



# Essential Philosophy

with Dr. David Schenk

## Lesson 3: Skepticism about Truth

### Outline:

#### Skepticism About Truth

- Introduction (0:00)
  - This increasingly popular position is prevalent in the Humanities, Social Sciences, and American culture; however, the position is self-contradictory.
  - **An example of Skepticism About Truth:** “That’s true for you, but not true for me. That’s your reality, but everyone has a different reality.”
  - **Reality:** Philosophers use the term reality to designate what, by its very essence, cannot be yours, mine, or anyone’s. Reality is the state of things as they actually exist.
- The Argument, or Doctrine D (See blackboard for Dr. Schenk’s notes at 3:37)
  - **Doctrine D:** “There is no one universal, objective truth about anything. There are only the personal, subjective truths that different people hold.”
    - Also, “There is no absolute truth. There are only personal truths.”
- 2 Basic Dilemmas for Doctrine D (7:00; 8:51)
  - This doctrine has logical consequences that contradict its own argument.
    - The doctrine commits humans to having no propositions being universally true. But, the doctrine itself is a proposition! Therefore, by its own criteria, it cannot be true.
    - This doctrine, which states that there is no objective truth, cannot then be objectively true—this is an obvious contradiction and flaw!
  - Defending or attacking Doctrine D implicitly relies on a *set of criteria for success or failure*.
    - **Dr. Schenk’s argument:** Any attempt to reduce the relation called truth to something else will implicitly rely on another set of criteria for success or failure.
      - **Example:** Consider Gottlob Frege’s attempt to reduce truth to an algorithmic function that a machine could compute mechanically. This failed because algorithms cannot create algorithms. An algorithm must come from a standard that is already beyond the algorithm.



- *Dr. Schenk's key point:* Truth is a fundamental or irreducible relation that you cannot account for in anything else.
- Real-Life Consequences of the Skepticism About Truth Argument
  - This argument can be tragic for someone's life. For example, this argument might appeal to a nihilist, or someone who believes life is meaningless. Similarly, it might appeal to a Nietzschean who is skeptic about objective standards.
  - As Dr. Schenk shares, humans are ordered toward, by their very essence, truth, goodness, and beauty. This reflects a Christian perspective. When a human embraces *skepticism about truth*, he or she faces disastrous emotional repercussions because it is impossible to balance a meaningless perspective with a natural inclination towards objective truth, goodness, and beauty.

### Upcoming Lecture Material (22:54)

- 3 Main Arguments for the Existence of God
  - Ontological Argument
  - Cosmological Argument
  - Design Argument
- Argument Against God
  - Problem of Evil