

The Dismal Science

Michael Sean Winters | Dec. 18, 2013 Distinctly Catholic

A friend asked me the other day to send a link to the [brilliant essay by Leon Wieseltier on scientism](#) [1]. The occasion of Leon's article was a previously published essay by Steven Pinker, but in re-reading Leon's words, the thought came to me that they have a bearing on the criticism being hurled at *Evangelii Gaudium* by the likes of Rev. Robert Sirirco and Samuel Gregg of the Acton Institute. Not for nothing is economics known as the dismal science. Here is the money quote from Leon's essay:

It is not for science to say whether science belongs in morality and politics and art. Those are philosophical matters, and science is not philosophy, even if philosophy has since its beginnings been receptive to science. Nor does science confer any license to extend its categories and its methods beyond its own realms, whose contours are of course a matter of debate. The credibility of physicists and biologists and economists on the subject of the meaning of life?what used to be called the ultimate verities, secularly or religiously constructed?cannot be owed to their work in physics and biology and economics, however distinguished it is. The extrapolation of larger ideas about life from the procedures and the conclusions of various sciences is quite common, but it is not in itself justified; and its justification cannot be made on internally scientific grounds, at least if the intellectual situation is not to be rigged.

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Links:

[1] <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/114548/leon-wieseltier-responds-steven-pinkers-scientism>