

Epistemology, Objectivity, and Subjectivity

I. The Biblical and Theological Basis for Objectivity

- The doctrine of the Trinitarian God in Christian theism establishes the basis for a robust *theological objectivity* rooted in him and his existence and perfect nature.
- God’s holiness, justice, and love constitute the transcendent, authoritative standard in which the moral order of the universe is anchored.
- Christianity is characterized not only by theological and moral verities, but is also marked by objective, cosmological structures based on the biblical doctrine of creation.

First, Scripture insists that we understand the existence of God’s creation “*cosmologically*” as a product of his Word (*logos*).

Second, Scripture also requires that we understand design of God’s creation “*cosmosophically*” as an achievement of his wisdom (*sophia*).

Third, Scripture also proposes that we apprehend the providential administration of God’s creation “*cosmonomically*” as a consequence of his law.

II. Augustine on God as the Author of the Cosmos and Its Given Nature

Thus God is the supreme reality, with his Word and the Holy Spirit—three who are one. He is the God omnipotent, creator and maker of every soul and every body. . . . From him derives every mode of being, every species, every order, all measure, number, and weight. He is the source of all that exists in nature, whatever its kinds, whatsoever its value, and of the seeds of forms, and the forms of seeds, and the motions of seeds and forms. He has given to flesh its origin, beauty, health, fertility in propagation, the arrangement of the bodily organs, and the health that comes from their harmony. He has endowed even the soul of irrational creatures with memory, sense, and appetite, but above all this, he has given to the rational soul thought, intelligence, and will. He has not abandoned even the inner parts of the smallest and lowliest creature, or the bird’s feather (to say nothing of the heavens and the earth, the angels and mankind) — he has not left them without a harmony of their constituent parts, a kind of peace. It is beyond anything incredible that he should have willed the kingdoms of men, their dominations and their servitudes, to be outside the range of the laws of his providence.¹

III. Three Positions Regarding the Appropriation of the Truth About the Cosmos

| <u>Category</u> | <u>Naive Realist</u> | <u>Anti-Realist</u> | <u>Critical Realist</u> |
|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Description | Certain Certainty | Certain Uncertainty | Certain certainty Certain uncertainty |
| Epistemology | Objectivism | Subjectivism Relativism | Objectivist/subjectivist |

¹ Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson, intro. John O’Meara (New York: Penguin Books, 1972, 1984), 196 (§5. 11)

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|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Umpire Illustration | "Call 'em as they are." | "They ain't notin' till I call 'em." | "I call 'em as I see 'em." |
| What can we know? | Everything | Nothing | Something |
| Psychological Evaluation | Optimism | Pessimism | Realism |
| Ethical Evaluation | Confident Arrogant; Contentious | Cynical/ Skeptical/ Despairing | Assured/ Humble/ Modest |
| Color Evaluation: | Black and White | Black | Black and White or Gray |
| Rlgs. Evaluation: 12) | Pharisaism | Ecclesiastes: | Pauline: "We see in a glass darkly" (1 Cor. 13: |
| Historical Evaluation: | Modernity | Postmodernity | Premodernity |
| Worldview Evaluation: | Scientism Naturalism | Nihilism | Christian theism |
| Rational Evaluation: | Too much confidence in human reason | Too little confidence in human reason | A recognition of what reason can and cannot do |
| Philosophic Evaluation | Dogmatists | Skeptics/ Sophists | Realists |
| Teleological/ Historical Evaluation | Utopian | Dystopian | Atopian/Kingdom of God |