

Creation, the Trinity, and the emperor without clothes

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This essay applies the concepts of God, the Trinity, and knowledge, from my previous article, into a powerful apologetic that can be used against the unbeliever. The unbeliever presents the view that the universe is uncreated, or undesigned. But such a view makes knowledge impossible.

In my essay, *Trinity's Truth Confirmed in Creation*,¹ I provided a way of looking at God as Triune that involved the questions of epistemology. In particular, the breakdown of knowledge from particulars to universals. It is the Christian view of God as Trinity that provides an explanation for the origin of the knowledge questions concerning the relationship of the one-and-many. Christian theism thus provides a framework for the development of knowledge and it is not surprising to find why science has developed where Christianity has flourished.

In this essay, I wish to explore the implications of those ideas in practical Christian apologetics. For the doctrine of the Trinity, far from being an abstract doctrine, provides a fundamental foundation in how the world is viewed.

In 2 Corinthians 10:5 we read: "We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ." This is Paul's claim of what he was doing and we are encouraged to do the same, to destroy arguments raised against the knowledge of God. In this essay, I want to show how it is possible to completely undermine the unbeliever's worldview.

In one sense, the arguments presented in this paper are 'logically prior to' the arguments in my earlier essay. If the unbeliever cannot get off the ground in differentiating between one object and another, then he does not need universals to help explain the particulars. Thus, I want to strip unbelief to its bare essentials, then show that the unbelieving self-proclaimed emperor has no clothes.

A Christian philosophy of 'facts'

Basic to the unbeliever's worldview is a denial of creation—the ordered arrangement of the universe according to the mind of God. It is essential in Christian theism that we hold to the idea of an ordered universe in such a way that we can present the 'facts' of the universe as ultimately being tied together in the mind of God. The role of human endeavour, in the dominion mandate (Genesis 1:26), is to uncover these

relationships and use them to better the human condition. Robert Reymond explains this issue well:

"God created the universe, and has continually governed it according to His plan. Every fact in the universe is what it is, therefore, by virtue of God's prior knowledge. Every fact in the universe has meaning by virtue of its place in the unifying plan of God. No fact in the universe exists independently of God. *There is not one non-theistic fact in the universe.* Even the most insignificant single fact reveals God as its Creator as truly as the most obvious one does. Man himself, physically, rationally, reveals God. If one wonders how it is that the God of Christian theism has interpreted every fact of the universe, that is, how it is that He has placed a meaning on them I would reply, first, *by the creative act itself.* He has interpreted this fact a 'star' by creative fiat. He interpreted that fact a 'bird' by created act. Second by *subsequent special revelation.* He created light and 'called' it day (Gen.1:5). He created an expanse and 'called' it heaven (Gen. 1:8). ... It would follow then that if a man learns a fact to any degree, his knowledge of that fact to the degree he knows it at all, has to be in accord with the prior divine interpretation of it. ... In other words, the word of the God of Scripture is the final and ultimate 'court of appeal' in every area of human existence. It is only on the basis of the Christian faith alone that man can justify knowledge at all [emphasis in original]."²

The alternative to an ordered universe is an unordered universe. Carl Sagan posed the question as to whether the universe was cosmos or chaos.³ There is no middle ground here.

Sagan's question allows us to present not just a philosophy of science in general but a philosophy of factuality in particular. As already stated, the Christian philosophy of factuality is that all the facts of the universe are tied together in the mind of God. There is not one single piece of the created order that is not where it is, at the time it is, and the

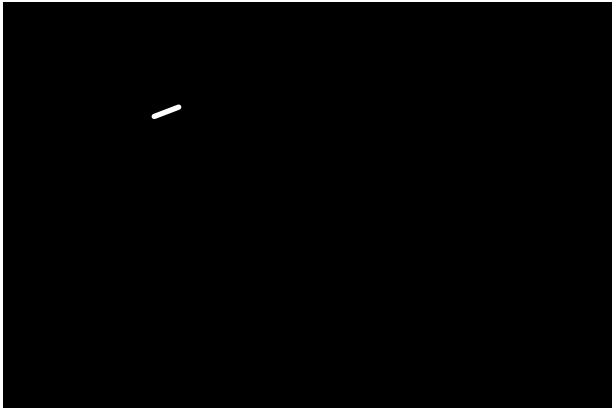


Figure 1. What is this?

size that it is, that is not the result of God's ultimate plan for His creation. Only on this basis is there a genuine *universe*.⁴

In my earlier article, I argued that knowledge requires the ability to differentiate between individual objects. This is done by means of universals, or what we might call categories. Examples of categories would be horse, chair, dog, cat, plants, animals, and so forth. Now in the Christian scheme of things, categories, or universals, were a part of the creation act of God. In other words, they are not man-made categories. You just need to remember one thing: without universals there is no knowledge of particulars.⁵

Let's argue, for a moment, that the unbeliever's worldview is somehow a true picture of the universe, that it is uncreated, unordered, and therefore chaos. Another way of saying this is that the facts of the universe are not where they are by design, but by chance, or some notion of random activity.⁶

Now here we come to a remarkable issue that can be easily overlooked. *Random facts cannot be known*. They are what the philosophers call *brute* facts and a brute fact is one that cannot be identified or explained.⁷ This is a question of logic that flows over into our philosophy of science, so it becomes a question of science as well.

The issue, then, is this: is it possible to have science if the facts of the universe are unordered, that is, they are random? Consider figure 1. What do you see? If you say you see a white line on a black background, you have already *assumed* there is some connection of the facts with each other. In this case, your observation of a white line is, firstly, connected to colour and, secondly, connected to geometry. But in the unbeliever's universe of chance, no such connections can be identified or explained.

Now this notion seems so very strange to us today. But that is because we are so used to thinking of the universe as an *ordered* arrangement of facts and we find it difficult to comprehend the alternative. Because of our Christian worldview heritage, we are so comfortable with the notion

of arranged and ordered facts that we probably never stop to consider the alternative.

If the unbeliever's worldview is correct, however, everything that comes into existence does not come with relationships to other facts. Every item is unique. But if it is so unique that it has no connections, then science becomes an impossible project. Thus, the words of molecular biologist, Gunther Stent:

"The scientist thinks he recognizes some common denominator, structure, in an ensemble of events, infers these events to be related, and then attempts to derive a 'law' explaining the cause of their relation. An event that is unique, or at least that aspect of an event which makes it unique, cannot therefore be the subject of scientific investigation. For an ensemble of unique events *has* no common denominator, and there is nothing in it to explain; such events are *random*, and the observer perceives them as noise [emphasis in original]."⁸

Why science is impossible on the assumption of atheism

This is really important to grasp. If what the unbeliever says about the origin of the universe were true, then science is dead in the water. Imagine the first human in the unbeliever's view. He knows nothing. He has no 'science' to work with. He has to start the whole endeavour of knowledge from scratch. But he has no laws, no 'common denominators' that he can use. So he picks up his first piece of the universe, or observes it in some manner, and now what will he do with it? What *can* he do with it? Very little. Again the words of Reymond:

"The universe is a compound of an overwhelming number of particulars. (Everything in the universe is viewed by the philosopher as a particular.) If every particular a man encountered (and remember the man himself is a particular composed of particulars) remained for him unique and completely unclassified and unclassifiable ... knowledge and communication would be impossible, for nothing would have meaning."⁹

In the unbeliever's worldview, the universe is merely a vast puzzle. Do the pieces fit together in some fashion? He does not know. And even if he thought they did fit together, where does he place the first piece of the puzzle? Does he have it in the correct place? How would he know?

Imagine you're sitting in front of a 10,000-piece jigsaw puzzle that has no interlocking edges. There is no finished picture of what the puzzle is supposed to look like once it is assembled. The edges cannot guide you to identify how one piece connects to another. Maybe colour can help you,

but if there is no finished picture of what the completed puzzle should look like, then you have no clue as to how the pieces *should* be arranged even by colour. Everything is a wild guess.¹⁰

Take a look at figure 2. Here there are additional ‘bits’. But if they are all unique, there is no common denominator such as geometry or colour to give them some explanation. They just ‘exist’, and that’s all that can be said. You could not even say they are a certain distance apart, because in a random world, how do you identify distance, which is merely a numerical description of how far apart objects are?

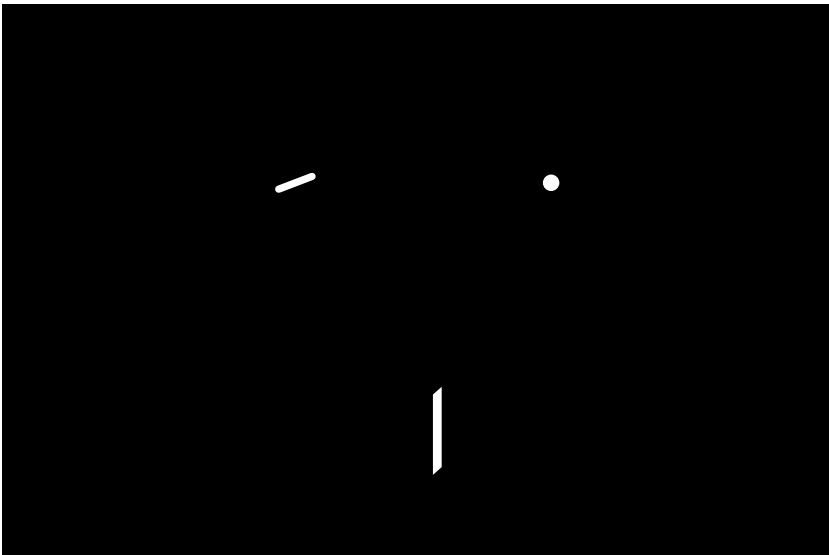


Figure 2. Unique objects have no relationship to anything else.

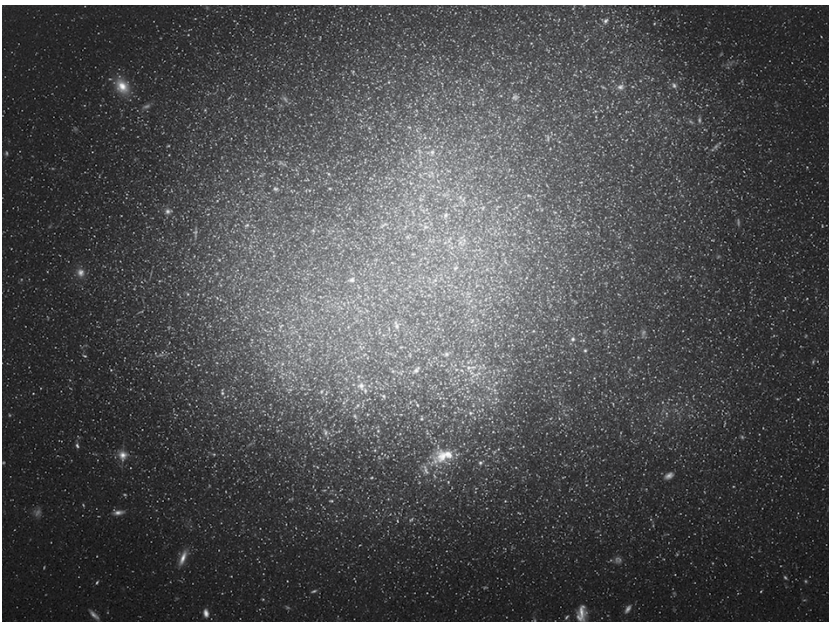


Figure 3. All the pieces of the universe require an ordered arrangement in order for science to take place.

If you think that a 10,000-piece jigsaw is a challenge, then you can really feel sorry for the unbeliever who has created a nightmare for himself. The universe is not made up of 10,000 pieces but trillions of pieces. In order to ‘make sense’ of any of these pieces, the unbeliever must get at least one piece in its proper place. But how can he do that? He does not even know if a ‘proper place’ exists for any of the pieces. He assumes there is, but he does not make this assumption based on his own worldview. He makes this assumption because Creation is true and he knows no other way to ‘see’ the universe except that somehow the pieces fit together. In other words, the universe is designed (see figure 3).

So what the unbeliever denies with his view of creation, he has to accept when it comes to science. The evolutionary hypothesis requires an unordered universe. But even evolutionary science *assumes* an ordered universe in order to have science. Thus, we truly have schizophrenic man. The idea of man as a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate, is a myth. Not even in Eden could Adam have begun the process of the dominion mandate without the enlightenment he obtained from God as God’s image bearer. So when Adam named the animals, he was not a blank slate guessing at things but already applying the knowledge that God had endowed him within the acts of creation.

But it’s worse than that. The modern scientific method requires neutrality. That means, it requires brute facts—uninterpreted facts. To assume creation is to assume that the facts of the universe are not neutral but are in fact God-ordained facts. That is, all the facts are where they are at the time they are according to the decrees of God. But the scientific method does not permit this assumption. Instead, it requires brute facts—unknowable facts—in order to begin the scientific search for knowledge.

In other words, the modern scientific method requires an irrational beginning to its own process. But from such a starting point, it has nowhere it can go.

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Creed or chaos?

So the unbeliever speaks one thing out of one side of his mouth—the universe is random—while out of the other side of his mouth he demands an ordered universe so that he can have science. Thus it is no coincidence that science arose in the environment of Christianity.¹¹ In particular, Van Til identifies the key Christian doctrines that make science possible:

“Christianity claims to furnish the presuppositions without which a true scientific procedure is unintelligible. Chief of these presuppositions is the idea of God as expressed in the doctrine of the ontological Trinity. In addition there are the doctrines of creation, of providence, and of God’s ultimate plan with the universe. Christianity claims that the very aim and method of science require these doctrines as their prerequisites.”¹²

Chaos or cosmos? That really is the question. And the unbeliever wants to have it both ways. Enter the law of noncontradiction, which says that A cannot be non-A at the same time and in the same relationship. You cannot be in Sydney and New York at the same time. The universe cannot be ordered and unordered at the same time.

Inherent in the unbeliever’s worldview, then, is a trip between rationality and irrationality. He’s prepared to deny logic in order to maintain his unbelief. And now we begin to see the wisdom of Scripture which says: “Professing to be wise, they became fools.” A fool, according to Proverbs 18:2 is a person who despises knowledge and expresses his own opinion. And that’s the unbeliever. He has opinions about many things but little or no knowledge.¹³

But it is more than cosmos or chaos. It is also a matter of creed or chaos, as Dorothy Sayers so eloquently pointed out:

“We are waging a war of religion. Not a civil war between adherents of the same religion, but a life-and-death struggle between Christian and pagan. ... [A]t bottom, it is a violent and irreconcilable quarrel about the nature of God and nature of man and the ultimate nature of the universe; it is a war of dogma.”¹⁴

The battle lines have been drawn by those who reject Christian theism. Their dogma, irrational as it is, cannot withstand the light of creation, the Trinity, providence, and rationality that form the essence of Christian dogma. And it is Christian dogma we use to identify that the unbeliever has no clothes. In other words, we show that Christianity “is first and foremost a rational explanation of the universe”.¹⁵

Conclusion

If you can just grasp the notion of the jigsaw puzzle, the universe, and trying to find the correct place for any piece

of the puzzle, you are so far ahead in the apologetics game. Certainly far ahead of the unbeliever who really has not the foggiest notion of what you will be talking about. But it is your place to enlighten him, to show him the emperor really has no clothes and is intellectually stark naked.

References

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4. Universe is a ‘mongrel’ word that combines unity and diversity. It is the outlook of the Christian worldview and also the basis of the university, a place where the various disciplines are brought together for study.
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7. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brute_fact.
8. Stent, G., *The Coming of the Golden Age: A View of the End of Progress*, *The Natural History Press*, Garden City, NY, p. 116, 1969.
9. Reymond, ref. 2, p. 79.
10. From this, we note that jigsaw puzzles are created and designed. If everything in the puzzle were random, the puzzle could not be completed. Small puzzles may be an exception but not one as large as the universe itself.
11. See Sarfati, J., The Christian Roots of Science & Busting the Myths of Science, www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQjM6ceYiX8.
12. Van Til, C. and Edgar, W., *Christian Apologetics*, 2nd edn, The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Phillipsburg, NJ, Logos Online edition, 2003.
13. Knowledge is identified as ‘justified true belief’. Unbelievers may believe many things but since they cannot justify them, they are not knowledge. Knowing the difference between an opinion and knowledge is thus important in the defence of Christian theism.
14. Sayers, D.L., *Creed or Chaos?* Sophia Institute Press, Manchester, NH, pp. 27–28, 1949, 1974.
15. Sayers, ref. 14, p. 31. See also Sarfati, J.D., Loving God with all your mind: logic and creation, creation.com/loving-god-with-all-your-mind-logic-and-creation.

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