we respond? Sober reflection on the nature of science and its interaction with public policy can help to keep a proper balance between skepticism and scientism.

### A Middle Way

If both skepticism and scientism fail to provide a satisfactory approach to scientific knowledge, what then? Is there a middle way to balance scientific confidence and philosophical doubt? I believe there is. But to find such a way, we will have to question a strongly held belief bequeathed to us by our culture.

This cherished belief is part of a complex of ideas related to what knowledge is, namely, 100% certainty. The trajectory of the history of ideas has been to pursue (and critique!) ever more undoubtable, provable, and certain conclusions and to label only this sort of certainty as “truth.” Every other kind of knowledge is questionable and of a qualitatively different sort. The bar for truth is thus incredibly high for fear that otherwise we will fall into error, conflict, and ultimately, misery. *But this desire or need for certainty is the first mistake.* We simply *decided* that only indubitable, demonstrated truths should be allowed. Western culture *chose* to believe that perfect truth would lessen or remove conflict and pain. It was a choice, and the consequences of that choice laid the foundation for many unspoken beliefs, such as these: a) the root of conflict is usually lack of knowledge, not desire; b) science and technology have better answers to man’s problems than do religion and philosophy; c) proof is possible in science and mathematics but *no* other fields; and d) if a claim *could be* wrong, then we cannot call it true. The problem is that we made and adopted this choice in the face of an enormous amount of experience to the contrary.

Consider our everyday experience. In every waking moment of every day, we are all making choices. Some are momentous, like should I marry this person. But the overwhelming majority are so automatic that we don't realize they are choices. I choose to push the keys on my keyboard. I choose to move my foot in a particular way while walking through the house. I choose to pronounce "good morning" in the customary way when I see my wife. All these minuscule choices, which are automatic and almost built into my very being, are the result of *beliefs*. I believe that if I push a particular key, it will produce an effect on my screen and in the computer memory. I believe that if I move my foot just so, I will get closer to my destination. I believe that if I pronounce "good morning" in the customary way, it will accomplish a relational goal.

Because these beliefs are so much a part of our body and mind, we do not think of them as beliefs. But they must be, because if for some strange reason, we were to change our beliefs, we would not act as we do. Actions are the fleshing out of a nearly infinite set of beliefs.


The question then arises: Are these true beliefs? Are we allowed to say that it is true that if I touch the key on my keyboard in just such a way, the computer will respond as I wish? Or shall we choose the high bar of certainty and say that we do not really know? I propose the former. All our experience suggests that nearly everything we believe is true. If it were not, we would fail to move, eat, talk, work, or function in any coherent way. These beliefs are what I would call "knowledge," and we are warranted to claim the knowledge is true.

Is it conceivable that our beliefs could be mistaken? Absolutely. But it is only within the framework of 100% certainty that this a problem. In the more normal usage of the word "truth," most people will acknowledge that it is possible that what they believe could be false, however unlikely. I believe it is true that my bank account is not empty when I write a check, but it is, in principle, possible that it has been emptied somehow.

What about much more complex beliefs, like a belief in some complicated cosmological theory about quantum gravity? This belief is the same as simple beliefs in some ways and different in others. It is the same in that the theory does not stand outside of me as knowledge independent of me. I am the knower, not a science book or article. I may believe it to be true, and true for all, but I recognize I may be mistaken. Where this cosmological belief differs is in its complexity and evidence. I do not have multiple experiential tests of the theory as I do with moving my foot to walk. It takes more thought and more skilled examination to decide what I believe. It differs also in import; little is at stake since my actions do not depend much on that belief—as opposed to walking, where if I move my foot wrongly, I fall down. The only tool I have at my disposal is a judgment of the trustworthiness of the source of information, not first-hand knowledge. The complex belief, then, differs in quality, but not kind.

The implications of this perspective are profound, both for science and for knowledge in general. It implies, for instance, that scientific knowledge is personal and embedded in our minds and bodies. It is not impersonal and independent of the knower. It allows for humility while not requiring skepticism. It requires that we make judgments based on evidence and take responsibility for our knowledge and beliefs. In this perspective, scientific knowledge may in some cases (not all) be held as true with great confidence, but it is not different in kind from other types of knowledge. In this perspective, humility does not demand a skeptical view. Fundamentally, we are not skeptical since we hold our beliefs as true and act on them but also recognize the potential for error.

If we demand certainty, this approach is not satisfactory. It does not provide a way to overcome conflict. It does not guarantee or mechanize the process of creating impersonal knowledge independent of the knower. It does not do away with doubt.

This, then, is the middle way. We have knowledge, which is belief. We are warranted in claiming it is true, even though it does not pass the 100% certainty test. Knowledge requires effort and skill in knowing from the knower. It demands that we take responsibility to make fair and honest judgments. In short, it heals the division between doubt and overconfidence, between skepticism and scientism. 

**Chris Swanson** is the president and a tutor at Gutenberg College where he teaches science and leads discussions in *Microexegesis*, *Western Civilization*, and the *Great Conversation*. He holds a Ph.D. in Physics from the University of Oregon.



Nancy and Paul Pindell





COLLOQUY WINTER 2021



1883 University Street  
Eugene, OR 97403

541.683.5141 | [office@gutenberg.edu](mailto:office@gutenberg.edu)

[gutenberg.edu](http://gutenberg.edu)

NONPROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
EUGENE, OREGON  
PERMIT NO. 594

## March 1 Deadlines:

**ADMISSION for Fall 2021 (Regular Decision)**  
[gutenberg.edu/admissions](http://gutenberg.edu/admissions)

**RESIDENCE PROGRAM for Fall Housing**  
[gutenberg.edu/student-life/residence-program](http://gutenberg.edu/student-life/residence-program)

**Join the Conversation!**

## Young Philosophers: March 4

In its Young Philosophers series, Gutenberg College opens its (virtual) doors to high-school-age participants for thoughtful online discussion of important ideas. The next Young Philosophers meeting on March 4 will explore this question: What is Freedom? Register at [gutenberg.edu/events/young-philosophers](http://gutenberg.edu/events/young-philosophers).

## Summer Institute 2021 • July 29-30

### The Meaning of the City: Rebellion and Redemption

They said, “Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name.” (Genesis 11:4)

From the first pages of Genesis, mankind has sought security apart from God. The city stands as the first and foremost expression of that search. As individuals, in what political philosophers called the “state of nature,” we are vulnerable. But together, we strive to overcome the vicissitudes of earthly existence. Despite the rebellious origins of the city, God promises to redeem the city by creating a New Jerusalem. The questions thus arise: What is a city? What function does it perform? And how are we who live in an intensely urban world to understand the meaning of the city? Summer Institute 2021 will explore the nature of cities and urbanization. We will look at what the Bible and other authors have said, with a particular emphasis on modern city life. Visit [gutenberg.edu/si](http://gutenberg.edu/si).

## Community Classes Zooming Now: Tyranny: Historical Episodes

Observing the social and political landscape, one reality rises to the fore: polarization. Both sides are afraid that the other side will destroy what they deeply cherish. In short, they fear tyranny. Gutenberg's winter and spring Community Classes are exploring the nature of tyranny throughout the history of Western culture by looking at particular historical episodes and discussing a short reading by an author of the period. The goal is to help us all better understand tyranny in our own cultural context. Please join us for Zoom classes on Wednesday evenings. Visit [gutenberg.edu/events/community-classes](http://gutenberg.edu/events/community-classes) for information and to register.

## Education Conference: Sept. 9-11 The Art of Learning

In the predominant view of education, the student's primary job is to consume and store information, much like a computer. But such a view misses the true nature of learning. Learning is dynamic. A student, like an apprentice, slowly builds skills and knowledge, constantly self-correcting toward mastery and a sound worldview. A key component of the process—frequently overlooked in modern education—is a student's moral orientation toward truth. In this conference, we will explore the art of learning through workshops and talks by prominent educators in order to become better learners and better teachers. Visit [gutenberg.edu/edcon](http://gutenberg.edu/edcon).