

# Living Three Worlds: Individual Experience and Social Reality in the Contemporary Era

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## Abstract

Aboriginal inhabitants on remote lands may only know a commonsensical world just as all human ancestors who lived a long time ago in primitive societies. Faithful believers may only care about their religious world just as most Christians who struggled with spirituality during the Middle Ages. Dedicated scientists may only perceive and produce things in the world of science as if nothing could ever meaningfully exist besides it. However, the majority of contemporaries who grow up with probably a dotted exposure to religious service and likely systematic access to scientific education tend to approach reality, frame experience, and organize life with input from and output to a multitude of sources. This chapter points to the fact that people in the contemporary era live in a general world of reality with connections to commonsense, religion, and science. Compared to commonsense, the general world incorporates not only religious elements for non-earthly meanings but also scientific forces with productive outcomes. In contrast to religion, it exhibits both the practicality of commonsense and the rationality of science. With regard to science, it shows a direct involvement in commonsensical experience as well as a simple commitment to religious transcendence.

**Keywords:** Commonsense, Religion, Science, Believing, Reasoning, Living

Aboriginal inhabitants on remote lands may only know a commonsensical world just as all human ancestors who lived a long time ago in primitive societies. Faithful believers may only care about their religious world just as most Christians and Muslims who struggled with spirituality during the Middle Ages. Dedicated scientists may only perceive, entertain, and produce things and events in the world of science as if nothing could ever meaningfully exist besides or beyond it. However, the majority of contemporaries who grow up with probably a dotted exposure to religious service and likely systematic access to scientific education through family, school, and the mass media tend to approach reality, frame experience, and organize life with input from and output to a multitude of sources, especially the world of commonsense, the world of religion, and the world of science (Heschel 1967; Odum 1971; McGinn 1990; Weber 1991; Durkheim 1995; Childress 2000; Merton 2002;

Rosenberg 2002; Ligotti & Brassier 2010; McDowell & Morrow 2010; Mirola et al. 2011; Watts 2011; Bijker et al. 2012; Roberts & Yamane 2012; Rifkin 2014; Harari 2015; Shaw 2015; Stolorow 2015; Christiano et al. 2016; Easton 2016; Johnstone 2016; Mirola & Monahan 2016; Nye 2016; Wahl 2016; Melich 2017; Newman 2017).

## **Image**

With knowledge about and access to all three worlds, from commonsense to religion to science, people in the contemporary era can hold a comprehensive view of reality and may take a systematic approach to the environment in which they live.

The physical world is not simply what we sense by seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting. There are original objects and their natural configurations, normal processes, and actual effects on the humans and human senses to be described and explained by science through research. For example, a black stone is seen falling off a cliff. Falling is caused by the gravity of the stone. Like any object sitting on the face of a round-shaped planet, the stone automatically pulls toward the centre of the Earth by its weight. The stone appears in colour when it emits composite lights from its surface. In composition, the stone may break down into chemical elements such as Iron and Silicon as well as chemical compounds including various metal and nonmetal oxides. Moreover, there are meanings, purposes, and spirits to be found, felt, and understood about things and their ups and downs, gains and losses, births and deaths in the world of commonsense. For instance, hot springs from a local mountain are said to have healing effects on certain diseases. It is not enough just to pinpoint in science what is contained in the springs and how the spring water acts on the body and its biochemical process. It often takes faith and all the awe, care, or fear associated with faith to achieve a full effect in treatment. It is beyond scientific calculation as to how much more powerful the hot springs would work on devout believers as a blessing from God with a divine message than a mixture of materials with some healing effects.

Similarly, social reality is not just what we experience and witness in everyday life. An individual rises to wealth, power, or fame in the secular world of commonsense. Science can follow his or her path to identify and analyse all personal and social factors and forces that lie beneath his or her success. Religion may declare that the individual has won blessings from God for his or her fortunes. Just as scientific explanations cannot be logically exhaustive in accounting for individual success or failure, religious proclamations may never be convincingly exclusive in ruling out all mundane endeavours for personal loss or gain. A regular person in his or her commonsense would cautiously keep his or her awe for God or any God-like force while doing all he or she could in chartering his or her personal journey step by step throughout life. A society falls into poverty, chaos, or ruins as part of commonsensical reality. Scientists can find a spectrum of causes from culture, economy, and

government to social dynamics and point out how they converge to lead to the society's decline or demise. Priests may blame infidelity or atheism across the population or condemn a Satan-like leader and his various evil acts for the society's moral decay and structural breakdowns. While neither scientists nor priests could be completely correct and valid in their explanations or condemnations, a normal collective or a typical society in commonsensical reality would reflect on history, learn from past stories of failure and success, avoid blasphemy, irreverence, and sacrilege, keep peace with surroundings, do what is good, effective, and efficient, and work on what is lacking, inadequate, or improper toward unity, stability, and prosperity.

Indeed, commonsense, religion, and science coexist with mutual penetration and joint interaction through individual effort as well as societal integration. Commonsense takes meaning and purpose with religion as the latter secures base and life via the former. Religion becomes logical and plausible through science while the latter turns spiritual and metaphysical by way of the former. Science gains application and demonstrates utility in commonsense whereas the latter achieves understandability and attains transformation with the aid of the former. Of course, all these interactions among commonsense, religion, and science occur when individuals think across and act upon their three such worlds in social settings or as societies appeal to religion and resort to science to achieve structural integration, material affluence, and temporal maintainability in the world of commonsense.

## **Element**

What issues does a typical contemporary have to wrestle with in his or her everyday life? At the outset, there are body, mind, their divisions, and respective needs. On the part of the body, matters range from sensuality, pain, pleasure, and sustainability to liveability. With regard to the mind, concerns can go spiritual over belief, norm, value, and morality or become intellectual alongside logic, knowledge, intelligence, and rationality.

Physically, contemporaries must face their commonsensical world for a living. Life goes from day to day. Resources, opportunities, or means of survival matter. With an adequate supply of material goods, individuals live in sufficiency, affluence, or happiness. The body operates with comfort, joy, and pleasure. Without basic subsistence, however, the body endures hunger, exposure, or pain. Individuals suffer from poverty, illness, and danger. It is therefore important that people embrace their commonsensical world, mobilising resources, utilizing opportunities, transforming material environments, creating amenities, and producing means of sustenance. Among people and groups, it is also critical that surplus is kept in check, competition is put in perspective, and the market is maintained as a fair and open place for trade and exchange. With no doubt, the quality of life differs so dramatically from

individual to individual and from population to population largely due to human abuse, exploitation, and manipulation against one another.

On spiritual dimension, contemporaries have to deal with what is right and wrong, what is good and bad, what is beautiful and ugly, what is friendly and hostile, what is holy and secular, and various other contrasts in everyday life. They desire kindness, beauty, and comfort. They long for morality, peace, and happiness. They strive for the good, the right, and the spiritual. However, when they face discrimination and mistreatment, they could only hope for justice. When they suffer in pain or poverty, they would still wish fortune. They might candidly pray for forgiveness when they have committed the wrong or have fallen in disgrace. Obviously, contemporaries face the issue of belief whether they believe in God, a supernatural force, science, reality, themselves, or something else. They have to act on the matter of value as to what is good, pretty, important, or significant among things they do and with fellow human beings they come in touch. They also need to grapple with the problem of norm so that they can meaningfully perceive themselves as well as all others as deviants, criminals, or law-abiding ordinaries.

Intellectually, most contemporaries follow a standard socialization process that includes family influence, schooling, peer interaction, and media exposure when they grow up from infancy to childhood to adolescence to adulthood. Family influence can be commonsensical, religious, scientific, or a combination thereof, depending upon parents and their educational, religious, and occupational backgrounds. Schooling primarily features scientific knowledge even though it may carry a religious, communal, or commonsensical flavour. Peer interaction takes place saliently in the commonsensical world. Children reared in the countryside tend to develop awe for and adaptation to events, forces, and their reappearances in nature whereas youths matured in the city are likely to form sensation and alignment with structures, processes, and their changes in manmade environments. Finally, the media revolve around the dominant knowledge enterprise as well as the prevailing value system. In the contemporary era, both become a mixed affair of logic, science, technology, reason, rationality, instrumentality, practicality, profitability, productivity, liveability, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability.

## **Stage**

The world unfolds and unravels with different forms, contents, and outlooks in their eyes and experiences as contemporaries traverse the course of life through its main stages.

Infants and children explore the world of commonsense with curiosity. They see, hear, smell, touch, and taste things, learning what is white versus black, what is music versus noise, what is fragrance versus stink, what is soft versus hard, and what is sweet versus bitter. They practice trial and error. They ask questions: Why

does the Sun become scorching hot in the summer? Where does the Moon hide during the day? Can water flow from low to high places? May I fly like a bird? How can fish swim all day in the water? As they look for answers and fill their minds with commonsensical knowledge, children may develop a fear for nature, a superstition toward existence, and a caution with reality. Upon introduction by parents or other caretakers, they may progress into religion, following God or a godly entity to find some solutions or come up with certain resolutions in their life. The stage of religiosity can be atheism or egoism as long as an individual subject becomes capable of managing all his or her inner concerns and outer issues without resort to an external force.

Teenagers and youths experiment with the world of science through efforts in school or standard education. They take classes, learning how to read for outer information, how to speak for inner experiences, and how to write for self-creations. They observe models, replicas, and simulations, getting to know why day alternates with night out of relative movements among the Sun, the Earth, and the Moon, why colour changes from white to black with differential combinations of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and violet, and why weather appears in the form of wind, snow, rain, thunder, or heatwave due to a plethora of forces such as the distance of the Sun, the surface of the Earth, temperature, pressure, and the changing states of water from solid to liquid to gas. They perform laboratory experiments, create chemical reactions, and make mechanical devices, demonstrating what governs as universal laws, what prevails as ultimate truths, and what sustains as general patterns. While they focus on facts, follow reasons, and aim at results, they also grow and become habituated to see the importance of commonsense as the fundamental framework of everyday life and understand the relevance of religion or religiosity as an essential element in the minds of many individuals with regard to the meaning of this life as well the nature of an afterlife.

Adults and seniors live in a general world of reality with information, inspirations, and mandates from all three worlds, the world of commonsense in which they are born, the world of religion by which they are cultured, and the world of science with which they are educated. Sensing and observations turn multidimensional. The Sun is not just a moving fireball in the sky that lights and warms us who live on the flat ground. It is not just a star sitting at the centre of the solar system. It is not just a sacred symbol of God. It is all three: Commonsense shows where the Sun is, religion dictates what the Sun means, and science explains why and how the Sun behaves phenomenally in nature and improvises spiritually out of human fear and imagination. Coping and experiences become layered and all-way functional. In commonsense, water flows in creeks and rivers, gathers in lakes and oceans, and quenches thirsts and fires. In religion, water symbolizes blessing, extends miraculous healing in the form of a spring, or represents the power of destruction by way of a flood. In science, water comes into being when hydrogen burns with oxygen, life multiplies when water combines with carbon to form a great variety of

carbon hydrates, and energy flows when water strikes the turbine of a generator in a hydroelectric powerhouse. Indeed, most contemporaries in their adulthood are capable of availing themselves of the information and knowledge they have about all three worlds to find effective means, essential meaning, and vivid experience in their journey of life.

The human civilisation seems to follow a similar stage from the commonsensical to religious to scientific to general. In the beginning, people in primitive societies live at the mercy of nature, gaining a complete exposure to all polarities of a harsh environment in their commonsensical world. Tough reality keeps people in awe and fear of everything that comes in their everyday encounters. They conjure up supernatural forces for protection and miracle. They dream of God for guidance and salvation. Religion then arrives in the scene, granting people a retreat where they remember and forget, hope and regret, express and purify, act and moderate in the face of inner ambivalence and outer challenge amid daily survivals. After a long period of struggle in darkness such as the Middle Ages in Europe, people wake up with a realization of their own intelligence and intellectual faculty. They begin to focus on facts to find the order of this world. They start to follow reasons to uncover the rationality of the current existence. The torch of science lights up, allowing people to see the working mechanism of many different things in the universe. Most important, people are enabled to find better means of living with findings from science. Since history is additive and whatever has occurred remains on record for reference and re-enactment, a minority of contemporaries can delve into any one-dimensional world to live a life featuring just commonsensical simplicity, only devout religiosity, or merely technological complexity. The majority of contemporaries, however, seem to be capable of drawing upon all three sources of influence to live a general life toward a combination of commonsensical happiness, spiritual meaningfulness, and scientific effectiveness.

## **Connection**

The general world that most contemporaries can now take for granted builds upon commonsense, religion, and science. It remains connected to, accessible by, and analysable through each of these three worlds.

Compared to commonsense, the general world has incorporated not only religious elements for non-earthly meanings but also scientific forces with productive outcomes. Things are not just what we know through sensing and senses. They have purposes, carry wills, and signify the order an almighty entity or power designs and desires for the world. For example, an age-old tree can be deified to represent God or a godly force. People worship it for blessing, fortune, miracle, or protection. On the other hand, people can follow scientific principles and technical procedures to find out what the tree is, how old it becomes, why it has survived years of weather

to still stand firm and strong. For its rarity or significance, scientific researchers may take actions to protect it with labels, fences, or guarding devices deployed around the tree just as religious believers would do to sanctify it as an object of prayer. Through positivistic inquiry and analysis, people study things for their applied practical utilities as well as their basic scientific values. In general, they attempt to augment pure knowledge about as well as to increase predictive control over nature.

In contrast to religion, the general world exhibits both the practicality of commonsense and the rationality of science. Before any contemplation of the meaning of life, contemporaries know and understand that they must create physical amenities and improve material conditions to make life affordable, liveable, convenient, comfortable, and happy by their sensing and sensible needs. In creating amenities for life, they can follow science and technology as how to deploy labour, draw upon resources, seek opportunities, and manage processes for an optimal level of effectiveness, success, and efficiency. For instance, people in the contemporary era would not bother much to pray to God for the blessing of water or seek God's approval in their endeavour to save, use, reserve, or recycle water when they face a drought. Instead, they would turn directly to science and technology to make rains, build reservoirs or irrigation networks, or adopt more efficient water use policies. To a large extent, contemporaries can focus more on their immediate everyday needs and have them sensibly met through scientific discoveries and technological inventions with or without serious concerns over God, a supernatural force, the other world, and issues of damnation and salvation in religion.

With regard to science, the general world shows a direct involvement in commonsensical experience as well as a simple commitment to religious transcendence. Whether they know or are able to find out something beneath its phenomenal displays in commonsense, contemporaries recognise that sensing and sensible experiences are real, instant, and important, and from place to place can be quickly taken care of only through tools and mechanisms obvious and immediate in the world of commonsense. For example, someone has to jump into the water, without any thought and delay, to save a drowning child before people follow Archimedes of Syracuse and his principle (Any object, wholly or partially immersed in a fluid, is buoyed up by a force equal to the weight of the fluid displaced by the object) to figure out how to increase the amount of the water displaced by the drowning child for a greater buoyance to keep him or her afloat and alive. Similarly, whether they understand or are capable of discerning anything in the aftermath of a religious fervor or fanaticism, contemporaries realize that feeling and sensational outputs are tangible, constant, and critical, and from time to time can be promptly managed only through ways and means accessible and approachable from the world of religion. For instance, construction fails to move forward, marriage ceases to materialize, and people remain in fear and anxiety if some religious ceremonies are not properly performed, if some superstitious rituals are not piously conducted, or if some traditional taboos are not sincerely observed. It does not matter if Karl Marx

critically declares that religion is the opium of the people, if W. I. Thomas intuitively says that if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences, or if social scientists analytically reason that religion reigns and superstitious practices prevail only in a time when people live helplessly in a society with a low productive force.

In all, contemporaries live in a general world of reality with open connections to commonsense, religion, and science. They have choices to delve into one, combine two, or integrate all three worlds for a living journey of particular dimensionality, intensity, or meaningfulness or a life course of universal dynamics, vividness, and richness.

## **Metaphysics**

Thinking metaphysically is part of the mindset for contemporaries. Going above and beyond physics is what contemporaries do in managing their commonsensical experiences, how they behave in channelling their religious sentiments, and why they act inquisitively yet innocently in satisfying their scientific curiosity.

Living in the world of commonsense, contemporaries make free and easy reference to general metaphysical dimensions in their mental sphere when they deal with things in specific physical outlooks and settings. From a scientific point of view, they can pinpoint the metaphysical truism of a physical object or phenomenon. In religious terms, they may uncover the metaphysical meaning of a physical deed or observance. For example, a man falls off a cliff into his death. Surrounding this simple event in the physical world of commonsense, people in the contemporary era can feel natural and reasonable to say that the man inevitably followed the law of gravity once he accidentally lost his balance of weight at the edge of the cliff. People may also take some degree of sorrow and relief in claiming that the man has made his ultimate sacrifice after years of defiance, disobedience, or rebellion with regard to nature, law, morality, a supernatural force, or a godly will.

Mesmerising in the world of religion, believers in contemporary society may seek metaphysical validations of their faith from ideas, objects, and practices to deeds. With knowledge about science and scientific reasoning, they may go above spiritual doctrines and teachings to find the background of a story, the logic of an argument, the rationality of a claim, the practicality of a lifestyle, and the possibility of a prediction. They may also move beyond practising settings and objects to figure out how geological sites, architectural designs, building materials, and other physical elements converge to show the sanctity of a church, mosque, or temple, what makes a preaching by a well-known figure in a mass so particularly touching, and why one thing is combined with another in a ceremony. As far as commonsense is concerned, authentication of a word, confirmation of a deed, or verification of a claim may sound just metaphysical in sensual and sensible experiences. For instance,



a couple giving birth to a child after years of effort as a physical incidence in the world of commonsense can feel like a miracle, a metaphysical phenomenon, when believers take it as a blessing from God or the validation of teaching by the church that faith, honesty, loyalty, sincerity, and praying can move our Father, bringing about forgiveness and fortune.

Navigating through the world of science, analysts, logicians, researchers, and scholars need to go back to their sensing and experiential world to be a normal human being with regular participation in everyday life. Living in the physical reality of commonsense may hence feel like metaphysical retreat and relief from or supernatural recreation and rejuvenation for continuing expeditions in the world of logical reasoning, modelling, and scientific analysis. In religious dimension, scientists may from time to time contemplate the purpose of their inquiry beyond knowledge and rationality. They may sometimes meditate the meaning of their discovery above intellectual enlightenment and technical utility. Is there spirituality underlying order and chaos in the universe? Is there an almighty power behind dynamics and equilibrium in the material world? Is there God or a supernatural force creating and changing the existence in accordance with the law of universality or the rule of particularity from order, symmetry, homogeneity, or simplicity toward entropy, asymmetry, heterogeneity, or complexity?

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