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Building Dioramas with Common Sense Calvinist Tools

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Abstract: The aim of this thesis is to present a complete philosophical system (a broad theoretical framework) in general terms. The motivations for satisfying this objective were the need to have a system of this nature, which could be cited or referred to in works about specific topics; and the fact that there is no such system already made that includes all my foundational philosophical positions. Some call these systems worldviews, but not agreeing with this conception, I proposed the perspective of building dioramas. Any successful construction requires method and materials; both are drawn from the two great theoretical systems mentioned in the title: Commonsensism and Calvinism. The basic character of these two systems and the diorama perspective are presented at the beginning. Henceforth it follows the combined system of Common Sense Calvinism. The mode of presentation is Cartesian. The materials are advanced according to a criterion of epistemic proximity, i.e. from those things that are intuitively known to those that require experience, conceptual cataloging, and several inferential steps. As such, one begins with Commonsensism and then moves on (in a theoretically linked way) to Calvinism. The transition starts with Native Theism (the faculty of perceiving transcendent realities), then Generic Theism (a theory about how divine entities relate to the world), Christian Theism (the specification that transcendental realities are correctly described by Christianity) and finally Calvinism (the theological system that best systematizes the truths of the Christian religion). The section devoted to Commonsensism begins with epistemic sources, viz. sensory perception, self-awareness, (moral) conscience, (aesthetic) taste, and divine sense (or as I called above Native Theism). In the perceptions of the first two we intuit the most epistemically secure realities (those of which we can be sure). In the perceptions of the following three we intuit indubitable realities, but which need discernment, experience, and external guidance to avoid errors in their details. These intuitions are used as the system's theoretical axioms. In this thesis, no great emphasis was given to taste and the reality that it perceives, beauty. Most of the space devoted to transitioning from Commonsensism to Calvinism was distributed between consciousness and the divine sense. It turns out that the divine sense is not a faculty that deceives us about reality. In fact, reality has a supernatural character, and it is very likely that there is a divine agency: someone who created, governs, and preserves the world. But this Generic Theism admits a lot of speculation about the character of this divine agency (whether it is one or many, what are its intentions, what are its capacities, by what means does it relate to us and to the world), and therefore it is necessary to look for more definitive answers. And here come the various claims of transcendent knowledge, but the one that seems most plausible is that of Jesus Christ. This position is justified with a level of detail suitable for the present thesis. With Christian Theism guaranteed, Calvinist dogmatics proceeds, ending with a new theory of the Trinity.

Keywords: Worldview, Philosophy of Common Sense, Calvinism

Sumário alargado: O objetivo desta tese é apresentar um sistema filosófico completo (um enquadramento teórico de largo escopo) em traços gerais. As motivações para cumprir este objetivo foram a necessidade de ter um sistema deste caráter, que pudesse citar ou referir em trabalhos sobre tópicos específicos; e o facto de não haver um tal sistema já feito que incluísse todas as minhas posições filosóficas de fundo. Há quem chame a estes sistemas de mundivisões, mas não concordando com esta conceção, propus a perspetiva da construção de dioramas. Qualquer construção bem-sucedida requer método e materiais; ambos são extraídos dos dois grandes sistemas teóricos mencionados no título: o Sensocomummismo e o Calvinismo. A caracterização básica destes dois sistemas e a perspetiva dos dioramas são apresentadas logo no início. Daí em diante segue o sistema combinado do Calvinismo do Senso Comum até ao final da tese.

Duas notas de esclarecimento. Primeiro, embora entenda que estes dois sistemas básicos descrevem e explicam aspetos fundamentais da realidade em grande medida, isso não implica que não haja versões destes dois sistemas com erros, para lá dos seus alicerces teóricos. De modo que a hibridização destes dois sistemas nesta tese, deve ser entendida como uma perspetiva (ou uma versão) específica, e que entendo ser a mais correta. Segundo, projetos deste género têm precedentes entre pensadores que se reveem nestes sistemas teóricos. No virar do séc. XIX para o XX, surgiram pressões culturais que motivaram estes pensadores a mudarem a sua estratégia apologética, quer na defesa do Senso Comum quer na do Cristianismo. Essa estratégia passou por desenvolver sistemas teóricos semelhantes àquele apresentado nesta tese. De modo que esta tese não é propriamente revolucionária ou pioneira, ainda que se possa dizer inovadora (quando comparada com propostas antigas) e pouco usual (tendo em conta as tendências atuais de hiperespecialização na investigação e composição de artigos para revistas académicas).

Passando para o meu sistema, o modo de apresentação é cartesiano. Os materiais vão sendo avançados segundo um critério de proximidade epistémica, i.e. daquelas coisas que se sabem intuitivamente para aquelas que requerem experiência, catalogação conceitual e vários passos inferenciais. Como tal começa-se com o Sensocomummismo, onde se tratam tópicos de epistemologia, metafísica, psicologia filosófica, filosofia da lógica e filosofia da linguagem; e depois passa-se (de forma teoricamente encadeada) para o Calvinismo. A transição começa com o Teísmo Nativo (a faculdade de percecionar realidades transcendentes), depois o Teísmo Genérico (uma teoria sobre como entidades divinas se relacionam com o mundo), o Teísmo Cristão (a especificação de que as realidades transcendentais são corretamente descritas pela religião cristã) e finalmente o Calvinismo (o sistema teológico que melhor sistematiza as verdades da religião cristã).

A secção dedicada ao Sensocomummismo começa com fontes epistémicas, viz. perceção sensorial, autoconsciência, consciência (moral), gosto (estético) e sentido divino (ou como chamei acima Teísmo Nativo). Nas perceções das primeiras duas intuímos as realidades mais epistemicamente seguras (aquelas das quais podemos ter certeza). Nas perceções das três seguintes intuímos realidades certas, mas que precisam de discernimento, experiência e orientação externa para evitar erros nos seus pormenores. Estas intuições são usadas como axiomas teóricos do sistema, e.g. autoexistência, dualismo de substâncias, singularidade, certo e errado moral, deveres,

justiça, beleza, agência pessoal transcendente, dependência desta(s) agência(s). Dado o caráter epistémico diferenciado destes dois conjuntos de axiomas (os axiomas extraídos da perceção sensorial e autoconsciência vs. os axiomas extraídos da consciência, gosto e sentido divino), no final da tese metaforizo o primeiro como o núcleo duro do sistema, enquanto o segundo é o núcleo dúctil que assenta sobre o duro.

Tendo em conta a importância do núcleo duro, é nele onde se despende mais espaço. A apresentação das intuições vem entrelaçada com uma psicologia de como a realidade é apreendida pelo aparelho cognitivo. É considerado o que são cognições, representações, crenças, noções, proposições e argumentos. Cognições são o produto imediato da perceção sensorial e autoconsciência; representações são o produto do trabalho combinado de várias capacidades, e.g. retenção, associação, composição e simbolização; noções são o produto de capacidades mais sofisticadas chamadas de poderes comparativos. É com os poderes comparativos que produzimos concretos, abstratos e conceitos, mas também proposições (a aglutinação de noções que se exprime através de frases declarativas) e argumentos (o encadeamento de proposições como premissas e conclusões de modo a chegar a realidades mais distantes). Na secção sobre crenças, além de as caracterizar como um fenómeno psicológico, discute-se também se faz sentido falar de uma ética doxástica, i.e. se as crenças estão sujeitas a deveres, e aprovação ou reprovação moral. Conclui-se que sim, mas com qualificações. Essa posição nuançada chama-se de Voluntarismo Doxástico Indireto.

Mas fora isso, é em torno deste núcleo (duro e dúctil) que o sistema expande para o Calvinismo. O núcleo dúctil é onde se faz a transição do Sensocomummismo para o Calvinismo. Na tentativa de perceber o que é percecionado pela consciência, gosto e sentido divino, explora-se o mundo externo. Nesta tese não se deu grande destaque ao gosto e a realidade que perceciona, a beleza. A maior parte do espaço dedicado à transição foi distribuído entre a consciência e a o sentido divino. Nas considerações sobre a consciência conclui-se que há tal coisa como propriedades morais, e que elas são percecionadas cognitiva e afetivamente. É de destacar também a discussão sobre duas perspetivas muito diferentes sobre a natureza moral do homem entre Sensocomummistas. De um lado o que eu chamei a posição racionalística, do outro a emotivistica. Opta-se pela segunda como a mais plausível. Depois verifica-se que o sentido divino não é uma faculdade que nos ilude sobre a realidade. De facto, a realidade tem um caráter sobrenatural, e é muito provável a existência de agência divina: alguém que criou, governa e preserva o mundo. Mas este Teísmo Genérico admite muita especulação sobre o caráter desta agência divina (se é uma ou muitas, quais as suas intenções, quais as suas capacidades, por que meios se relaciona connosco e com o mundo), e por isso é necessário procurar respostas mais definitivas. Aqui entram as diversas reivindicações de conhecimento transcendente, mas aquela que parece mais plausível é a de Jesus Cristo. Esta posição é justificada com um nível de pormenor adequado para a tese presente.

No meio de diversas considerações percebe-se que o cânone cristão – a Bíblia – é a revelação de maior autoridade, e desta forma, o que houver para saber sobre Deus e a sua criação para efeitos de prática religiosa têm de estar contidos nele. Porém, o cânone por si não faz tudo. É preciso um método e alguns alicerces teóricos (anteriores à investigação teológica) que orientem a exegese e compreensão geral dos

textos. É aqui que entra o Calvinismo como abordagem à religião cristã nascida na Reforma Protestante. Apresentam-se teorias e considerações sobre a autoridade do cânone, a composição do cânone, o que são inspiração, iluminação e revelação, perspicuidade do seu conteúdo, e exegética. Com estes alicerces a postos, procede-se à teologia dogmática. A ordem de apresentação que melhor se encadeia com o resto da tese é a mesma do início, o critério cartesiano – das coisas mais próximas para as mais distantes. Assim a ordem temática vai da antropologia e soteriologia, para a eclesiologia e por fim a teologia própria onde se criticam teorias da Trindade e se propõe uma nova.

Palavras-chave: Mundividência, Filosofia do Senso Comum, Calvinismo

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Motivations and purpose

1.　　Two things were in my mind when I decided to produce this work: a conscious utilization of frameworks to address philosophical questions and the work of the Neocalvinists on Presuppositional apologetics.

2.　　Regarding the first one, it seems it is commonplace in philosophy to approach an object of inquiry with a lot of theoretical baggage behind. Philosophers go about their work providing "views" and "solutions" from various quarters, such as Marxism, Naturalism, Humeanism, Hegelianism, Kantianism, Feminism, Darwinism, and many more. All of these are very interesting, but none of them provide a proper framework for the Christian. True, Thomism can be mentioned, but as I see it, it has too much of Aristotle in it.[1]

3.　　This leads to the second point. Neocalvinists did a tremendous job in making out of Calvinist theology an interpretative framework for any datum of consciousness. The founder of this line of thinkers was Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920). His paradigmatic work was actually the transcriptions of a special set of lectures, delivered in Princeton University in 1898.[2] In it he provided the groundwork for Presuppositional apologetics. By providing what he calls a "life system"[3] and describing how it accommodates various spheres of human experience, such as politics, art, and science, Kuyper shifted apologetics from a defense of particular points in isolation to a coherentist competition, i.e. which life system better coheres all the data in consciousness.

4.　　However, perusing some works of Kuyper's followers, such as Cornelius Van Til (1895-1987) and Greg L. Bahnsen (1948-1995), left me dissatisfied. Their style of writing always has a certain feeling of a political manifesto and their exposition, to my standards, lacks theoretical precision. Their rhetoric here and there appears to be designed to elicit a feeling of faction, and their notions and logical relations are not properly fleshed out. To my taste, rhetoric can be used to embellish and facilitate apprehension. Other than that, I rather stay with simple and frugal discourse. Theoretical exposition, on its turn, must signal some didactic considerations. This suggests the author has communication in mind and also a sense of logical priority, i.e. how a piece of content depends on another to be properly apprehended.

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[1] In my first draft, I just dispensed with Aristotle by pointing at his Paganism. But this is not an adequate reason to put him aside. The problem I have with Thomism is that it is too dependent on Aristotle's metaphysics, i.e. both Exegetics and Systematics are completely taken by his philosophy. A Thomist twists and shapes Scripture and theological theory in a way that fits Aristotelian philosophy – this is unacceptable. Data should shape our theories, not the other way around. The other problem I have with Thomism is its mostly meaningless technolect. I will not delve into this matter here in this footnote; that would be a separate article by itself. That said, a taste of that nonsense can be found in section 5.6.1.1.

[2] KUYPER, 1899.

[3] "Hence we must first ask what are the required conditions for such general systems of life… These conditions demand in the first place, that from a special principle a peculiar insight be obtained into the three fundamental relations of all human life; viz. 1. our relation to God, 2. our relation to man, and 3. our relation to the world." KUYPER, 1899: 16.

5.   In the end, no one philosopher or theologian developed the kind of framework I was searching for, and so this leaves me to do the job. Today, Calvinism separated completely from Common Sense Philosophy. The last bastion of this happy alliance was Princeton Theological Seminary, who fell with the victory of Theological Liberalism in the 1920's. Orthodox Presbyterians left *en masse* to a brand-new haven called Westminster Theological Seminary. Here, however, the traditional Scottish Common Sense philosophy lost its appeal to the theologians plagued by constant disputation, more concerned in fortifying walls and burning bridges. Gordon H. Clark (1902-1985), for instance, says in his *Incarnation* that Common Sense philosophy is "one of the most incompetent types of philosophy in the history of the subject."[4] Neocalvinism planted a flag in Presbyterian orthodoxy, and since then, here and there, Scottish Common Sense receives a blow from the intellectual heirs of this new Dutch influenced orthodoxy. This is how contemporary Neocalvinists formulate the problem:

> Common sense philosophy, therefore, when tried in the fire of apologetic methodology, and thus also of epistemology, failed in its attempt to defend the truth of Christianity in the face of a hostile science. In other words, the problem with a strict Reidian approach to epistemology is that there is no way, no method or mode, by which one might be able to determine just what beliefs are common and what beliefs are not. One man's properly basic belief, therefore, could easily be another man's irrationality. How might we address this problem?[5]

6.   Was it really no criterion? We will see that there was (and is) one. This is not a work of polemics, so I will not address Neocalvinist objections to my Commonsense Calvinist framework head-on. My purpose here is to *put in writing and present the mentioned framework*. In my view this is of the utmost importance in philosophical research, but also for any kind of philosophical effort. When trying to arrive at a personal opinion about any topic, the thinker must be aware of his beliefs regarding argumentation and epistemic norms, and also core facts about the world. This is important not only for the thinker himself – because it disciplines his thinking process – but also for those who are going to listen or read his opinions – because it is very hard to evaluate an opinion with no clue of what is being assumed.

7.   The plan of this work is the following. We start by understanding the title of this work. What are dioramas (1.2.), what is Common Sense (1.3.), what is Calvinism (1.4.), and how they fit together. This will prevent the reader from injecting his own understandings of these words, and it will give some general conception about where these ideas come from and how they can be further developed and tailored to every individual thinker who agrees with their basic tenets. After this introduction, we will go directly into the meat of the work. First, Commonsensist metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of psychology, philosophy of logic, and philosophy of language (2.). These taken together are the theoretical hard core of the system. After that we jump into moral philosophy (3.1.) and natural theology (3.2.-4.2.). This is the soft core of the system. It is still epistemically close to us, but not as much as the central claims of Commonsensism. From here, we have a safe ground to start speculating and making thinner and thinner probabilistic and plausible inferences

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[4] CLARK, 1988: 41.
[5] OLIPHINT, 2006.

about spiritual realities concerning religion (4.3.), and the relations of humanity to God (5.).

1.2. Worldviews, dioramas, and schemata

8.   To be fair, what I am trying to accomplish here has already been tried before by a fellow Scottish Calvinist, James Orr (1843-1913), in his *Christian View of God and World*. Orr surely noticed to where philosophical winds were blowing in his time – especially winds from the continent. For the last hundred years, the notion of *Weltanschauung* had grown exponentially. It came from very humble beginnings in the pen of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) with no special import, but it burst into enormous proportions at the hands of his German Idealist and Romanticist followers.[6] Philosophers, by the end of the 19th century, were dedicated to the construction of holistic descriptive-normative systems to interpret reality. But why such trend? What is so special about this notion? Why such a rapid growth? Orr's hypothesis might help in providing an answer.

9.   According to Orr, human nature craves for such a thing as a worldview, *i.e.* a "general theor[y] of the universe, explanatory of what it is, how it has come to be what it is, and whither it tends".[7] This craving originates in two aspects of human experience, *viz.* intellectual and active. The former seeks unity in all the data of consciousness, the latter some telic existential positioning in the world – in other words, one requires a map, the other directions to go by. Although this drive is always present in human-beings, Orr notes that only now – approaching the 20th century – did science get to a point where the mind had enough materials to build a world to itself. All this seems plausible, but I would like to add something more of my own.

10.   After Kant, the intellectual and sophisticated spheres of Western societies would never be the same. David Hume (1711-1776) injured Realism and Kant gave the final blow to it with his phenomenon-noumenon distinction and *a priori* categories of the mind. All human beings have access to their own personal representations, and these must be understood as appearances[8] and not reality in itself.[9] However, even these appearances necessitate prior conditions for their proper cognition, and we provide them by our inborn intuitions.[10] With this in the minds of the producers of fine culture, it did not take long until they started positing the ability of the mind to determine its own world.[11]

11.   To sum up the factors behind the origin of *Weltanschauung*: i) an original, or native, tendency to give order and direction to the world in consciousness; ii) a favorable developmental stage of Western science; and iii) a trending philosophy which conceded too much power to the mind.

12.   But can we build worlds for ourselves? Or putting it more lightly, can we work on a conception of the world? No. Whatever is the world, it is quantitatively unmeasurable and qualitatively undeterminable – fancy words to say, too big and too

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[6] NAUGLE, 2002: 57-61.
[7] ORR, 1893: 7.
[8] KANT, 1781/1998: A250.
[9] KANT, 1781/1998: A 255.
[10] KANT, 1781/1998: A20, A22, B60-A43.
[11] FICHTE, 1794/1889: 310-311; 1799: 83-84, 89-90.

complex. Recalling my previous analogy, we cannot map out the world and come up with perfect directions all the time. In my experience, such extravagant philosophical undertakings end up with very deficient products. The supposed view of the world is too blurred and only attracts precipitous minds for its quick answers. I think it is more reasonable, considering how feeble are our mental powers, to conceive our enterprise of disclosing reality as building *dioramas*.

13.   Instead of putting some super-powerful glasses which give its user some special access to the depths and heavens of the universe, I insist in something more modest as building fragments of reality as we progress in our journey.[12] But what is a diorama exactly? If the reader went to a museum, collects trains as a hobby, or works in architecture, surely he knows what I am talking about. *It is a physical manmade three-dimensional representation of something*. In museums they might represent some full-scale scene in the paleolithic; at home it might be a miniature landscape for a closed-circuit railroad system; at work, maybe a maquette with some future bridge. A diorama, then, *is a very small portion of reality which we know fairly well*.

14.   This piecemeal block-building approach to knowledge acquisition is somewhat useful in cognitive psychology. *Schema Theory* is a hypothesis concerning the way we store, process, and use information. Unfortunately, it is couched in Kantian jargon (and therefore Kantian notions), but it is possible to cut away the essentials without bringing with them the whole transcendental perspective. The gist of it is that the mind stores structured collections of representations.[13] These structures function as relevancy constraints.[14] The usual analogy to illustrate the workings of these structures is the relation between a computer (the mind) and its folders (the structures). Each of these folders has some membership criterion, i.e. what kind of mental representations can be stored together. These structures, then, might be more or less cohesively linked to each other with various types of relations. This upper level of networking (not between singular representations but structures of them) is to be understood as a schema itself. We have then schemas and subschemas.[15]

15.   We can, thus, bridge our diorama metaphor with contemporary cognitive psychology. When I say "building dioramas", the cognitive process behind it is of *intentionally* (willfully bringing an object under attention) associating relevant mental representations with each other under proper principles, i.e. rules of structuring. Each diorama is a bundle of structured mental representations, and the goal of the contemplative thinker is to systematize to higher and higher levels, on the one hand, the connections between the dioramas; and on the other, assimilating new information in the whole already achieved by the former connections, and revise it if necessary. Keeping with the metaphor, the product of this mental engineering activity is an ever-growing three-dimensional topographical map and directions to move about. The quantitatively bigger and qualitatively denser this map gets the better and easier will be our continuous familiarization with the world. It is a process analogous to navigation, viz. the more you explore and map out your surroundings, the better

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[12] A view shared with Philip SCHAFF, 1907: 26.
[13] KAMPPINEN, 1993: 141.)
[14] KAMPPINEN, 1993: 144.
[15] KAMPPINEN, 1993: 144.

and easier it will be to expand and become proficient in travelling over mapped territory.

16.   So now we need the so-called proper principles and the tools to build and put our dioramas together. But before we go on to a full description, let me first historically introduce from where I got all these things.

1.3. The Scottish common sense tradition[16]

17.   Who would have thought that from such a ragged and unsophisticated race, although hearty and determined, would come out a successful philosophy, capable of searing its mark in history, and make a stand to every kind of logic-chopping challenger for three hundred years. Yes, it is true, the philosophy of Scottish Common Sense never flew to the heights of metaphysical speculation of the Germans; or conquered the mind of the man of fine tastes such as French philosophy; or persuaded the English gentleman out of his elitist tendencies; however, it survived in the minds and by the effort of candid and simple thinkers, with love for truth and teaching.

18.   It all started in the second half of the 18th century, in the midst of what the historians called the *Scottish Illuminism*. I think it is general knowledge the cultural traits which emerged in Western societies during this century, viz. a giant boost in confidence over man's capabilities (especially reason), the naturalization of thinking, dissemination of inductive (or Baconian) modes of reasoning, secularization, growth of Atheism and Deism, scientification of school curricula, and a few others. All this happened more or less in Scotland, but it had its particularities. What differentiated Scottish enlightenment from others were its peculiar institutions – "the Kirk, the legal system and the universities".[17]

19.   I think it is safe to say that the character of these institutions was the outcome of two sets of events, viz. the Scottish Reformation and the struggles with English monarchs. The first brought Calvinism to the Scottish race, the second created an intergenerational resentment and suspicion from whoever lived south of the Marches. These two were about to collide with fresh resolutions for the new century. The Scottish upper classes desired a modernized country, as their southern neighbors, but politics of isolation were of contrary effect; and the same can be said for Calvinistic zeal, which is miles apart from the Anglican Latitudinarianism. Institutions were, then, a stage for the wrestling of wits. The events which brought the clashes were the parliamentary Acts of the Union (1706-1707), in the civil sphere; and the Act of Church Patronage (1711), in the ecclesiastical sphere (which had enormous repercussions in the Universities since these were under the wing of the Scottish clergy).

20.   The two main ingredients, then, being stirred at the entrance of the century, were a political determination from the upper classes to modernize the country and the gladiatorial mood which animated the most cultured minds. Some wished to just eradicate any Scottish features and assimilate the country into English culture, such

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[16] For a fuller presentation of Scottish Common Sense check the article "O que é a Filosofia do Senso Comum?", in *Philosophy@Lisbon* 11, here
http://www.philosophyatlisbon.org/userfiles/file/01_Joao_Miranda.pdf.
[17] BROADIE, 2003: 2.

as David Hume (1711-1776); others understood the value of their culture and language and tried to revitalize national identity, such as Allan Ramsay (1713-1784).[18] Some clerics viewed themselves as "Moderates" or the "New Light" and were eager to put an end to the Covenanter spirit of a bygone era; others viewed this as an intolerable meddling of secular views and powers in Kirk affairs and an affront to ancient oaths of spiritual independence.[19]

21.   Like every arms race, the contestants searched for the best arguments, the best methodologies, and familiarized themselves with cutting-edge philosophy and science of the time. Mathematics and Natural Philosophy were highly prized in Scottish universities then.[20] Newtonianism was trending in every sophisticated mind and, with it, the method of induction (presented by Francis Bacon in the previous century) gained a new reputation. Every cultural influencer was trying to make a name for himself in this era of rapid change and material progress, and it was in this boiling broth where the Philosophy of Common Sense came to the surface.

22.   Its first formulation was by the pen of a Kirk divine – Thomas Reid (1710-1796). He was born at Stratchan, Kincardineshire (now Aberdeenshire);[21] an administrative portion of land under the newly formed Union at the time. It faces the North Sea and is mostly flat, allowing the sea breeze to travel inland. His childhood house and deathbed was hugged by green hills, and right at the door, the vivid child and gentle old man Reid could muse himself with sounds and sights of running water at the Water of Feugh – a small affluent of the River Dee. From his father side came his love for letters and the things of God; from his mother side, a curiosity for natural philosophy and mathematics. One cannot tell a tale of signs of genius from his youth; however, the proclivity for serious study and patient diligence were in his mental frame.

23.   In his early teens he met his instructor for higher learnings – a great Newtonian, George Turnbull (1698-1748). And from that time on he never left academia or his studies. He was also an ordained minister of the "Moderate" bent, and that created instinctive enemies on the "Evangelical" side. However much of the godliness of his forefathers animated his being, and by word and deed he put out the sectarian fires burning in his parishioners' breasts. He was too modest for his own good. He spent most of his time studying and ruminating on his thoughts, but not so much composing. Rarely his parishioners heard anything original – Reid believed he was not worthy of speaking his mind. However, later in life, his close associates gave him the forwardness to publish his philosophical reflections; what it came to be the cornerstone of a tradition – *An Inquiry into the Human Mind* (1764).

24.   In it, we can find what came to be the paradigmatic methodology and substantial doctrines of the Philosophy of Common Sense. It is a groundbreaking work which stemmed from the polemics of his time. It was a direct response to Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739). It took its time to come out, but it was worth the wait. Even Hume, who Reid had the decency to send a draft before publishing, had this to say:

[18] BURCHFIELD, 1994: 39
[19] MCCOSH, 1874: 17-18.
[20] BROADIE, 2003: 101
[21] STEWART, 1803/1852: 3.

> It is certainly very rare that a piece so deeply philosophical is wrote with so much spirit, and affords so much entertainment to the reader ... I must do you the justice to own that, when I enter into your ideas, no man appears to express yourself with greater perspicuity than you do – a talent which, above all others, is requisite in that species of literature which you have cultivated. ... As I was desirous to be of some use to you, I kept a watchful eye all along over your style; but it is really so correct, and so good English, that I found not anything worth the remarking.[22]

25.   But, why the polemics? Although Hume was the one who broke the silence from Reid, he was merely the last drop in a filled bucket. Reid had a problem with what he called the "Ideal System" or the "Theory of Ideas". Very briefly, this is any philosophical thesis which denies any kind or level of direct cognitive access to reality. Some posit an intermediary between subject and object, others completely reject the notion of any external reality. Reid thought this system to produce egregious consequences, and to make matters worse, it was the dominant one since the dawn of modernity.[23] The logical conclusion of it is "absolute skepticism", which undermines all truth, being that of religion, science, or common sense.[24]

26.   To accept such conclusions, one must have serious evidence for the premises, something Reid found it wanting: "[I]t leans with its whole weight upon a hypothesis, which is ancient indeed, and hath been very generally received by philosophers, but of which I could find no solid proof."[25] This is an absurd philosophy, thought Reid. The one who presents a case for it depends on the very foundations he is arguing against.[26] This is metaphysical lunacy and it has no place in serious philosophy.[27] At the base of all human knowledge is our common sense. This is a set of intuitions "which the constitution of our nature leads us to believe, and which we are under a necessity to take for granted in the common concerns of life, without being able to give a reason for them"[28], and through them one discovers "that cold freezes water and that heat turns it into vapour" and also "the law of gravitation and the properties of light."[29]

27.   So here we have Reid's goal, viz. *to restore common sense to its proper foundational place*. He does this by constructing a philosophical system which shows that without common sense there is no knowledge. *We must start with knowledge*. If the premises are doubtful any inferred conclusion cannot be stronger. Hence the need to safeguard our common sense. How, then, did Reid found this starting place? He did this in two ways: i) by "observation and experiment" or the inductive method and ii) mental analysis. By the first he means the natural process by which we "trace particular facts and observations to rules"; by the second, accurately attending "the operations of our minds, and make them an object of thought".[30]

28.   What Reid calls the "maxims", "dictates", or "principles" of common sense are obtained by observation and generalization of single operations of the mind, but

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[22] BURTON, 1846: 154.
[23] REID, 1764/1852: 95, 99-104.
[24] REID, 1764/1852: 98.
[25] REID, 1764/1852: 96.
[26] REID, 1764/1852: 101.
[27] REID, 1764/1852: 99.
[28] REID, 1764/1852: 108.
[29] REID, 1764/1852: 97.
[30] REID, 1764/1852: 98.

also by its *external manifestations* – being one of the most important, language.[31] Mental operations, on the other hand, must be broken down into its constitutive parts and laid down in front of the diligent mind's eye. By this exercise we try to discover what kind of relations persist between the parts and how those relations occasion the concrete phenomena under our direct gaze. Using Reid's analogy, we want to proceed in the mind the same way a physical anatomist does with the body, viz. by dissecting and observing.

29.   The principles of common sense, the determination to defend them, and the working methodology of this paradigmatic work developed by Reid were picked up and revised by future generations to tackle the problems of their own time. Some names of the tradition are Dugald Stewart (1753-1828), Thomas Brown (1778-1820), Sir William Hamilton (1788-1856), Victor Cousin (1792-1867), James McCosh (1811-1894), Noah Porter (1811-1892), George P. Fisher (1817-1899), and others.

30.   To conclude this section, I think it is profitable to leave a definition of what is a Commonsensist thinker:

S is a Commonsensist iff:
  i)   S believes in a set of principles P common to practically all human beings,
  ii) S believes that P is necessary for any knowledge acquisition endeavor, and without it knowledge is impossible,
  iii) S believes that whatever principles constitute P, we ascertain them by the method of induction, mental analysis, and the study of various anthropological phenomena, especially language and (more generally) discourse.

1.4. Calvinism

> Lord whatsoever thou dost to us, take not thy bible from us: kill our children, burn our houses, destroy our goods; only spare us thy bible, only take not away thy bible.

31.   This piece of a dramatic public praying was taken from a personal anecdote told by Rev. John Howe (1630-1705), which was told to him by a second man, Rev. Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680). It happened at a church service in his youth. This anecdote is told and retold by numerous historians, ethnographers, and other researchers in cultural studies, as a perfect sample of the mind and life of an ardent Calvinist in the Reformation era. We can find it in secular works such as *English Puritanism: 1603-1689* by John Spurr; as in religious works like J. I. Packer's *A Quest for Godliness*. But is it though? Is it a perfect sample? I think not. It seems to be more of a sample of the ideal or romantic version of a Calvinist. Calvinists also said that the true hater of sin would rather fall into hell than fall into sin,[32] but I pretty much doubt they would do such a thing, given the opportunity. This to say, I'm not going to present a mythical picture of what a Calvinist or Calvinism is. So, we will start with some morphological considerations of the term and then some history behind it.

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[31] REID, 1764/1852: 110.
[32] BROOKS, 1669: 447.

32.   To analyze the term already does a lot for us. Let us use "Calvinism". The stem is "Calvin-" and this comes from an anglicized French surname, Cauvin, specifically from Jean Cauvin (1509-1564). The suffix "-ism" is used to modify the proper noun "Calvin" into a theoretical system, *viz.* Calvin's theoretical system. So, did John Calvin developed any such system? Yes. As we did in the previous section with Common Sense, in this one we are going to look at the historical genesis of Calvin's theology. As the reader might guess, whatever was in this Frenchman's mind did not coalesce out of the ether, and so, his theology is not completely his, though highly creatively and systematically revised. Where did Calvin, then, got his influences? Let us give a swift look into his life.

33.   John Calvin was born in Noyon, Picardy. His father, although not a cleric, worked in an ecclesiastical court. His mother stayed at home with her beloved son, his three brothers, and two sisters. His mother was of a stoic and pious frame, and that temperament find its way to Calvin. Calvin's family was far from rich, however they were well connected and were able to provide him a state-of-the-art education. He had an easy and protected life, contrary to other reformers. Thomas H. Dyer (1804-1888) speculates that to "this method of education it may, perhaps, be owing that we miss in Calvin's character that boldness of outline which marked most of the Swiss and German Reformers."[33] Contrary to Reid, marks of genius were noted in Calvin. His father did not want him to waste his intellect in religion, and so made him study law. That lasted only until he died. Calvin excelled in religious subjects. As a young man, whenever teachers missed their classes, Calvin was asked to take their place.

34.   It was in this phase of deep and continued study that Calvin started entertaining protestant notions. At twenty-years-old he preached the reformation for the first time. This did not fall well into the Romanist status quo, especially in Paris, where he was studying under the most acknowledged and prestigious Romanist scholars. Protestants were the underdogs of the time, and Calvin was a good addition to their roster. With time persecutions started. However, truth be told,

> Calvin … was not endowed with the masculine and indomitable courage of Luther, and was more inclined to propagate his doctrines by stealth, and at a safe distance, than to risk his life in maintaining them. Thus, though he was continually exhorting others to behave like martyrs, he was himself always disposed to fly at the first appearance of danger.[34]

35.   A lack of virtue which had its place in the Lord's plan. He, by the help of his wealthy benefactors escaped death by fleeing Paris, others not so well connected did not have the same fate and died in the most horrible ways.

36.   In Basil, Old Swiss Confederation, he met a great reformer by the name of Wolfgang Capito (1478-1541), who introduced the reformation in this region with the help of a like-minded cleric Johannes Oekolampad (1482-1531). Under his supervision Calvin studied Hebrew. He became acquainted with other great men of the reformation, such as Martin Bucer (1491-1551) and Simon Grynaeus (1493-1541). Breathing this *Gegendgeist*[35], Calvin finished the first edition of his famous *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 1535. Later, Calvin adventured himself into dangerous

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[33] DYER, 1850: 17.
[34] DYER, 1850: 32.
[35] Instead of *Zeitgeist* (spirit of the age), is *Gegendgeist* (spirit of the region).

places, always evading capture by French authorities. One day, while taking an alternative route, he had to spend the night in Geneva. Birds chirped at Guillaume Farel's (1489-1565) ears, the one who brought the reformation to Geneva, and he went to meet Calvin at the inn.

> [Farel] called upon the traveler, and endeavored to persuade him to remain at Geneva. Calvin at first excused himself, alleging that he did not wish to accept a public office, and had determined to devote his life to retirement and study. Finding persuasion of no avail Farel assumed the air and prerogatives of an apostle; and with that manner and voice which has often inspired thousands with awe, threatened Calvin with God's curse upon all his undertakings if he refused his aid in so pressing a conjecture. Calvin was so alarmed and shaken by this denunciation, that he abandoned his projected journey, as if, he says, God had laid His hand upon him out of heaven.[36]

37.   For our purposes we have seen enough history. We covered Calvin's formative years, his travels as a young man meeting his various mentors, and the publication of his seminal work, the *Institutes*. This work, however, was not graved in stone. In each edition, Calvin revised it, adding to it the maturity of his later years and experience from many disputations with Romanists and other Protestant sects. It was in these theological contests that "Calvinism" made an entrance into the lexicon – something not at all strange in the theological sphere. It was custom to name a theological system after its creator, such as Augustinianism (from Augustine of Hippo) and Thomism (from Thomas Aquinas). Speaking of names, we mentioned some in this biographical flyby: Capito, Oekolampad, Bucer, and Farel, the most important.

38.   What do all these men have in common? Among other things, they sided with Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) in his disagreement with Martin Luther (1483-1546) concerning the question of the Lord's Supper. Luther and his followers contended for *Consubstantialism*; Zwingli and his, for *Memorialism*. From an Aristotelian metaphysical framework, by the former one argues that in the performance of the Lord's Supper two substances share the same material medium, viz. the body of Christ and bread, on one side, the blood of Christ and wine, on the other. Memorialists, on the other hand, argue that Christ has no special presence during the ritual – neither spiritual nor corporeal. This ritual serves the purpose of giving special importance to the remembrance of Christ's sacrifice and promises. Now, though these men took Zwingli's side, that does not mean they all agreed with him completely. Capito and Oekolampad were in line with Memorialism,[37] but the same cannot be said for Bucer, Farel, and Calvin.[38]

39.   These three aligned themselves with a third way – *Receptionism*. There is a special presence of Christ during the ritual, but it is spiritual only. Under this presence, Calvin argues in his *Institutes*, we ought to take the bread and the wine as *signs* of the body and blood of Christ. When the believer ingests these foods he ought to think of them *as if* they were the body and blood of Christ. By doing that the believer in receiving Christ's special spiritual presence enters into a holy communion with

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[36] DYER, 1850: 42

[37] REFORMATION500, extracted from https://reformation500.csl.edu/bio/johannes-oecolampadius/; RUMMELL, 2005: xxvii.

[38] REFORMATION500, extracted from https://reformation500.csl.edu/bio/martin-bucer/; VAN RAALTE & ZUIDEMA, 2011: 27-28.

Him.[39] This third way is a sort of a compromise between Consubstantialism and Memorialism.

40.   Those who sided with Zwingli also tried to distance themselves from medieval Scholasticism – heavily laden with Aristotelian metaphysics. Too much pagan philosophy smothered Scripture, and excessive refinement veiled what should be clear truths. Notwithstanding, it seems impossible to do theology without some kind of metaphysics to couch its doctrines. True, Scholasticism was dipped in Aristotle, but Plato was also very popular with Augustinian monks, and Plotinus with Christian mystics, such as Pseudo-Dionysius and Meister Eckhart (1260-1328). What about Calvin and the other older reformers? It seems they were not using any metaphysical framework in particular.[40] Putting Zwingli aside – who was playing with Pantheistic notions in his theology –[41] the others were not so enthusiastic with the rediscovery of Greco-Roman literary culture by the humanists.

41.   But, zeroing on Calvin, we can call him an *eclectic*. He would pick and choose whatever first principle fitted his exegesis of Scripture. This is a crucial shift in theological methodology. It was an inversion of direction in theory building. Romanist theologians started with a complete metaphysical framework and explained away scriptural data, doing small adjustments to the former as new data arrived. Reformed theologians started with the data and would pick first principles which seemed to better accommodate the content, building implicitly in the process, and in a piecemeal fashion, a metaphysical framework. Romanists, then, proceeded by the *deductive method*, while the reformers, by the *inductive method*. Here the reader might recall Francis Bacon. The same way Bacon exhorted the interpreters of nature to be more diligent in the analysis and compilation of nature's particulars (or "facts", as he would say), the reformers exhorted theologians and exegetes to do the same with the particulars of Scripture.

42.   Later, both these methodologies marked their presence in Calvinism. Continental Calvinists (mainly Dutch) went with the Deductivist side; anglophone Calvinists (Scottish and American), with the Inductivist. We have seen already the manifestation of this Deductivist tendency in Neocalvinists; however it is of the Inductivist bent we are going to explore in this work, especially of the Scottish variety.

43.   We are now ready to provide a definition for what a Calvinist is. We have seen that Calvin was influenced by his contemporary brothers in faith, but had his own special take on those doctrines and ideas, and his own methodological approach to theological research. Hence by specifying what was common to these men and what was special about Calvin we will obtain a clear concept of Calvinism. Fortunately, I already did that work in another place,[42] and I will reproduce here only its results in a concentrated fashion:

S is a Calvinist iff:

   i)   S believes that Calvin's scientific methodology is the best way to treat and organize relevant data;

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[39] CALVIN, 1536/2006: L. 4, c. 17, 10-11.
[40] VAN DER WALT, 2010.
[41] BRUNNER, 1946: 322.
[42] MIRANDA, 2021a.

ii) S believes that spiritual discernment (or illumination) must accompany proper scientific methodology;
iii) S believes that true theology is inherently practical, i.e. it facilitates personal transformation;
iv) S believes in a strong (or robust) Theism;
v) S believes in some form of Augustinianism.

1.5. Building dioramas with Common Sense Calvinism

44.	What to do with Common Sense and Calvinism? One thing must be certain before we proceed. Commonsensism is a metaphysical and epistemological system; Calvinism is a theological system. That means Commonsensism is epistemically closer to us than Calvinism. The level of confidence over the former is always higher than over the latter. The reader will understand why this is so later. Level of confidence has a technical meaning. It should not be confused with a sensation of confidence. It rather concerns the level of confidence one can claim rationally. The closer one keeps to epistemic sources (the raw data for knowledge building) the higher the level of confidence; the further one gets by inference from these sources the lower the level of confidence.

45.	The corollary is that most or all the traits of Calvinism might be false without any consequence to Commonsensism, but not vice-versa. When we get to study the Bible and systematize its contents, i.e. to build a theology, there is already in place a tremendous structure of knowledge – for instance a mental lexicon and some folk mechanics and folk psychology. This structure, present at the starting point, must already possess a comfortable epistemic status. If not, then whatever one reads and infers from the Bible will be even less reliable. If the interpretive apparatus is flawed at the start, its user will not be able to acquire new knowledge. And hence we cannot just decide to put the Bible at the bottom of our knowledge as the starting point, since it occupies a much further position in the inferential network built upon our epistemic sources.[43]

46.	As an example, let us ponder over the general statement: The higher the price of a good or service, the lower the quantity demanded by the consumers. This is known as the Law of Demand. This statement is inferred from a non-random sample of single instances of market behavior. This is called an inductive generalization, and it is non-random because we cannot sample future instances of the relevant phenomenon. However, the sampled ones had to be observed, recorded on some means of data storage, and then quantified and organized. If there is some flaw in any of the steps of this data gathering, the generalized statement will lose its epistemic status. It was poorly generalized and so we cannot rationally put confidence over it. For instance, if we cannot trust our ability to make observations, no quantified and organized data will make it better, and so, we are barred to trust any of our generalizations. The same way, we cannot trust on any of our inferences regarding scriptural data, if we do not start with assumed relevant knowledge.

47.	That said, we come to the corollary that most of our mental dioramas will be built with Commonsensism alone. Most of the day-to-day business and scientific

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[43] This remark goes right to the heart of *revelational epistemology* – the epistemological theory behind presuppositional apologetics.

truths do not require any inputs from Calvinism. It is, however, for the most important deeper realities of this world. Calvinism provides answers for the existential worries of mankind and the individual man. Who are we? What are we doing in this earth and in this life? Where are we going? Are we alone? Is there anything beyond terrestrial senses? What kind of God is there? What duties we owe to Him? Calvinism, then, will provide us building materials where Commonsensism cannot.

48.   We have our building station set and ready. It is time to open the toolbox and see what is inside. In the next sections the reader will be acquainted with the Common Sense Calvinist framework.

2. COMMONSENSIST FIRST PHILOSOPHY

2.1 Epistemic Sources

49.   Some readers will find strange how little I'm going to rely on Thomas Reid. Some, because this Scotsman was the center stage and founding father of the Common Sense tradition; others because whenever a contemporary philosopher mentions Common Sense philosophy he tends to equate it with Reid. An unfortunate circumstance in my view, since many generations contributed to revise, update, and adapt this philosophy to their own problems, as we have seen. Like Calvin's *Institutes*, Reid's work was not set in stone as God's commandments to Moses. There was error and space for improvement, and so, I will pick from the tradition the best it has to offer – it is not my intention to make an homage to Reid.

50.   So, where do we begin? By our awareness. Richard Baxter (1615-1691), a renown English Puritan, puts the matter like this:

> Q. 1. What is the first thing that a man must know?
>
> A. The first in being and excellency is God. But the first in time known by man, or the lowest step where our knowledge beginneth, are the sensible things near us, which we see, hear, feel, &c, and especially ourselves.[44]

51.   We can speak and think only of what we sense. We cannot conceive any sort of agent which is completely senseless. What senses, then, are there? Two of them are *sense-perception* and *self-consciousness*. These are the first exercises of our minds, and without them there is no knowledge. They can be called *presentative powers.* By these powers we can get familiarized with the things of this world and with ourselves in their simplest forms. We start with knowledge, though simple and very limited. If knowledge is not conceded in this first step, i.e. "if we have not knowledge in the premises, we are not entitled to put it into the conclusion."[45]

52.   By sense-perception I mean that power by which we acquire "knowledge of things affecting us, external to ourselves and extended."[46] By self-consciousness I

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[44] BAXTER, 1683/1830: 13.
[45] MCCOSH, 1889a: 19.
[46] MCCOSH, 1889a: 20.

mean the power by which "we know self in its present state as acting and being acted on".[47] In both we cognize things *singularly* and *concretely*, i.e. as one and whole objects.[48] This primary activity of knowing we call *primitive* or *simple cognition*. Simple cognitions are singular as opposed to *general*; and concrete as opposed to *abstract*. Both these opposites are the products of higher powers which manifest themselves in processes of thought and so cannot come from the presentative powers. Now, take for instance the object car. It is one thing to look at *a* car, it is another to think of the *class* of car after observing many similar objects. It is one thing to look at a car as a whole, it is another to notice *differentiating qualities* from other objects, such as the four-wheeled chassis and self-propulsion. Here we have seen some commonalities between sense-perception and self-consciousness, let us delve a little deeper into each other separately.

2.1.1. Sense-Perception

53.   In sense-perception we acquire both objective and subjective knowledge. We know objects as affecting *us*. And here we perceive right away an observing agent (ourselves) and something under the agent's sensible apparatus. It is also important to make a distinction between *original* perceptions and *acquired* perceptions.[49] By the former I mean those perceptions which exclude experience and inference, i.e. are not derivative – as we have seen, we must start with knowledge. The latter is derivative and so it requires experience – hence it cannot be a simple cognition. For instance, the perception of distance is not original but acquired. By the continuous exercise of our senses, we notice differences in shading, sharpness, contours and color distribution, and size; and by moving in between objects without resistance, we perceive separation between them. All these contribute to perceive distance. And the more one exercises it, such as painters and team-sports athletes, the better it gets.

54.   This distinction allows us to understand what is the source of error and illusion in sense-perception.[50] "Our original perceptions are all true to facts; but there may be mistakes in the steps we take in forming our derivative perceptions."[51] Sight is especially prone to error, however it can be remedied most of the times with other senses. The stick in the water illusion can be corrected by the sense of touch and the muscular sense (proprioception), viz. by feeling its texture in our nerve endings and by feeling the shape and resistance of its surface. Also, perspectival change is not a problem. From one point of observation one perceives a pyramidal object, and from here one might *consciously* and *reflectively* infer to be a squared pyramid; but after circling around, from the new point one perceives a triangular pyramid. From the new point the object appears as a slightly inclined triangle, but our previous perception did not dissipate into the air, and so, we make an *unconscious inference* by which we add only one side from the previous perception. Does this mean we did not perceive the real object? No, it only means that perspective implies *perceptive incompleteness*. Not seeing the complete object at once does not mean our partial visibility is wrong – this applies to other senses.

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[47] MCCOSH, 1889a: 70.
[48] MCCOSH, 1889a: 18.
[49] REID, 1764/1852: 185, 188, 194-195; STEWART, 1876: 10.
[50] REID, 1785/1852: 336-337.
[51] MCCOSH, 1889a: 55.

55.   McCosh (whom we have been citing) and Reid provide us a couple of interesting anecdotes regarding the senses. The first anecdote illustrates the difference between original and acquired perceptions, and also how our senses jointly conspire to render accurate access to reality. The second anecdote relates to the phenomenon of unconscious or irreflective inference, but also helps apprehending the original-acquired distinction.

56.   A very old way of curing cataracts was by couching. The procedure consists in piercing the eye with a very sharp and thread-thin tool and then pushing down the opaque lens, allowing light to enter the eye. This procedure was especially interesting when applied to extreme cases, viz. congenital cataracts. A person who never saw and came to know the world by the other senses provides a wonderful opportunity to understand what visual original perceptions are, and how those fresh perceptions are modified by non-visual experience. The following experiment took place in 19th century Leipzig, Germany. Dr. Franz applied the procedure to a seventeen-year-old man with congenital cataracts. He prepared right away a sequence of plane and solid shapes to show. Each particular visual stimulus was separated by closing the eyes.

57.   Astoundingly, at a distance of three feet, he identified straight and horizontal lines, but also plane shapes, a square, and a triangle. It was not so easy with solids. After placing in front of him, at eye level, a sphere and a cube, the young man identified them as "quadrangular" and "circular" figures; he then revised to a "square" and a "disc". Putting a disc next to the previous sphere, he could not tell the difference. Dr. Franz resumed the cube but now in an oblique position and side by side with a quadrate shape of the same outline of the cube; the participant, once again, could not tell the difference. A pyramid to him seemed a regular triangle, and after putting it in an odd position, he could not relate to anything, and remarked it to be a very extraordinary figure. After the experiment was over, Dr. Franz gave the solids to the youth's hands, and he was perplexed about not being able to identify them by sight only.[52]

58.   This experiment suggests that

i)   although we can *analyze* our sense-perceptions, i.e. "separate in thought" our sense-perceptions "into [their] parts or qualities" and spread them out,[53] in reality they always come about in the concrete, i.e. as discrete wholes of aggregated qualities;

ii)   meaning that there are no pure sense-perceptions, i.e. no pure visual perception, or auditory perception, and so forth, with the implication that arguments from illusion – in which sense-perceptions are analyzed and individually isolated to produce thought experiments – ignore reality in their premises;

iii)   and also, that non-visual perceptual experience – which assists in plentiful acquired perceptions – can provide ample information about extension, resistance, and space; the eyes adding much more accuracy to it once proper cooperation develops. It seems then, by analysis, that our original visual perception only provides us with a plane of distributed colors, being the

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[52] MCCOSH, 1889a: 46-49.
[53] MCCOSH, 1884: 44.

objects' disposition in space and three-dimensionality a joint acquisition with other senses.

59.   We come now to Reid's anecdote. In his *Inquiry* we get acquainted with a remarkable character – Dr. Nicholas Saunderson, a brilliant English mathematician and contemporary of Reid. He is described as someone with substantial criticism and understanding, capable of participating in the most sophisticated scientific discussions.[54] But the mention of Dr. Saunderson had a purpose on Reid's argument. Reid was laboring to prove the objective nature of the external world and its objects, and was particularly answering objections on perspectival change. The gist of his argument was that any shape occasioned by change of perspective around a certain object can be mathematically derived from the basic shape of that same object. This, say, mathematical constancy, cannot be explained other than by positing an external world, populated with persistent objects, in which we have real perceptions, although incomplete. Saunderson enters the scene as an example of a blind man who can understand the object and its various perspective dependent shapes, by recourse to mathematics.

60.   To better understand Reid's thesis, let us dive into it a little further. There is an important distinction to start with, viz. i) "the appearance that objects make to the eye" – this would be the subjects perspective over the object – and ii) "the things suggested by that appearance" – this would be the incomplete object perceived. The first is further subdivided into ia) "the appearance of colour" and ib) "the appearance of extension, figure, and motion."[55] The term "extension" in Reid's *Inquiry* is interchangeable with "magnitude" and "proportion". These three terms tag an abstracted property of vision, viz. the size the appeared object obtains depending on its distance from the observation point. "Figure" and "motion" also tag abstracted visual properties. The former concerns shape under perspective; the latter concerns the appeared object's motion relative to the visual field. Dr. Saunderson, says Reid, can conceive ib), but not ia). Why? Because color is not formalizable as space and extension.

61.   Although the blind man cannot (visually) *sense* perspective, he can *conceive* it, and the same applies to the real object. ib) and ii) are both creatures "of his own reason and imagination."[56] However, this cognitive process is completely different from someone who sees. "We [the visually abled majority] immediately conceive the real figure, distance, and position of the body, of which its visible or perspective appearance is [an] indication."[57] There are then two types of conceiving, though both occur by calculation, viz. an *immediate* (irreflective or unconscious) and a *mediate* (reflective or conscious). Visually abled people once they perspectively sense the object, an immediate ideation of its *real* figure, distance, and position forms. The calculation behind this, however, is unconscious (§54.), i.e. "we draw the conclusion without perceiving that ever the premises entered the mind. … [T]he mind passes instantly to the things … without making the least reflection." Blind people, on the other hand, must do these calculations attentively and in reverse. Says Reid that

[54] REID, 1764/1852: 134.
[55] REID, 1764/1852: 133.
[56] REID, 1764/1852: 144.
[57] REID, 1764/1852: 135.

"Visible figure leads the man that sees, directly to the conception of the real figure [ii]. But the blind man's thoughts move in a contrary direction. For he must first know the real figure, distance, and situation of the body, and from thence he slowly traces out the visible figure [ib] by mathematical reasoning."[58]

62.   Hence, we can see from where it comes the difference between acquired and original perceptions. As we have seen above, acquired ones are derived, i.e. they have some computation to them. This computation produces a notion (or an idea) of real figure for the visually abled, and of visible figure for the blind. The former does this unconsciously, the latter attentively. The more any of these classes of people exercise their cognitive apparatus, in its peculiarities, the better they get at getting reality right. Reid is aware of the original-acquired distinction: "To a man newly made to see, the visible appearance of objects would be the same as to us; but he would see nothing at all of the real dimensions, as we do. … [The] eyes, though ever so perfect, would at first give him almost no information of things".[59] We need and are subjects of a constant calibration between our sensorial inputs and geometrical equations (immediate or mediate). These equations, for the visually abled, are revised automatically by the joint experience of the other senses.

63.   To put in other words, our original perceptions are mere sensorial inputs which lack many distinctions. By the olfactive sense we can only know that something is affecting us through our breathing. To distinguish one smell from another we need experience; to claim the cause of the smell (salty seashores or freshly cut grass) even further experience; these then are acquired and not original perceptions. Hearing and touch are analogous. We can only know our body being affected inside our ears and in our skin; the differentiation of sensation and externalization of its causes requires experience. The muscular sense is crucial to perceive externality. Through it we sense resistance which presents to us immediate knowledge of externality. Identifying and distinguishing the objects of resistance, once again, requires joint experience from the senses. I think we can apprehend original and acquired perceptions as *a two layered access to the world*. The first layer presents the world to us, the second layer contextualizes and gives depth to it. The first layer is also present, in the temporal sense of the term; the second layer, being a product of the representational powers, adds information from the past, predictions, and other guessings. Merging these two layers makes our sense-perception rich, and so as our knowledge.

2.1.2. Self-Consciousness

64.   The reader must have noticed a lot of we(s) – we sense, we see, we perceive, etc. – but we who? We cannot erase from our minds our self-awareness, i.e. that there is a *Self* being affected and capable of affecting back. By sense-perception "we know the various properties of matter as they come under our notice; by [self-consciousness] we know the various states of self."[60] "Consciousness" is the word tagged to the phenomenon of self-awareness; of an agent capable to acquire knowledge of not-Self and Self.[61] "Self-consciousness" is the activity by which we are presented to the contents of this phenomenon. Consciousness is continuous; its

[58] REID, 1764/1852: 144.
[59] REID, 1764/1852: 136.
[60] MCCOSH, 1889a: 70.
[61] PORTER, 1883: 62.

contents are diverse and ever changing sequentially, such as thinking, willing, and emoting.[62] Man "becomes cognizant of himself in the fluctuating states of thought, feeling and volition" and so the "*ego* is immediately presented, and there is an inexpungable conviction of its reality."[63]

65.   Self-consciousness is analogous to sense-perception in its exercise, viz. speed and accuracy can be developed by attentive exercise. We can apprehend it under two points of a continuum, as *primary* and *secondary*. The former concerns average capabilities of noticing mental states. It spontaneously develops to a certain point to meet everyday needs. The latter is the product of special training, and we can find it in religious gurus, philosophers, and scientists.[64] The relation between the two is conditional, being the primary a necessary condition of the secondary. It is also chronological, meaning, one cannot develop a secondary level without going through the primary. The primary level is associated with original perceptions and poor acquired perceptions, i.e. it has a small pool of experience and lacks qualitative and quantitative nuance. The secondary level is built upon the primary; it adds many and diverse acquired perceptions; the regular training inflates the pool of experience quantitative and qualitatively (recall the layers).

66.   The secondary level is not always productive to its attainer. Some give a wrong turn to an *abnormal consciousness*. These are the people who get lost in their inner world and lose touch with the external. Some fall to the point of insanity, others remain half-sane.[65] But it also has its benefits. Without a developed *ethical consciousness,* no moral improvement can ever happen, but we will develop this point further ahead (3.2.). A third developmental area for the secondary level is the *philosophical consciousness*. It concerns special abilities in *persistence*, *comprehensiveness*, *classification,* and *systematization*. In the same order, it stays in its activity longer without losing acuteness; its larger experiential pool is wholly and easily recruited making each presentation ontologically rich; it provides instant organizational taxa; and also relational patterns.[66]

67.   It is through this developed self-consciousness that humanity can build a science of the mind – Psychology. However, some thinkers are of the contrary opinion. No science can be built from first-person observation, so they say. A recent objection to Introspectionist psychology is that when we introspect, we are not *observing* but *theorizing* off-the-cuff about our inner world.[67] We cannot trust descriptions of the experience of our own mental states. We need, then, a third-person science of psychology. A science where our experiment participants do not have the last and final word about their mental states. We should treat their recorded statements as data, yes, but we ought to look at them as fictions.[68] The same way we can speak in a truth-conditional fashion about *King Solomon's Mines*, we can also do it in the participant's recorded description of his mental states, without committing in the process to any stance regarding its reality. The psychologist's job is to link

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[62] MCCOSH, 1889a: 71.

[63] FISHER. 1893: 2.

[64] PORTER, 1883: 63-64.

[65] PORTER, 1883: 79.

[66] PORTER, 1883: 79-82.

[67] DENNETT, 1991: 67.

[68] DENNETT, 1991: 81.

these fictions with third-person observable items such as the brain's anatomy, its chemical activity, or computational schemes which might provide explanations for information processing in human beings.

68.   Notwithstanding, *first*, it is not clear how the term "theory" is used in these assertions. Probably it has to do with modern conceptions of a *model*, i.e. "an interpretative description of a phenomenon that facilitates access to that phenomenon."[69] All phenomena under scientific scrutiny have some entities and relations between these to describe. In a model the relations and the *relata* are precisely fleshed out. This means, as was stated, that every observation requires interpretation – it must be integrated in some previous conception of reality. Every observation is laden in some theory, more systematized or fragmentary, more explicitly or implicitly. So, both first-person and third-person approaches fall into the supposed sin of extemporaneous theorizing.

69.   And since our mental phenomena do not look like anything external we have words for, it is expectable to use material analogies to talk about it, such as a theater, a television, a castle town, or a computer – which might make the theories sound farfetched. The tendency is to make analogies with mechanical or organic relations. But more recently materialistic notions have been avoided, resorting more often to computer programming ones. But this is not any better. The theoretician is still trying to talk about one thing by analogy with another. This to say, contemporary cognitive science enthusiasts are not out of the pull of this alleged sin.

70.   *Second*, we have already seen that a Commonsensist philosopher or psychologist, although heavily relying on introspection, does not preclude external data or third-person observable phenomena. We have also seen examples of this in McCosh and Reid. Specifically, as Commonsensists we rely on i) self-consciousness, ii) the words and deeds of other people, and iii) the findings of the neurosciences.[70] Points ii) and iii) make psychology heavily influenced by multiple disciplines. However, all kinds of third-person disciplines can never discard the meticulous and sustained introspections of experienced researchers of the mind. To erase this data source is nonsense. It is to discard the closest access we have to the mind, and to justify this methodological move by noting how experiment participants are flawed and unreliable introspectors who theorize on-the-spot, appears to be a hasty generalization. Experiment participants do not make the whole class of abled introspectors, there are also highly experienced introspectors. These are the ones with a philosophical consciousness (§66.), and with proper logical instruments are capable of erecting a science of the mind.

71.   Finally, *third*, we do not have to treat experiment participants' descriptions of their mental operations as fictions. Their observations can be merely mistaken. Their self-consciousness never developed into a secondary stage of refinement. The same way a freshly recruited sailor cannot distinguish a skerry from a shadow under the moonlight, so also cannot a person with a primary level self-consciousness distinguish a feeling of disgust from a truth-conditional based conclusion that some proposition is wrong; or for that matter, the difference between a conclusion obtained

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[69] BAILER-JONES, 2013: 1.
[70] MCCOSH, 1889a: 7-8.

through attentive rational procedures and one through social instincts, such as an attempt to signal intelligence and protect one's social status. Their internal observations, then, are evaluated as how well they are accommodated in a theoretical framework developed through experienced introspectors and external data.

72.   The Commonsensist would also agree with establishing systematic links between, on the one hand, brain physiology and chemistry, and on the other, psychic phenomena; however this is not the main or the supreme goal of psychology, it is rather an additional step which enriches our science. Computational schemes and programming languages are useful, yes, but here we should not mistake creation from creator. These are products of introspection. They are products of the creative analysis and synthesis[71] of rational operations, and put to use in machines. These formalizations of our rational mental operations can illuminate the way in which our mind works, but we should never forget from where they came, specifically, we should not mistake their ontological status from our minds'.

73.   So much for the psychology of our epistemic sources. A last point to make in this section is how all this fits in our inductive method (or Baconianism). Recall our previous point about general statements and laws (§46.). The same way market behavior is our data for the Law of Demand, self-consciousness data will be for our laws of the mind. We already saw some of the results of this work in this section, regarding the operations of sense-perception and self-consciousness, but now we want to go to another domain, viz. *intuition*. "By introspection we may look on [intuitions] in operation; by abstraction or analysis we may separate the essential peculiarity from the rough concrete presentations; and by generalization, we may rise to the law which they follow."[72] And in this way we will get to unnoticed "regulative principles", or "general principles", which are prior to the inductive exercise itself. But what is an intuition exactly?

2.2. Intuitions as philosophical axioms

2.2.1. What are Intuitions?

74.   By "intuition" I mean native, necessary, and universal principles which *accompany* every act of perception.[73] These are the so-called regulative principles which both constrain and sustain the development of our perceptive skills and knowledge acquisition. They are *native* because they are integral to the mind, the same way the heart or veins are to the physical body.[74] Keeping the analogy, "it is [also] like the bodily frame when it comes forth from the womb;" it comes into the world with a set of potential developments contained in an initial or scarcely developed form. Today, this Nativist Psychology was further developed into the *Core Cognition Hypothesis*. According to it, human beings evolved in a way such that, not only we inherit certain physiological traits which differentiate us from other species,

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[71] We have seen that analysis is the breaking down and spread over of parts of a whole; synthesis is the opposite procedure, being the putting together of parts to produce a whole.
[72] MCCOSH, 1875: 3.
[73] MCCOSH, 1875: 2, 4, 25.
[74] MCCOSH, 1875: 21.

but also a foundational built-in ontology in our minds upon which learning is possible.[75]

75.   They are *necessary* in the sense that we cannot *resist* their use in our cognitive activities. There is an indefeasible conviction attached to these intuitions.[76] No argumentation or theoretical creativity can ever suppress them. Sophisticated philosophers and scientists can express doubts concerning their own existence, the existence of the external world, or the difference between their minds and the material aspect of reality; but they cannot avoid treading in the world with these convictions in act and speech: in one group of sentences they might argue for the illusion of their conscious *self*, but in another they might argue for the royalties the publisher is going to pay *them*, or take offense to *themselves* after a harsh review.

76.   They are *universal* since every single typical human specimen inherits and utilizes them.[77] The keen reader must have predicted this one. Nativity seems to imply catholicity. And this is not mere 19th century armchair philosophical speculation. Although the late Commonsensists of this century did not have the rigorous and formal precision of contemporary data collection and treatment, or even the same amount or availability, they were men of intense and wide reading experience. Their familiarity with the history of human events, ideas, philosophy, and general science was immense. Their inference to universality is justified and corroborated further by recent research.[78]

77.   Before we proceed, let us secure a clear and succinct provisional definition of *intuition*:

i is an intuition iff

  i)   i is a cognitive principle, i.e. something that must be set in place in the human mind for knowledge acquisition and learning to be possible,
  ii) i is native, i.e. integral to human nature,
  iii) i is necessary, i.e. an indefeasible conviction,
  iv) i is universal, i.e. present in practically every specimen of the human race.

78.   Now, the "principle" aspect – this first-in-place trait – can be further elucidated. The *conscious* attainment of these principles is possible only by special exercises of introspection, and that requires a secondary level philosophical consciousness. It implies, then, that *chronologically* their attentive contemplation and assent come later in life and after proper training. It also implies, by observation of humanity's common habits, that "the majority of men never think of them, much less accept them"; even those "who attain to not a little culture, do not reach a clear and intelligent conviction that these propositions are true."[79] But it is a little more than this. These axioms are the last thing to be apprehended.[80] Even scientists might

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[75] CAREY, 2010: 35, 252-253, 284-285.

[76] MCCOSH, 1875: 39-40.

[77] By "typical" I mean, a human specimen with no congenital or suffered disabling abnormalities, such as neurological malformations and injuries to this or that part of the brain.

[78] Examples of these native, necessary, catholic intuitions, are listed on the back cover of BROWN, 1991: mereological relations such as part-whole and particular-general, notions of Self or personhood, tensed time, and modality.

[79] PORTER, 1883: 501.

[80] PORTER, 1883: 502.

never feel the need to wonder at the dark recesses of their acquisitive mind. However last in time, they are first *theoretically* or *logically*. They are epistemic desiderata. They form a genuinely presupposed ontological nucleus around which we can build and lay over our dioramas. The logical order, then, is the *real* order, though unconscious to many.

79.   The mode by which we attain them explains the curious phenomenon of people expressing denial but assenting them in act and speech. They can argue away their Skepticism, Nihilism, Nescience, and Idealism, but, on one side, in the bare act of thinking and the grammatical categories and lexicon they use; and on the other, also their decisions and actions, they betray themselves. It is like to purposely trip one leg using the other.

> [T]he very language which they use is a constant profession of their faith in the reality and importance of these relations ... every sentence which they frame and word which they employ is a voluntary acknowledgment, that these intuitions are necessarily accepted by all men. When they act, every one of their expectations and deeds is a more decisive avowal that these principles are absolutely certain, and never admit an exception.[81]

80.   It also explains how half-sophisticated and pedantic doctrinaire minds reject them when proposed as philosophical principles. Soon enough theological and philosophical systems are inculcated in their youth. These systems have their own core principles, and other philosophical principles are tried by how well they fit in them. Some of these systems are at odds with humanity's intuitions, and hence we have above average minds denying, in part or wholly, their original nucleus – the one they used to develop and/or apprehend the later artificial systems.

81.   How are we, then, to test genuine intuitions? Or, by which criteria are we to include or exclude principles from our intuitional nucleus? By the traits above mentioned: nativity, necessity, and catholicity. The last two have been sufficiently elaborated; the first we can point to the kind of research developmental psychologists do, viz. the studying of infants' and children's cognition. This is important, especially to uncover what kind of mental structure enables the acquisition of language and ontology. By trained introspection we can find the principles, then propose them as candidates of original intuitions, and by further third-person experiment and observation test them. To be sure, Commonsensists would diverge in the interpretation of the data. Porter, following Reid and Hamilton, would describe these principles as *related notions* (or propositions) in the mind – an interpretation closer to the modern Core Knowledge Hypothesis. McCosh, keeping closer to Baconianism, describes them as *laws* of the mind. The first is stronger than the latter. To understand the difference, we must look into what is a notion – we have already seen what laws are.

82.   Both Porter and McCosh would agree that notions necessitate the *representative powers*. The presentative powers deliver the objects; the representative retain them for further processing such as identifying, distinguishing, abstracting, generalizing, analyzing, synthetizing, naming, and classifying. Of course, the retained objects are not forks or crayons, but representations of them. On these we apply the enumerated operations, and distil from them special mental objects. We do not know

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[81] PORTER, 1886: 509.

exactly their ontological status. We call them "notions", and we can look at them as retained processed information. What is information then? Whatever processable input rendered *directly* by our presentative powers or *indirectly* by assisting technologies. The complexification of notions accompanies the complexification of the acquired perceptions, and vice-versa. Our notions, then, can be singular and general, but also abstract and concrete. Porter suggests intuitions to be fundamentally of the character of notions, though very rudimentary.[82] McCosh thinks otherwise.[83]

83.   To the latter Scottish-born academician, intuitions are of the nature of *mental laws*. These laws constrain the mental operations enumerated in the above paragraph. They are also native, not in the sense of being latent things in the mind – as Porter would look at his core or foundational notions – but as constrains or forces in the development of human cognition, i.e. specific laws perpetually acting over a specific aspect of human nature, viz. the mind (or soul). Porter's hypothesis, then, is stronger because it explains the data by positing a type of latent psychic entity in the mind. McCosh's hypothesis is weaker because it only notices, after induction, laws constraining our learning and knowledge acquisition.

84.   A contemporary synthetizing position, assuming the truth of evolution, would be to combine McCosh's laws with Porter's inborn notions. The ever-operating laws of mind, over a certain extent of time and physiological changes in the neurological structures of the organisms who came to be modern humans, generated a set of rudimentary notions which came to be the nucleus of all further cognitive developments in the human specimen's life. From another angle, there is a certain set of laws (physical and mental) which constrained human evolution – we being the latest (still evolving) product of that multinomic process. On this hypothesis, "intuitions" would be appropriately tagged to inherited foundational, native, necessary, and universal notions. The activity of intuition – to intuit – would be to make use of them in an inattentive way. However, in this work, I'm not going to commit myself to such strong content-full hypothesis, and so, we (me and the reader) are going to dispense both with this last synthetizing evolutionary position and Porter's, and proceed with McCosh's. If the reader does not agree, feel free to decide for any of them, since these ontological status questions (the essential or most basic nature of the intuitions) have little to no bare over the next sections.

2.2.2. Primitive Cognitions, Beliefs, and Judgments

85.   Hitherto we have been discussing the characteristics which delineate the concept of intuition; now it is time to enumerate the items admitted, i.e. items that satisfy the marks by surviving the tests. These items are theoretically prior to anything else acquired in life. Through them we learn, expanding and deepening our dioramas of reality, and so, they are also proper metaphysical axioms. If metaphysics is a proper science, and not the fancy of intelligent and creative speculators, its notions and theories must be the products of data. What is the data of metaphysics then? Some would very sanguinely point to physical science, such as physics and chemistry. But how so? What exactly would those fields provide as data? Theories, hypothesis, statistics, experiment reports? All these are products of prior theoretical

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[82] PORTER, 1886: 503-504.
[83] MCCOSH, 1875: 11-17, 103.

assumptions; they are very late acquisitions in life and cannot be learned, apprehended, or produced without prior developed and secured core commitments (conscious or otherwise).

86. What about common wisdom (or folk science)? Much of the wisdom of the ancients is useful, and for the business of daily life is more than enough. It is mostly correct about what does what in the little things of common life. The farmer *knows* what happens after he grafts a bud into another rootstock. The cook *knows* what happens after she adds baking powder to the dough. But without familiarizing themselves with modern chemistry, whatever mechanism or process they conceive, odds say, is going to be wrong. And the same happens when what-does-what extends into a complex web of diverse relations. Common wisdom, accumulated by generations of trial and error, simply cannot keep track of all, or most, causal agents and the very specific nature of their relations. Common sense – i.e. the intuitions as presented above – needs be sharpened by method.[84] Thus, humanity developed various methods depending on what is to be discovered. Examples are the Interpretive Method in social research, the Historical-Grammatical Method in Bible hermeneutics, the Historical Method in humanities, and of course the Scientific Method in both physical and social research. All these methods, though, are accommodated in a methodology, i.e. the theoretical framework behind the method, which, again, requires prior commitments.

87. We are bound, then, to our intuitions, and if we want to declare truth to any of our later acquired sciences, we also must assume truth in our intuitions. If so, they are transplanted into scientific formal instrumentation as propositions, specifically, metaphysical principles or axioms. They are the *natural* regulators and propellers of our first cognitive achievements, and so, in this way, we make them the *artificial* regulators and propellers of our metaphysical science.

88.. It is proper to classify the intuitions by the powers whereupon they are manifested. They are the presentative powers, the representative powers, and the

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[84] Huemer confounds these two: *common wisdom* and *common sense*. In his *Skepticism and the Veil of Perception*, p. 18, the error is clear. As examples of his "common sense beliefs" he lists: "I am a human being. I have two hands. I have spent my life at or near the surface of the Earth. I have thoughts and feelings. There are other people in the world" etc, etc. The first three should not be put next to the last two. The first three are common wisdom, the other two are intuitions in the sense presented above. Again, common wisdom concerns acquired knowledge based on unaided common sense; common sense concerns intuitions as they were defined before. Even Reid, who was more akin to think and speak in terms of beliefs, would not accept most of these listed beliefs as part of common sense. This can be confirmed in REID, 1785/1852, in the sections dedicated to his first principles of necessary and contingent truths. Reid says: "Thus I conceive, that first principles, which are really the dictates of common sense, and directly opposed to absurdities in opinion, will always, from the constitution of human nature, support themselves, and gain rather than lose ground among mankind." (p. 439), and again, "the first principles of all sciences are the dictates of common sense, and lie open to all men" (p. 441). Just to make sure there is no doubt about Reid equating these first principles with common sense; when talking about the belief of the existence of one's own mental phenomena he says: "As, therefore, the real existence of our thoughts, and of all the operations and feelings of our own minds, is believed by all men—as we find ourselves incapable of doubting it, and as incapable of offering any proof of it—it may justly be considered as a first principle, or dictate of common sense" (p. 443). Common wisdom and common sense should not be confused. This is especially important in discussions concerning the criteria for what is common in common sense, and what can be listed in the core principles of a common sense epistemology, or more generally Commonsensism as a philosophical system.

comparative powers. The first has been sufficiently expanded; we now turn to the other two. We want to focus now specifically on the representative powers.

89.   In general, the representative powers can also be called *reproductive*. By them we re-present what was presented to the mind in the past but not now. By these powers, then, we re-produce again and again, though imperfectly, that which was noticed by the mind. McCosh lists six powers: retentive, recalling, associative, recognitive, composite, and symbolic. What we can do with each of these powers can be summarized with an example:

> I have seen Mont Blanc [sense-perception]. Having done so, I retain [retentive] it in such a way as to be able to recall it [recalling]. It comes up from time to time in the shape of an image according to the laws of association [associative]. It is recognized as having been before my mind in time past [recognitive]. I can put it into new forms and dispositions [compositive or imagination]. I can think and speak of it by means of the name which has been given it [symbolic].[85]

90.   It is here, in the domain of the representative powers that the phenomenon of belief takes place.

2.2.2.1. Belief

91.   By perception we know something before us *being* presented; by representation we can believe something *was* presented before us, or *might be* in some circumstance. By the former we testify the object's reality as in the present; by the latter we assent the object's reality as tensed but not present.[86] Belief occurs whenever *the object is absent from the presentative powers but posited to be real*. That object might be recollected, but also as projected into a moment yet to come. The future is a blackhole for the presentative powers, but not to the representative. But to believe in things future, or even in things never witnessed, another power must be in play.

92.   One of the representative powers is that of the compositive or imagination. We "put in new forms and dispositions what had been previously before the mind."[87] By this power, we can reconfigure our representations of the past and posit their reality in a time to come or in places never witnessed before. The richer these representations are, the more insightful our speculations get. Hence, we have representative powers to bring to mind things *as they were presented to us* in the past—the *phantasm* – but also in new configurations – the *phantom*.[88] By the power of composition, we not only

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[85] MCCOSH, 1889a: 87.
[86] MCCOSH, 1889a: 154.
[87] MCCOSH, 1889a: 165.
[88] "Phantasm" and "phantom" might be outdated terms, but we need words to talk about these things. These things I suppose to be mental entities. Entities wherewith information is stored. If the information is produced by retention – something presented and retained in memory – that entity is a phantasm; if the information is produced by composition – something retained and reconfigured – that entity is a phantom. These entities are speculative – this is a philosophical work after all. I know the mentioned powers are real; I also know about their activity – remembering and imagining – and their products – remembrances and imaginations. These products are mental but not mind or Self. They are things *in* the mind and, as much as I know, are not shareable with other minds. From these realities, I speculate the reality of these entities, and I think it is useful to linguistically differentiate them with different names, since they are products of different powers.

might speculate about the future, but might also speculate about ongoing (i.e. present) unseen realities around us, and very distant pasts never witnessed firsthand.

93.   Hence, it is to this last – the compositional power – that we owe humanity's civilizational flights. No planning could ever take place, no quests for the imagined unknown. We would be stuck in cultures of immediate minds. No wheel could ever be invented unless presented in a final form. Not even a mud hut could be built. Imagination "fills the empty space which lies between things that are seen, and it gives a peep into the void which lies beyond the visible sphere of knowledge."[89] To summarize, a past never witnessed, an unperceived present, and a hidden future are all phantoms. And the product of this power after completion might be or not be involved in believing. If a person does not posit the reality of the things represented in the phantom, there is no belief. We call those things *fictions*.

94.   That said, representations are the only targets of the *act* of believing – it is in these mental entities that we can find the information to believe in. When any of these find themselves under this activity of the mind, we call them *beliefs*. A pertinent question at this point would be to ask if this act is voluntary. Can we control our doxastic activities?[90] Can we choose the things to believe? The answer to these questions is of the utmost importance. If so, belief can be subjected to moral speculation. We might wonder what doxastic responsibilities we have, and what beliefs are approvable or reprehensible. If not, then there are no duties or prohibitions towards our beliefs. And here I part from the received opinions of the tradition. To my knowledge no Commonsensist took his time on this question, except Hodge, who was very straightforward with his view on this matter.[91] However, it is common to find appeals to duties of belief.[92] Part of the tradition is adamant regarding the necessity or irresistibility of common sense beliefs, but not so much for others – and I cannot from the brief mentions here and there abstract a criteria for *doxastic control*.

95.   The lack of argumentation about the subject suggests also lack of introspection about it. They observed that they themselves and others cannot avoid common sense, so why not extend those observations to all other beliefs? Alas they cannot answer this question to us. This I tried to do in this work. But before we proceed to my observations, let us first look into available positions. There are two positions concerning doxastic control (DC), its negation and affirmation. The former is called *Doxastic Involuntarism* (DI). This is the position that we have no control over our doxastic involvements with representations. Things go through our mind and belief appears uncommanded, unsolicited, just as stomach cramps and hunger. The latter, *Doxastic Voluntarism* (DV), is further distinguished between *Direct* DV (DDV) and *Indirect* DV (IDV). By the former we argue that no special means need be taken to believe this or that. It is like moving a hand or think of an answer to a school test. By the latter we argue that special means need be taken. One must go through some process to be able to believe this or that. One might not believe in the Neodarwinian

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[89] MCCOSH, 1889a: 175.

[90] From *doxa* i.e. belief.

[91] His view, expectably, is not overly developed, but the way it is presented it aligns itself with Doxastic Involuntarism. His position can viewed in HODGE, 1872c: 52-53.

[92] CHALMERS, 1849: 468; HAMILTON, 1870: 13; MAIR, 1883: 215; MCCOSH, 1875: 378; REID, 1788/1852: 676.

theory of evolution, however, this can be remedied by proper study of it. One last distinction here is between *negative* DC (-DC) and *positive* DC (+DC), i.e. abstaining from believing or disbelieving and ability to either believe or disbelieve.

96.   One defense of DDV is to analyze the phenomenon of believing as a concomitant of acting.[93] In deciding to act in a certain way, a person decides to believe in a certain proposition. Now, we are about to enter in rarefied conceptual altitudes, and I do not want the reader to lose track of what is being said; I will try to be as clear and definite as I can.

97.   A proposition in our framework is a fairly limited set of notions logically connected to each other, and it is the product of judgement (2.2.2.2.). For instance, "Bill is smart" is the relation between the notion BILL and the notion SMART. The author I am citing though – following the philosophy of his time (our time) – might be ascribing to it a much larger span of meaning (some philosophers believe propositions to be things out there). Anyway, I think we can bridge our conceptions of proposition enough in order to continue this discussion. Let us assume he agrees with our understanding of proposition.

98.   With that out of the way, we may proceed with the aforementioned analysis. Deciding to believe, as a concomitant of action, is to *stack something* and *count on* the reality of the proposition. The former (stack something) is further analyzed as the belief that the action is optimal given the reality of the proposition's contents. The latter (count on), as an accompanying dismissive, unconcerned, or unready attitude to the negation of the former. To make sure the steps were clear, and no strawman is later thrown at me, I leave a scheme of it, as is presented by the cited author:

<u>Analysis</u>

In deciding to A [a certain action], S [a person] decided to believe that p [the proposition]

In deciding to A, S *staked something on* its being the case that p

In deciding to A, S decided to *count on* its being the case that p

In deciding to A, S believed that A-ing was optimal iff p

In deciding to A, S decided to dismiss, be unconcerned or to not prepare for the possibility of not-p
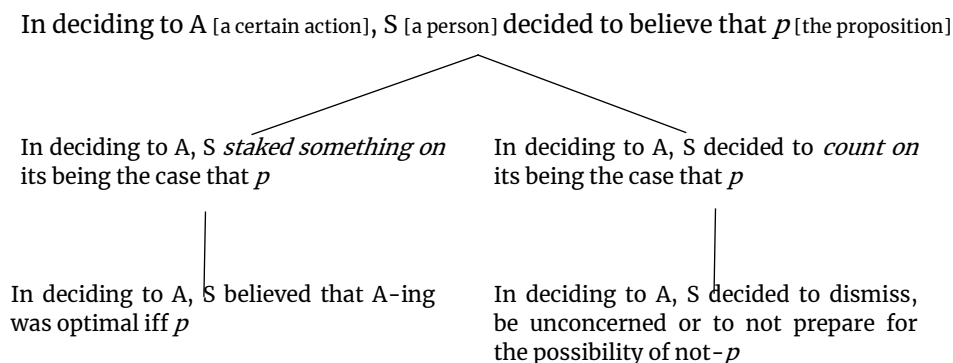
<u>Synthesis</u>

In deciding to A, S i) believed that A-ing was optimal iff p, and ii) decided to dismiss, be unconcerned or to not prepare for the possibility of not-p

99.   This analysis is odd because:

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[93] GINET, 2001: 65.

First, this analysis shifts the *analysandum*. It shifts from believing the proposition to believing the efficacy or the propriety of the action *given* the reality of the proposition's contents. Why does it shift? Because the doxastic relation of S-to-p was dispensed with. After the operator "iff", p is affirmed with no connection to S. It looks, as it stands, the first biconditional ("S believed that A-ing was optimal") affirms a doxastic relation of S-to-A, but the second biconditional (*"p"*) does not do the same between S and p – and this is supposed to be the *analysandum*. Stated like this, it seems p obtains just in case the doxastic relation S-to-A obtains and vice-versa. This has nothing to do with the *analysandum*.

Second, in an analysis one cannot repeat a term used in the *analysandum*. This suggests the analyzer is iterating the analyzed concepts. In a given relation aRb, where Rb is our *analysandum*, both R and b must be decomposed by abstraction and laid separately. What the author of the above analysis did was to go from Rb (the doxastic relation between a person and a proposition) to Rc (the doxastic relation between a person and an action), i.e. he repeated the relational term (that stands for the doxastic relation) and swapped the *relatum* for another one (the action instead of the proposition) which is not a component part of the *analysandum*'s *relatum*.[94] As mentioned in the first objection, the relation in question is the doxastic relation of S-to-p, where the relation itself and p should have been analyzed but were not.

Third, one cannot add content from outside the terms. In this case, one cannot add the efficacy of an action (optimality of A-ing) as part of believing p. This is an attempted analysis, not an actual analysis. Point ii) needs no attention, since i) already did all the damage needed to discard the thesis.

100.   Given this unsuccessful analysis we have no reason to accept DDV as a proper description of our doxastic involvements with propositions, i.e. with the relations we find between the notions processed from the information stored in phantasms and phantoms. The difficulty we witnessed above, specially taking into consideration that it was the result of an experienced professional philosopher's reflections, suggests DDV to be a product of bad reasoning habits and academic eccentricity.

101.   We step into IDV now. One insight that might lead us to accepting this thesis is going back to the stomach cramps and hunger. True, one cannot decide to not have stomach cramps and feeling hunger *once* they set in, notwithstanding one can *avoid* these inconveniences by taking proper measures, such as eating every two to three hours or eating the proper daily caloric needs. We cannot directly *stop* these bodily indispositions, but we can *prevent* them indirectly. If we know the root cause we might be able to intervene on it. By analogy, if we can do this with our body we might do it also with our psyche – an analogy the proto-Commonsensist Turnbull did even before Reid.[95] This was also noted by contemporary philosophers.[96] One can avoid being conditioned by a hypnotist, or for that matter narcotics, Neuro-Linguistic Programming, or tribalism by avoiding the special circumstances which occasion them. In this sense, we do not control the psychical activity of believing, but we can, in diverse situations, avoid the triggers of our doxastic involvements.

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[94] *Relatum* means a thing in a relation.
[95] TURNBULL, 1740/2005.
[96] AUDI, 2008: 405.

102.   What I discussed here is a case for -IDV, i.e. an abstention of belief or disbelief by avoiding doxastic triggers. Of course, this -IDV must be *partial*, i.e. whatever control we have over our beliefs, it does not cover them all – we have seen common sense, for instance, is out of reach. Another qualification to add is that it is *variable*, i.e. it is not the same from person to person, or in the same person's psychic development through life. Knowing the triggers and how they might come about is key, and so variance in the knowledge of these will expectably make a difference. *Strength of will*, i.e. the capacity to choose what the person perceives to be the correct course of action, also makes a difference in variance. One might be knowledgeable of the triggers, and one might recognize that avoiding them is better than not, and still not act accordingly.

103.   And what about +IDV, i.e. to make oneself believe or disbelieve by submitting to a certain process? Well, Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) thought so.[97] One might believe this or that under at least three conditions: i) the recognition that a certain claim is sufficiently justified, ii) the lowering of the emotions' influence over the mind, and, iii) the pretense to believe by acting like those who genuinely do. No doubt this is a long journey. i) One must familiarize with as many arguments and evidence for and against the claim, and come out of it with a positive conclusion, viz. that there is a reasonable case to be made for the claim. ii) One must meditate or submit oneself to any kind of mental exercise that lowers one's emotional investment in incompatible claims. iii) One must study and mimic day in day out what true believers do, specifically, those actions which proceed from the believed claim. Is Pascal right? I don't know for sure, but I will say this, if we can control our beliefs by negative intervention on the triggers, it seems plausible we can do the same positively. If my interpretation of Pascal's *Thoughts* is correct – if I got right his prescriptions –, it seems to me i), ii) and iii) are sufficient conditions, i.e. a combination of the three or each individually might trigger a doxastic involvement, but there are other ways which dispense with i), ii) and iii). I have already provided examples above (§101.).

104.   Let us safeguard a definition of belief before we proceed to some final remarks, regarding the Justified-True-Belief (JTB) epistemological framework:

B is a belief iff:

i)   B is information stored in representations (phantasms and phantoms) about testified or reworked traits of the world;
ii) B is under the influence of a mental phenomenon whereby its contents are taken to be real or unreal;
iii) B can be formed by positive and negative indirect control;
iv) B's formation control is partial and variable.[98]

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[97] PASCAL, 1670/1885: 99-100

[98] The attentive reader might have noticed that propositions were not mentioned in the representative powers. They are the products of judgment and we will talk about them in 2.2.2.2. The reason for this is the following. In describing our psychic phenomena I have to do it sequentially. There are things happening at the same time as wholes, but I have no other way to present them in writing except by a sequential analysis. This to say that when we think about our memories and imaginations we cannot avoid making distinctions and find relations in the things represented in them. One of the things we do is to affirm or deny relations of the form X is Y or X is not Y. It is under this judging activity that we believe in things. But there would be no comparing and no judgment without representations.

105.   It is important to finish this section discussing knowledge as JTB, since it is the dominant approach in epistemology. According to it, belief not only applies to things not present, but also to things that are. A regular JTBist would say that when one looks at one's hands, one forms a belief of it. First we sense; then our minds form a representation of the sensorial input; and the doxastic attitude settles on it.[99] This goes against our conception of how perception and belief work. We posit representations, yes, but for things not present to the senses. There are no *intermediate* representations between us and the world. Again, knowledge begins with cognitions. Knowledge extends beyond original cognitions depending on how careful we use our representative powers – this is called *representative knowledge*.[100]

106.   What about the so called second layer in perception mentioned earlier (§63.)? It seems this second layer provides an opening for belief to creep into perception. Yes, and this would be a correct observation. Let us take as an example the perception of a red table. After changing the lighting conditions, the table turned white. It is clear that person was mistaken. He not only saw a red table, but he also believed to be so. This case unambiguously shows that perception of X comes accompanied with beliefs of X. I think not though. The person correctly saw a red table – its surface was red. There is nothing wrong with his perception. He, however, was wrong on how he represented what was before him. The redness of the table was represented as a property *intrinsic* to it – like it had some red material in its surface. The reality was that the redness was a projected red light over a white surface (in normal lighting conditions, which would be daylight). Again, representation creeps into perception to elaborate on the seen with the *unseen* – an elaboration of perceived X with believed Y –, as was exemplified earlier with the triangular pyramid (§54.).

107.   We can also bring back the stick in the water example. There is nothing wrong with one's vision. There really is a bent stick in the water. It is supposed to be bent, given what water molecules do to light reflection when compared to air. When one

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[99] For two times people with doctorates objected to this claim. Both noted that JTB is an analysis of *propositional knowledge*, and that we still have other types of knowledge such as knowledge by acquaintance and how-to knowledge. The pointing out of this distinction seems to suggest that JTB applies only to a certain subset of knowledge which has no implications to claims to knowledge *via* the presentative powers. But I claim this distinction is, most of the time, a distinction of words not of theory. I will explain this in an indirect way. It is my policy to justify my theoretical decisions, especially when they collide with dominant opinions in current philosophical circles (academia mostly, but also outside of it by influence of the former). The JTB theory is surely one of them in a revised form (JTB plus something else). Another dominant position is *representationalism* (modern representationalists also call themselves *intentionalists*). See the *2020 Philpapers Survey*. This position contains the claim that perception is always representational and, hence, in the activity of perception there is always (what they call) a *propositional attitude* – an attitude towards the content in those representations. This makes knowledge by acquaintance (or perceptual knowledge) also propositional knowledge. The difference resides on the psychological mechanism. There might be propositional knowledge about content provided directly by the senses; there might be knowledge of this kind about content provided by memory or by speculative imagination. But it is always propositional and, therefore, representational. So yes, my claim that most of the time we will find a representational JTBist is true; and my claim that the mentioned distinctions are only linguistic most of the time is also true. There is no JTB theory *simpliciter*. It is always accompanied by satellite theories about what are beliefs and other philosophical speculations concerning our psychology. Since I cannot go after every, or only a handful, of JTB versions, I decided to zero-in the most dominant one: a representational JTB version.
[100] PORTER, 1886: 521.

looks at the stick, it is not the stick only that is before us. There are other things in-between the eye and the stick, viz. air, water, and light. These make a difference on how the light reflected on the stick gets to us, and we also see this interplay between physical properties – not only the stick. So there is no illusion to the senses. The illusion might happen if the person represents all the intermediate physical realities as non-effecting. If the person ignores these conditions, of course, he is going to represent the stick *itself* as bent. As was said before, original perceptions can never be wrong, but can be contaminated with error by false representations, in this case, beliefs.[101]

108.   In each example, the person does not believe there is a table with a red surface or a stick bent in the portion under water, the person *knows* these things; he might believe erroneously, however, in things beyond his vision, viz. the exact character of the red surface and bent shape of the stick. What if the person is really sensing things wrong? Should not the presentative powers be infallible, since they give immediate access to the world? I would reply by asking why these suppositions. The presentative powers present the world through some physical organ. An eye with more types of cone cells can access into a wider range of wavelength, and its user can perceive a wider spectrum of colors. Also, differences in the anatomy of the cornea and lens make a difference in focusing power. Eagles, for instance, can adjust both the cornea and the lens; we can only adjust our lens. Among other things, this provides a much sharper access to the world's objects and movements to the eagles. This brings us again into the difference between illusion and incompleteness (§§54., 59.-60.). Incomplete sensorial access to the world does not equate to sensorial illusion. To have limited perceptive powers does not imply illusion of sensorial inputs within its limitations.[102] Anyhow, no special configurations of sensorial physiology suggest an intermediary representation between the mind and the organs. This is the product of prejudice to some philosophical theory.

109.   But beyond physical limitations, we can also point to psychical ones. *Attention* is also a favorite topic in the tradition.[103] Opinions on the topic vary, it seems to me, in emphasis. Some concede more power to the will, and make most attentive acts products of it; such as Reid and McCosh. Others are more reluctant in quantifying how much of our attention is occasioned by the will, but recognize ample power to the will given proper circumstances (training the power), such as William Hamilton and Porter. Others, it appears to me, by deflating the will's freedom, are not so liberal in attentive control, such as Brown. Ultimately, I think I am not overstepping by affirming that all of them recognized some limitations in our attentive power, though diverging in the scope of the limitations. Attention is crucial when discussing our access to the world. Error might also afflict us by limitations of awareness conjoined with specious second layer representations.

110.   Whatever our sense organs might access, not all its complexity will be recorded in our phantasms: first, because the access was imperfect physically (anatomy of the sense organs) and psychically (how much awareness the act of attention can bear, i.e.

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[101] MCCOSH, 1875: 116; PORTER, 1886: 171-172.

[102] McCosh was aware of this. He called it *mereognosticism* in MCCOSH, 1890: 7.

[103] BROWN, 1822: 481-489; HAMILTON, 1865: 159-160, 165-167; 171-174; MCCOSH, 1889b: 235-236; PORTER, 1886: 62, 180-181, 212; REID, 1764/1852: 114-115.

how much sense information it can take in any given moment); second, because our phantasms are not xeroxed copies of our original perceptions, and so, from the limited features of the world captured by the sense organs and attention, only a fraction of them will be stored in the phantasm. A resultant phenomenon of the previous, is the unaware injection of materials by the imagination into the phantasm, to fill the holes. There are occasions a phantasm might be so corrupted by this phenomenon, that it might not even be correct to call it a phantasm; it is more of a phantom mistaken by a phantasm, i.e. a product of the imagination mistaken by a memory, viz. a false memory.

111.   As we have discussed above (§106.), representative mental objects might creep into perception *via* second layer, and with them, error. A perfect example is the mismeasure of distance. Our original perceptions of a world filled with shaped and colored things in a certain disposition between themselves are incontrovertible (§58.-iii); however, the details of the disposition require further experience – an ongoing process of developments and regressions of our second layer – and so, from person to person, and the same person in different stages of his life, we can expect to find better measurers of distance than others. The difference between these people, again, is the richness or poorness (§66.) of their second layer, which although intrusive in the concrete act of perception, we can see by analysis it is distinct from the first layer. With all that said, I admit some kind of doxastic attitude creeping into perception towed by the representative mental objects. I admit a belief might be formed at the same time an act of perception is taking place, but this belief concerns *speculation* informed by the second layer (acquired perceptions) and not *sensorial inputs* (original perceptions) provided by the interplay between sense organs and attentive powers.

112.   We finish this last discussion by affirming that the JTB conception of knowledge does not take into account the original-acquired perceptions distinction. Not all knowledge requires belief, it simply cannot according to our theory – there is no belief involved in simple cognitions. Pseudo simple cognitions, i.e. original perceptive failings to access the world, are detected by odd behavior relative to the world and inspection of the sense organs physiology.[104] Our final remark is that, if no knowledge is conceded to our most primitive or simple acts of perception – our stored building materials – no accumulation of and reasoning over them will ever produce knowledge, but only useful interfacing representations.

113.   Before we proceed to the comparative powers and judgement, I will leave a summary in bullet points of this last discussion concerning the theory of JTB:

   i)   In JTB theory, in occurring perceptions a doxastic attitude takes over a representation of the arriving sensorial inputs.
   ii)   Commonsensists recognize such representations as informative aids to first-layer-perception (1LP), but not as an all-encompassing intermediate in the concrete act of perception.

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[104] Colorblind people might get colors wrong; people with calloused hands might fail to distinguish smooth from grainy surfaces; people with bad proprioception (the muscular sense) might feel their pelvis anteverted when in a neutral or retroverted position.

iii)   By conceding this Commonsensists concede too the possibility of concomitant activity of perception and doxastic involvement; however, this takes place only at the level of second-layer-perception (2LP).

iv)   That said, the JTB criterion might apply to 2LP but not to 1LP.

v)   When something is wrong at the 2LP, the error is attributed to the believed representation that crept into perception. When something is wrong at 1LP, the fault is attributed to some anomaly in the sensorial and attentive apparatus.

vi)   JTB excludes 1LP from knowledge, since it has no operating representations in it; however, this exclusion severs any link to reality, and no process of reasoning over representations will ever remedy this.

vii)   Truth collapses into some virtuous justification, and we end up only with JB; this obviously is not the departing position.

2.2.2.2. Simple Apprehension and Judgement

114.   "Simple apprehension" and "judgement" tag the joint activity of various comparative powers, but three of them are of special importance, viz. *identification*, *mereologization* and *resemblification*.[105]

115.   The comparative powers are those by which we *find* relations between objects. They act constantly over our presentative and representative powers, especially, over our stored materials rendered by the presentative powers.[106] The comparative powers are the ones responsible for the processing and arrangement of these materials. Special ability in these powers produce huge discrepancies in intellectual might. It adds detail in acquired perceptions and expands and specifies the web of relations between objects stored in our representations. It is by these powers that we can build proper propositions, put them together as portions or fragments of reality – our conscious diorama building – and safeguard the coherency between them. The more abled one's comparative powers are, the wider and densely coherent one's dioramas get. So, recapitulating, by the presentative powers, things concrete and singular are presented to our minds. By the representative powers, a mental object is produced to safeguard the things presented and reproduce them whenever we need them. By the comparative powers we find relations in the things perceived and stored.

116.   The powers are classified according to the relations that fall into their notice. The three mentioned powers concern the relation of identity, whole and parts, and resemblance. Identity manifests itself in two forms, viz. *identity proper* and *difference*.[107] By our identity power, then, we find things that are the same and things that are different – repetition and diversity. It is relevant to add that this power is not put into action separately. In an act of identification, both identity and difference are asserted to be the case. When noticing a certain tree with peculiar engravings on it, we find that it is the same one from our childhood, but we also find it to be different from other trees – "this is the one and not others". When noticing a certain book in our hands, we find it to be different from a very similar book in our collection, but we also find the identity of our book – "this is not the one that is mine". In the first case, we

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[105] MCCOSH, 1889a: 230.
[106] MCCOSH, 1889a: 208.
[107] PORTER, 1886: 530, 533-534.

compared the presented engraved tree with relevant representations of it from the past, and the presented non-engraved trees with representations of the engraved tree from the past (including the more vivid ones from just a couple of seconds ago). In the second case, we compared the book presented to us with representations of a very similar book in our collection, and representations with representations of that same collected book.

117.   The mereological powers find two types of relations: whole to parts and parts to whole. Over these relations we can perform operations of *comprehension*, *abstraction*, *analysis,* and *synthesis*.[108] By comprehension we find that a concrete thing is full of parts and how the thing keeps them all together. By abstraction we focus on the parts individually; we draw them away from the whole and find how they relate to it. By analysis we use the cuts made by abstraction and spread over the various parts instead of just taking them individually. By synthesis we put together whatever was broken into parts to make a whole. Deficient mereological powers result both in poor awareness and in the most artificial theoretical systems. Errors can occur in each of the four operations, especially in more rarefied flights.

118.   It seems people in general would have no difficulties in abstracting from a concrete helicopter its fuselage, landing skids, blades, and windows, but we can abstract from it more fine-grained parts, such as *properties*[109] – that which has no reality outside of or independently from the thing it is a part of.[110] For instance, the property of anti-torque-system(ness) to avoid the fuselage to rotate with the main rotor system; or the property of aerodynamic(ity) to satisfy desired levels of lift and tolerable levels of drag. Both properties have no existence outside their instantiation in the concrete singular object. Both when considered as products of the mind, are called *abstracts*.[111]

119.   On the one hand, unphilosophical minds fail to notice properties by poor mereological powers; on the other hand, philosophical minds might fall into "excessive refinement"[112] and reification. There are times when one simply cannot follow the semantics of certain philosophical systems. It seems the authors are just pushing the limits of syntactical rules. One is not exactly sure of what was abstracted from what; but one can be sure that, from these alchemic activities, monstrosities are given life by a false synthesis and a precipitous, let us say, gullible frame of mind. And this is how, in part, most sophisticated minds become detached from reality and recipients of derision, laugh, and bewilderment from common folk not touched by an intellectual culture soaked in academic eccentricities.

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[108] MCCOSH, 1889a: 215
[109] Usually philosophers do not give this restricted meaning to "property". In this philosophical system, however, it must be understood this way. To make clear the lexicon of this system, "part" points to both properties and other ontological autonomous entities that compose the concrete object, and "characteristic" points only to the ontologically autonomous entities. Examples of characteristics are the mentioned fuselage, landing skids, blades, and windows of a concrete helicopter.
[110] MCCOSH, 1884: 9.
[111] Since we can abstract parts from an object (properties and characteristics), every abstracted part is an abstract.
[112] BACON, 1620/1886: 384.

120.   Last but not least, we have the relation of resemblance. "From the [presentation or representation of concrete objects] we perceive that there are points in which they are alike. This enables us to put them into classes, to which we may attach a name. That class must include all the objects possessing the common attributes [parts] fixed on. By the faculty of [mereologization] we get … our abstract notions. By the faculty of [resemblification] we get general notions or concepts".[113] The deficient operations of the mereological power have dire consequences for resamblification. This is how one creates, on the one hand, concepts which admit too much or too less, and on the other, Frankenstein(ish) empty concepts: they admit and bar nothing. It is by the attentive and explicit exercise of the combined powers of mereologization and resemblification that we produced the definitions in this work. We broke things apart (abstraction and analysis), brought them together again (synthesis), and then conceptualized the final product, i.e. we made a class out of it, instead of being just one concrete thing.

121.   Recall the book example. We can form concepts of different sizes regarding books. We can form a very strict concept for a specific book of ours, i.e. a concept which admits a very specific type of object, e.g. our 1841, American Sunday School Union, copy of Charles Hodge's *The Way of Life*. Because our book is identical in all perceptible ways to other copies, they have a class of their own. But we can also form a very strict concept not related at all with material copies of the same book. We might conceptualize books as an abstracted text. Paper, size, font, spacing, printing year, etc, do not mark this concept, and so, it only admits one of every book ever written.

122.   Like abstracts, concepts may also have an external reality. It is not that we have properties and classes out there floating around in the ether or in a third ontological realm. Whenever a property is duly abstracted from an external object, as was said, that property is real in every object it is a part of; whenever a concept is formed by objects with shared properties, the grouping of admitted objects is also real, i.e. the admitted objects *really* share this or that property. The process by which notions are developed (abstracts or concepts) is *Simple Apprehension*.[114]

123.   But now one might ask, from which concrete objects do we abstract parts? And what are those objects admitted or excluded from concepts? Those objects are not, of course, the very things that were perceived by the presentative powers. Those objects are *percepts*. They are concrete notions. They are the result of the comparative powers operating on the presentative powers. We perceive something, and right away a conception takes place together with retention in memory.[115]

124.   After all these comparative operations we might still further compare the resultant notions in a special way. Recall the proposition. Propositions are produced by our power of *judgment*.[116] By assembling a small combination of notions we produce a proposition expressible in a declarative sentence.[117] Here we must watchful. Deficiencies in any of the powers above mentioned will dictate the level of precision in

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[113] MCCOSH, 1889a: 216.
[114] MCCOSH, 1889a: 230.
[115] MCCOSH, 1884: 30-31; REID, 1764/1852: 110.
[116] MCCOSH, 1884: 93.
[117] Abstracts are used as the intension of the concept. Concepts and percepts are the only notions composing a proposition.

conceived propositions. If the notions are poor, opaque, or extravagant, we cannot but expect concurring propositions. Recall that notions are made under found relations; if these relations are wrong or distorted in any way, any positive or negative declaration of their character will follow the same. So, to summarize, by the comparative powers we find relations; these relations are processed into notions; the process is called simple apprehension; we then are able to compare the notions and by another process *assert* these relations and their respective *relata*, i.e. judgement. No simple apprehension, no judgment.

2.2.3. Intuitions manifested in primitive cognitions

125. Finally, we come to the intuitions themselves, instead of just talking about mental processes. The following sections will deliver the intuitions by the order of powers above mentioned: presentative powers-primitive cognitions; representative powers-primitive beliefs; comparative powers-primitive judgements. The criterion of intuition must be at hand (§77.).

2.2.3.1. Primitive cognitions in sense-perception

Existence or Being: Human-beings very early find a difference in objects, viz. some are intraorganic, others are extraorganic.[118] The former pertains to objects constitutive of our own body (limbs, organs, fluids); the latter to objects outside or not parts of our body. These objects are presented as *existent*. None of our primitive cognitions occur without the knowledge of being. The specific conditions of the object's existence is not part of the cognition.[119]

Persistence: Existing objects are presented also as independent and separate of our minds. We immediately know such objects to be persistent in reality: they existed before being presented to us and will possibly continue to exist. [120]

Externality: Intra or extraorganic objects are also presented as *out* or *external* to the mind. No person ever genuinely confounded these objects as constitutive of their minds.[121]

Extension: Another intuition that cannot fail our primitive sense-perceptive cognitions is that of extension or elongation. We might first notice this by feeling our bodies being affected in different locations at the same time.[122]

Affectation: Immediately noticed by us is also the fact that external persistent things affect us, and that can be from intraorganic objects or extraorganic objects through intraorganic ones.[123]

Capacity: Conjoined with affectation, there is always an intuition that things *can* affect us in certain ways. This is a *modal* intuition. If such was not the case, memory would be useless; our minds would not have any intuitive connection between what

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[118] MCCOSH, 1889: 28.
[119] MCCOSH, 1875: 108.
[120] MCCOSH, 1875: 109.
[121] MCCOSH, 1875: 109.
[122] MCCOSH, 1875: 110.
[123] MCCOSH, 1875: 111

was and what might be.[124] The first time a new object affects us, our mind immediately knows the object *can* affect us. This intuition, this propensity of the mind under its proper law, is what drives us to look constantly into the past in higher levels of intellectual activity, to ascertain the causal properties of an object.

2.2.3.2. Primitive cognitions in self-consciousness

<u>Existence or Being</u>: Conjoined with every intuition manifested in sense-perceptive primitive cognitions is the intuition of *self-existence*. An important qualification here is that this or any of the previous intuitions have to be in their full-blown manifestations right from the moment an infant completes his basic neurological structures. It is expectable, then, that given proper material conditions for the laws of mind to operate on, the mind will gradually manifest more and more its native tendencies. Self-existence has a concomitant development with all other intuitions.[125]

<u>Persistence</u>: We do not need to pour our attention over the question "do you exist?" to *realize* or *confirm* our self-existence. We do not exist only when we cogitate over ourselves. Between introspective acts of this kind there is never a moment the intuition of persistence does not operate. The first time we introspect over the matter the intuition was already being exercised in us, and we know immediately that we ourselves are persistent in reality, that we are a something independent of attentive observation. [126]

<u>Duality</u>: With the intuition of externality comes the intuition of duality, viz. we are different from intraorganic and extraorganic objects; or in other words, that we are not our physical frame or objects outside of it. No names need to be given, no comprehension or abstraction need to occur. An immediate knowledge of two things – self and other – takes place in us. The discovery of the nature of the difference between these two things must wait for the development of representative and comparative powers.[127]

<u>Capacity</u>: Conjoined with the intuition that external objects *can* affect us, there is the intuition that we *can* be affected by external objects. This might be the first piece of modal knowledge about ourselves we get. If self-capability was not an intuition, we would never attempt at doing anything – of affecting the world back.[128]

126.   These are the intuitions manifested in our presentative powers. From these intuitions, now we need to turn them into proper metaphysical axioms – core rules in our philosophical system by which we build and cohere our dioramas.

2.2.3.3. Primitive cognitions axiomatized

<u>Existence or Being</u>: A whole lot of words were written regarding this topic by philosophers; alas it seems many of those words are anything more than syntactically well-formed expressions, but semantically anomalous. The subject however, as other Commonsensists would agree, is rather simple, because there is not much to dig in.

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[124] MCCOSH, 1875: 111-113
[125] MCCOSH, 1875: 129-130
[126] MCCOSH, 1875: 130
[127] MCCOSH, 1875: 133
[128] MCCOSH, 1875: 133

Under the intuition we immediately notice a property of that which populates reality, viz. existence, and we work with it from our first intelligent acts in infancy. For philosophical purposes, we may attentively apply our comparative powers to objects, and explicitly separate this property from them. But, at this point, can we abstract it further for analysis? I think not. The answer for what exactly is the property of existence is more of a linguistic exercise, viz. to think about what were people trying to communicate when the etymon of "existence" emerged in speech before the word was subjected to philosophical and theological theories; coupled with introspections about what we are doing when using "existence" today. In both cases, it seems people just need a word to qualify an object as something that populates the world, i.e. another item for the collection.

Now, many times people mistake the specific nature of a certain object, but this is no rebuttal for the intuitive knowledge of being, since mistaken or not in this regard the object's existence is indisputable. The bare thinking of it is evidence of its existence: it is already in the realm of mind under our notice. The common mistake, which we already talked about, is reification. This mental phenomenon occurs when the specific ontological properties of an object are misjudged. Frequently these objects have no existence outside of our minds; they are simply representations. Some Norseman long, long ago, thought about a serpent. By his composite powers he stretched it to enormous proportions, circled it around the material world, and made it bite its own tail. He called it Jörmungandr. Is this creature more than a phantom? It seems highly improbable. However, this creature was entertained by many generations of ancient Scandinavian populations as an entity of the material world, not different from their huts or farm animals. Jörmungandr exists, yes, in various forms (I'm sure) in peoples' minds, but not outside of them or independent of them.

Being is the highest of all abstractions, and when conceptualized is the most comprehensive concept: it admits all kinds of objects, from square roots to horses.[129] The all-knowing God has the perfect concept of Being in His divine mind. His concept of Being is complete, i.e. it lacks no thing in the world, spiritual or material. We, however, as lower creatures, have very imperfect concepts of being. Though our concepts are correct in their *intension*, i.e. all of them have existence as a mark, they seriously lack in *extension*, i.e. every concept barely covers existing objects. We are able to form a concept of Being precisely because there is something over which our comparative powers can work on, viz. concrete objects presented to us and intuitively cognized as existent, i.e. *as parts or items of the world*. This means that "[*p*]sychologically, the knowledge of being in the concrete precedes that of being in the abstract. We know individual beings before we know being as a concept."[130] However, "[*l*]*ogically* ... the concept being is the first and most fundamental of all concepts, because it is the most extensively applied, and is the highest of our generalizations." The first axiom can be formulated as follows:

Axiom of Existence: *Everything under our notice is a part or an item of the world.*

Dual substance: It seems the next axiom to be discussed is the one derived from our intuition of duality. We have seen above that the most fundamental axiom in our

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[129] MCCOSH, 1875: 140; PORTER, 1886: 527.
[130] PORTER, 1886: 528.

philosophy is that of existence. The question to be made is, what follows next? What is the next level immediately under existence? I think it is that of substance. The most general properties which mark a difference between all items in the world seems to be spirit (or mind) and body (or matter). The moment the laws of intuition take effect on us, we immediately cognize two stuffs in the world. The philosophical technical term for the most basic stuff the world's items are made of is *substance*, and hence its use.

Axiom of Dual substance: *Every item of the world is made of something, matter and/or mind, which permits the first and greatest distinction.*

Singularity: All the items in Being are either material or spiritual, but they are also *items*, *a* thing in the midst of other *singular* things. We cannot avoid, by the laws of intuition, cognizing *things*. We do not cognize the two stuffs simply in different forms, but as fundamental properties of singular things. Hence our knowledge starting with concrete objects. Of course, there are different types of things in the world that seem to not fit the intuition, such as the *denotata* of non-countable nouns – water, paper, or lava. But singularity should not be mistaken with *discreteness*. Just because water is not countable (e.g. two waters), it does not mean it is not a singular thing. It is so, although a thing quantified in *portions* and not in discrete units, such as aircraft carriers and napkins. This property all objects have, I think, can be abstracted from the intuition of persistence. A thing cannot be separate, independent, or persistent, if in the first place is not a *thing*.

Axiom of Singularity: *Every item of the world counts as one.*

Parthood: In analyzing the intuitions of persistence, capacity, extension, and others we immediately arrive at the conclusion that singular things are differentiated from each other by their parts. Some parts seem to be *necessary*, such as existence,[131] but many others change over time, such as rigidity, irritability, or yellow(ness). A thing cannot *be* this and that – we cannot predicate whatsoever – if our intuition of persistence does not allow the noticing of parts. It is crucial in our system of metaphysics an axiom which deals with what singularizes the objects under consideration.

Axiom of Parthood: *Every item of the world has a set of parts which singularizes it.*

Capacity: From our intuition of capacity we get a like metaphysical axiom. All beings, material or spiritual, can *interact* with us, i.e. there is a non-stop interaction between subject and object in every waking hour, but also with object and object as we soon enough discover. We cannot avoid knowing them as affecting us, by implication having a *capacity* to do so. An axiom of capacity, being the result of a modal intuition, must include also an intuition of *possibility* – ways things *can* be. Capacity, then, for philosophical purposes, can be described as a range of ways things can be; that there is something in the objects which allows them a certain range. What is within that range is open to further experience and efforts of discovery.

Axiom of Capacity: *Every item of the world has a set of ways it can be.*

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[131] As we have seen, the moment we think or speak of a thing, that thing *must* have being; we *cannot* speak or think of things not existent. This means, we cannot ever be wrong about being. Substance is also a necessary property. Every existent item is material or spiritual; it cannot be otherwise.

Extension: Whatever is not mind is extended. What do I mean by this? That whatever is extended is located in and exclusively occupies space. By exclusively I mean that, the space occupied by an item cannot be occupied by another. Space, however, is not to be treated here in the intuitions of primitive cognitions. But it is from the extension of singular concrete objects that other laws of intuition build up into providing a notion of space as something separate from the objects which occupy it.

Axiom of Extension: *Every item of material substance is located in and exclusively occupies space.*

Externality: Conjoined with extension we must have externality. By the intuitive laws we know extended objects not only as not mind, but also as *out* of mind.

Axiom of Externality: *Every item of material substance is out of the mind.*

Self: Finally, we must have in our philosophical system an axiom of self. This is what today's philosophers call *personal identity* or *numerically distinct identity of person*. Physicalists provide material theories of such identity; however we would not be talking about such a thing if, first of all, we did not have an intuition of self affecting us every waking hour and dreamy sleeps. So, these philosophers come to the knowledge of self by self-consciousness, but then try to theorize it completely through the findings of sense-perception. They completely ignore from where it came the first spark of knowledge. That aside, I think "self" is a better name for our axiom. I would rather associate personal identity with higher cognitive abilities, viz. the production of an ideographic theory of our peculiar self.

Axiom of Self: *There are items of spiritual substance capable of recognizing their own existence.*

2.2.4. Intuitions manifested in primitive beliefs

Time and Space: Though time and space come to our minds through concrete objects *via* presentative powers – i.e. we know every object as space or time embedded – to separate these realities from the objects takes higher cognitive abilities. This means that we do not perceive time or space as separate from objects. By the recalling power we remember an object as antecedent to the present state-of-affairs; by the composite power we imagine an object posterior to that same state-of-affairs, and an object beyond those perceivable. We, then, believe in time and space. But this belief, following the above cognitions, is indefeasible. We cannot avoid to spatialize or temporalize ourselves and the surrounding objects. And we do not create these properties, we discover them.[132]

2.2.4.1. Primitive beliefs axiomatized

Like other *denotata* of non-countable nouns, there is only one space and only one time, and these are divisible by portions. This divisibility, however, is only mental and not physical. We cannot separate portions of time or space the same way we do with water. We can measure them nonetheless, and we organize our lives by distributing our activities over time and space. This means, and we apprehend it that way, that time and space are *continuous*. They do not exist in lumps, but rather as something

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[132] MCCOSH, 1875: 178-179.

non–interruptible. Lastly, and I'm not sure about this one especially, I think this continuity might in every human mind suggest *infinity* of time and space.[133] Not infinity as an abstracted property, but the mere belief that the horizon will ever get away from us, i.e. that we cannot reach an end of time or space. We have recursive minds, i.e. we go over and over the same rules to generate output, being that language or thought. Very early we find that we can keep adding or subtracting things in our minds.[134]

That same recursive thinking, when applied to items such as time and space, might trigger the belief that they continue without end. The question is, do we know all this? No. These are not intuitions acting on primitive cognitions. Space and time are not directly in front of us, as was said in the beginning. But being laden in real concrete objects we can be sure of their reality. This does not imply we know exactly what they are, the same way humanity knows water from the foundations of time, but only recently discovered its elemental composition of H_2O. Their specific ontological status is to be investigated by metaphysicians, logicians, geometricians, and physicists. What about the axiom of dual substance? Time and space are made of what? Of nothing we know of. Time and space are not items of the world, but rather conditions under which the world functions, and hence they do not need to be made of whatever. From this intuition we can go directly to its respective axiom:

Axiom of Time and Space: *Every item of the world is time or space embedded; both being continuous, indivisible, measurable, and endless.*

2.2.5. Intuitions manifested in primitive judgments

<u>Primitive relation</u>: McCosh, the work of whom we have been using mostly, repeatedly states that we must start with things, and through those things discover their relations – relations are not there at all at the starting line of the knowledge acquisition journey.[135] Single concrete objects come to our minds through the presentative powers, and are retained by the representative. We then compare these objects as mental representations, and discover relations between them. McCosh claims all the above relations are intuitive relations, and many more, such as spatial, temporal, and causal relations. But, how exactly are they intuitive? He goes on saying they are discovered based only on primitive cognitions and beliefs. This is true, though it does not satisfy an answer. It fails the first mark of an intuition. These are knowledge builders, no doubt, but so is advanced calculus, which is a very late and laborious acquisition.

These relations are all very specific, and they require something more general and antecedent. Something more of the character of an intuition. The power of comparison must be ruled by a law which drives us to discover relations, but to discover specific relations, first we need a *desideratum*, and that is simply primitive relation. The intuitions of Being, duality, persistence, self, or time and space would be useless if there was no intuitive relational law pushing our comparative powers. We need to start with the knowledge that *things relate*, and then proceed to discover in what specific ways they do. Take for instance *unary relations*. If this very simple

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[133] MCCOSH, 1875: 199.
[134] FALK, 1994.
[135] MCCOSH, 1875: 199, 208, 210-211; MCCOSH, 1889: 22, 26, 208-210.

relation was not there in the beginning the intuition of singularity and affectation would be useless to the mereological powers. Or *binary relations*. Without it the intuition of Being would also be useless. Reality or existence would never be apprehended as a domain of which we are a part of.

There is, then, an intuition of relation between two items at a minimum, viz. the unary relation of part to concrete object and the binary relation between parts or between concrete objects. If we have these, by the tendency of recursion we obtain relations with multiple *relata*. On this point, I side with Porter:

> it is essential to the definition of knowledge not only that we know objects as existing, but that we know them as related. We cannot know even two thought-objects as being, without also knowing that the one is not the other. We cannot notice two leaves, without knowing that they are alike or unlike in form, surface, or color. ... a relation is discerned in every act of knowledge.[136]

How do we get aware of this primitive knowledge of relation? We compare notions (judgement), because we have notions to compare; we have notions because we compare presentations with representations, and representations with other representations, and find mereological and resemblance relations (simple apprehension); and we find these relations, because there is a mental law of intuition driving our comparative powers towards the cognition of primitive relation. Without this law conditioning us into finding relations, all other powers would be useless.

Relational Realism: Another intuition, that seems to be implied, is that not only are the things presented to us real, but also their relations – between themselves or with themselves. If this was not the case the comparative powers would not be the least informative. In the relation of identity, for instance, one would look to one's past self and, after comparing with the present self, would simply conclude that *maybe* he is the same person from a few minutes ago; that it *might* be just a fiction, something invented and not really there. This however would contradict with the intuition of self; and here one, probably, would have to solve this tension by adopting some extravagant philosophical position. No, we human beings have a native, necessary, and catholic tendency to Relational Realism; an intuition without which no claim to knowledge would be possible, since, as we have seen, every item in this world is a *relatum*. We know that a lot of times relations suffer from reification, but failing to determine the specific ontological status of relations a certain number of times has no implication to the reality of relations between and in things. I think it is reasonable to posit that, most of the relations we discover are not symptoms of reification. Why? Because, if that was so, we would be incapable to deal appropriately with reality. Between humanity's common wisdoms and scientific endeavors, the *relata* that fall into our cognitive apparatus and enhancing technologies (computers, telescopes, infrareds, etc) are mostly correct, i.e. real.

2.2.5.1. Primitive judgements axiomatized

Primitive relation: This intuition is a fit candidate for axiomatization in our philosophical system. Without it no other intuition would make sense, and so, in the same way, all other axioms would also be good for nothing.

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[136] PORTER, 1886: 65

Axiom of Primitive relation: *Every item of the world is a relatum.*

Relational realism: We need now to connect this intuition with our comparative powers in an axiomatized format.

Axioms of Relational Realism:[137]
   i)   *the repetition of an item implies identity, and if the item is real, its identity is also real.*
   ii)   *the diversity between items implies their difference, and if the items are real, their difference is also real.*
   iii)   *a part implies its whole, and so an abstracted item must imply a respective concrete item;*
          a.   *if the concrete item is real, so is an item dully abstracted from it.*
   iv)   *a class implies at least two singulars, and so the generalized item must imply its respective singular items;*
          a.   *if the items with shared properties are real, so is the class dully generalized from them.*

2.3. Logic and Language

127.   There is a very plausible close connection between symbolic language and thinking, which even today's social researchers caught on. The connection, the Commonsensists believe, is so close that, "words become shaped and fitted to things; and as human life becomes enlarged and enriched, or again degraded and impoverished, so human language expands or contracts itself to life and experience."[138] This applies both to a single person, but also to communities: "Wherever we find a language scanty in the number and meagre in the import of its words, or a language which is limited in the combinations and relations of its syntax, … the thinking of the people who formed or used this language was imperfectly developed."[139] In the end, to survey a dialect, sociolect, or idiolect, in their lexical and grammatical peculiarities, is to dive into a world of images, notions, and opinions; it is to know a person, a community, or a people.[140]

2.3.1. What is logic?

128.   We are going to start with thinking and its relation to logic. By observing common language, people seem to have a reasonably correct understanding of what logic is. The word is often used to express order or rule in thinking about the world. In planning to achieve a goal or explaining how something was done, people might ask "what is the logic of that?". They seem to point to some criterion of thought and a mechanistic sequence that reflects the operations of reality. In sum, there is a general notion that logic is a productive way of thinking; particularly, it is a special subset of thinking which reflects the way reality works and is conducive to effective intervention on it. The Commonsensist tradition does not veer significantly from this use of the word.

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[137] The axioms provided concern the relations presented in §114. There are more relations, as was said, and so there are also more axioms to be made. However, for the purposes of this work, these axioms suffice.
[138] WHYTE, 1883: 39.
[139] PORTER, 1886: 387.
[140] PORTER, 1886: 387.

129.   This notion is alluded in Reid as a discipline oriented to "teach men to think, to judge, and to reason, with precision and accuracy."[141] His protégé, Dugald Stewart, reiterates by pointing once more to a discipline or field of inquiry "which has for its object to guard us against the various errors to which we are liable in the exercise of our reasoning powers; and to assist and direct the inventive faculty in the investigation of truth."[142] Later, McCosh refines the notion by qualifying it as a science that has as an object of study something *a priori*, though we discover its constitution by inductive means.[143] Being an inductive investigation, the researcher might get his hands on laws, in this case, "laws of thought."[144] McCosh also provides an interesting analogy regarding the purpose of Logic:

> Logic has been called the Grammar of Thought. Logic is not the same as Grammar, but it is analogous to it. Grammar does not profess to teach us how to speak or write, but it explains the laws involved and teaches how to speak and write correctly. So Logic does not claim to give us the power of thinking, but it shows us how to think accurately, and to correct false reasoning.[145]

130.   Noah Porter, in his lexicographical research, defined it as "the science of pure and formal thought, or of the laws according to which the process of pure thinking should be conducted: the science of the formation and application of general notions [concepts]; the science of classification, judgement, reasoning, and systematic arrangement."[146] Here, Porter zeroes in on only one side of the common use of the word, viz. a "criterion of thought." So, what about the other side? Porter, McCosh, and William Hamilton, recognize the two sides. Again, Porter notes the difference between "*pure* and *applied*" logic through a quote from the 1st Baron Kelvin William Thomson: "*Pure logic* is a science of the form, or of the formal laws of thinking, and not of matter. *Applied logic* teaches the application of the forms of thinking to those objects about which men think." McCosh points to the division using different terms: "So far as it treats of discursive operations, whatever be the objects about which it is employed, it is called ... Formal Logic. So far as it considers thinking as directed to special kinds of objects, it ... might be called Objective Logic."[147] Hamilton, on his turn, makes the distinction with terms such as "Pure Logic" and "Modified Logic": "The end of Pure Logic is formal truth,—the harmony of thought with thought; the end of Modified Logic is the harmony of thought with existence."[148]

131.   At a first approximation, Commonsensists only add to the common wisdom's notion the trait of discipline, i.e. of making that special subset of fruitful thinking an object of research. Common wisdom does not have the tools to pinpoint the laws of thought and its characteristics; when successful reasoning takes place common folk can only notice its effects, by predicting, planning, and making something work right. Notwithstanding, many times they get things right by mere luck, and effective reasoning mixes with sloppy thinking. To prune out such undesirable instances, and preserve only ripe fruit, systematization, classification, reporting, and recording must

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[141] REID, 1774/1852: 709.

[142] STEWART, 1876: 30

[143] MCCOSH, 1875: 358.

[144] MCCOSH, 1875: 359-360; 1884: viii, 24.

[145] MCCOSH, 1891: 42.

[146] GOODRICH et al. 1865: 785.

[147] MCCOSH, 1884: 3.

[148] HAMILTON, 1870: 54.

be put into action, and that continuous work is at the hands of science. In this sense, as McCosh already noted, Logic is both *a priori* and an empirical science. It is *a priori* in *modelling*. A logician does not need to investigate the world – in and out – to work out some system of calculation and its respective notation. It is *empirical*, however, when the logician needs to justify the rules of calculation – why these rules and not others.

2.3.1.1. Importing philosophical axioms into logic

132.   And here we see the logician cannot work in isolation. He needs to take a good look into metaphysics and psychology. In the former he familiarizes with the systematization of humanity's intuitions, i.e. axiomatized intuitions for philosophical purposes. In the latter he familiarizes with the data concerning what kind of reasonings tend to be successful both in the qualitative and the quantitative domains. So, what rules of calculation can we extract from our Commonsensist first philosophy? For instance, the most basic and perennial of them:

i)   Identity: A is A; or A equals A.
ii)   Non-contradiction: That which is A cannot be not-A, and vice-versa.
iii)   Excluded middle: There is nothing in between A and not-A

133.   We can have two basic notions in a proposition: singular concrete notions or percepts (*a* boat, *a* coffee machine, *a* scientific theory) and concepts (boat, coffee machine, scientific theory). i–iii can all be A's.

2.3.1.1.1. Problems with the fundamental axioms of logic

134.   Some readers here would jump the gun and say that these rules, although useful overall, it would be very naïve to apprehend them as reflections of reality, and would invoke "shades of grey" and "roughness in the edges" to problematize these basic relations and their use in logical calculation. The ancient problem alluded here was brought originally by Eubulides of Miletus (4th century BC) and is commonly called the Problem of Sorites (Heap): at what exact point an aggregate of sand will turn to a heap and vice-versa. This problem can be translated into numerous other domains of conceptualization, such as being rich or poor, bald or not bald.

135.   Of course, attempts to solve these problems were presented over the ages, but here I am only to provide an answer from a Commonsensist perspective. We have already seen an axiom for the relation between single entities and classes (2.2.5.1.-iv)), and I proposed that if the entities from which the class was generalized are real so is the class. Our intuitive concepts behind the common names such as "heap" and "mount" *really* have a corresponding class, and that class must have things with shared properties. The question is: what are those shared properties? If there are no shared properties between the things, there is no class; if there is no class, our concept of mound or heap is a delusional fabrication of our minds, which suggest something ominous about the reality of the things themselves. But there is nothing to worry about. Those shared properties exist, and we will go through them in the next sections.

2.3.1.1.1.1. The heap problem

136.   Regarding the famous heap problem, human-beings noticed that most of the objects they drop, from the same spot, on top of each other carelessly, tend to form a certain shape, being that made of rocks, junkyard trash, clothing, or whatever else. Whenever that elevated, curved, and convex shape, somewhat close to a cone section obtains we call that a heap or a mound. This to say, whenever we can slice a cone section where the base is always larger than any section of the convex curve, and juxtapose it successfully over the pile of objects, we have a mound or a heap.

137.   The skeptic might object that there must be a point where this or that "somewhat close to a cone section" shape is close enough. A Commonsensist answer would be to ask why such intransigence. Can we or can we not draw the mentioned curves over our presented piles of objects with minimum irregularities inside and out of the line? Yes we can. This means we are *really* being presented with mounded like piles of things, and we can think of a very definite conception of what is for a mound to be based on cone sections; we just do not do it because, for practical purposes, it is not needed. I leave this problem with a definition of mound or heap:

Pile P is a mound iff:

   i)   P describes a line that:
        a)   is a conic;
        b)   obtained from a cutting plane that touches the base of the cone;
        c)   and the lengthier section is the arc (from the Euclidean plane).

2.3.1.1.1.2. The bald problem

138.   The bald problem is different. Its etymon denotates clearly a naturally visible hairless area in the head – it could be all of it or just a portion. Today it seems that people also use the term to point to thinning hair. The skeptic might ask at which point of thinning we call it bald. Simple, when there is a decrease of active follicles and hair string diameter from one point in time to another. A person might not be bald – because we cannot yet see his scalp – but he might be in a process of getting bald. So, we need two concepts here, one for the *state* of being bald, and another for the *process* of balding.

S is bald iff S's scalp is observable by visually abled persons.

S is balding iff S is losing active follicles and hair string diameter.

2.3.1.1.1.3. The rich-poor problem

139.   Finally, the concepts of rich and poor do not need be marked by amounts of money. People usually use these concepts to classify life-styles, viz. rich people eat in fancy restaurants, have luxurious and high-performance cars, live in mansions and castles, can influence politics, and so forth; poor people need to be constantly counting every penny to make sure they can eat, cannot live without welfare programs, use public transportation or walk everywhere, etc. These traits, however, are culturally laden. A rich person in 4th century BC Persia is not the same as some other in 21st century China. What is common in all these concepts is that rich people have luxurious life-styles inaccessible to most others, and poor people have decrepit life-styles no one wants to be in. Nevertheless, without the peculiarities of this or that culture, these very general concepts are not that informative, other than pointing to where we must look for those peculiarities. So, to make definite concepts of rich and poor in each cultural context, an anthropological or sociological data collection needs be made first. If the peculiar concepts of rich and poor are generated from appropriate abstracts, i.e. notions of real shared properties, we can be sure they *really* admit rich and poor people in their respective cultural contexts.

140.   All this to say, our intuitions point to real things and our logical systems are based on real relations, and so, trustworthy.

2.3.1.1.2. Quantification axioms

141.   With this in place, the Commonsensist can also use intuitions to systematize a logic of predicates, i.e. of relations between concepts and singular concrete notions. The axioms of existence and singularity provide the most general domain of quantification and a quantified item, respectively. The axioms of parthood and primitive relation provide an immense quantity of subdomains that differentiate and resemble the quantified items from each other and relations between these, respectively. Finally, the intuition of relational realism provides the ontological basis to make the necessary connections between concepts and their extension:

  i)   If concept C was dully conceptualized, then C has at least two items as its extension.
  ii)   If item i exists, then i is at least the extension of one concept.

142.   Regarding i), when we think of the concepts' marks – its intension – we postulate that *all* admitted items must have those marks. If this was not the case, we would be violating the above three basic rules (§132.) and toying with our intuitions. This means that a dully conceptualized concept implies *some* extension, i.e. at least two admitted items. What about empty concepts, those do not imply extension? If one is playing with extravagant intensions which do not classify anything in the world, then of course it will not fall into our logical system. It is like subtracting 00,044 from 4: the first decimal number is just a notational illusion, it does not point to any possible quantity, and so we do not use it in our arithmetic calculations. By the same token, we should also not use anomalous concepts in our predicate calculations, and

should not try to accommodate them in any logical system. But this empty concept conversation needs a qualification.

143.   In today's formal semantics empty concepts are crucial. When comparing a linguistic expression with a diorama (which should be the domain of discourse), i.e. that which provides us with the truth conditions, we might get empty non-anomalous concepts. For instance, let us picture in our heads John Calvin writing with a feather at candlelight – this is our diorama. Now, suppose someone says, "John Calvin is drawing with a feather". The main verb in its tensed form "drawing" is a relational concept; it relates the entity John Calvin with the entity feather. We call it a two-place predicate. This concept, though real (we really have an activity of drawing), in this specific diorama is empty because John Calvin is not drawing but writing. Since the concept is empty relative to the diorama, the proposition extracted from the expression would be false. But this would be an instance of "applied logic" or "modified logic".

144.   Above we were talking about the most general logical system, i.e. a system that takes into account all observed and imagined dioramas. Drawing is a real activity, and hence its concept is appropriate in context-free logical operations, though in context-bound ones it might, as we have seen, admit nothing. Bringing the mathematical analogy again, 00,044 does not point to any possible quantity, and therefore should not be admitted even in context-free arithmetical operations; 4, on the other hand is an appropriate number to report quantities in the world, though in context-bound operations it might fail to do it.

145.   Regarding ii), this has restrictive implications in a logical system's grammar, i.e. every item must be bounded by some concept. We can simplify the above two rules. Let X stand for a place holder of concepts and x a place holder of items:

   iii)   All X must admit some x and all x must be admitted by some X

2.3.1.1.3. Alethic modal axioms

146.   We are going to finish this discussion about logic with the axiom of capacity. It is this axiom that further enriches our logical systems by adding modality. A logical system must also deal with this aspect of reality, viz. that reality is dynamic rather than static; that things obtain different states of being depending on their capacities. Some parts obtain *necessarily*, others *contingently*. Usually metaphysics deals with the former and the empirical sciences with the latter. We have seen, for instance, that a necessary property of all concrete things is Being. However, many other properties are merely contingent. As an example, we can think of a person's height. With eight years-old the person is 125cm, and with 17 is 175cm.

147.   Let us establish some rules. Think of Xx as a proposition expressed by a simple declarative sentence, i.e. a subject and a predicate (a concrete entity related with a class):

   i)   For Xx to be possible, Xx is the case in *at least one* conceived diorama.
   ii)   For Xx to be necessary, Xx is the case in *all* conceived dioramas.
   iii)   For Xx to be contingent, Xx is the case in *at least one* conceived diorama, but not in *at least one* other.

148.   Rule i) stipulates that the entity has the capacity to have the set of parts (properties and/or characteristics) that mark the class in at least one diorama, but it does not specify if that capacity extends to all dioramas or if there are dioramas in which that capacity is not there. ii) and iii) specify the extent of the capacity. From here we can derive two more rules:

iv)   (From i and ii) If Xx is necessary, then Xx is possible.
v)   (From i and iii) If Xx is contingent, then Xx is possible.

2.3.1.1.4. Groundless Possible Worlds metaphysics

149.   Now, before we proceed to language, some remarks need to be made regarding contemporary metaphysics of capacity, or modality. The literature regarding this topic is vast, and I do not have a relevant wide-ranging sample of readings nor is this work the place for a synoptic voyage through the field; that said, others took the pains to do just that, and I am going to rely on their work.

150.   Under our attention will be the notion of a *Possible World*. Contemporary metaphysicians rely heavily in a theory of possible worlds to account for modality. These theories, however, are alien to common wisdom and extravagant to Commonsensists. We already saw how to apprehend a diorama (§§13., 15., 115., 143.), and we used that same notion to account for modality. I claim that these mental constructs better account for modality than possible worlds. The reason follows. We saw that we know capacity intuitively: the moment we are affected by some object, the intuition operates on us and drives us to postulate a capacity in the object. Yet, it is not correct to affirm that we sense this or that capacity; if that was the case, experimentation and systematized observation would not be needed, since we would just perceive the capacities – there would not be anything to discover. This means we know specific capacities in specific objects by their effects, for instance, we know organisms *can* age because we testify that capacity on a daily basis; we also know the technique of crop rotation *can* help the soil to replenish its depleted nutrients without slowing down our farming activities because, from ancient times, farmers experimented on relations between land and plants, and testified how the capacities of both could be combined to a desired goal.

151.   This to say we are *sensorially* blind to capacities and we can only account for them through some imagined interface construct, viz. the diorama. A theory of possible worlds goes much further. To account for this intuition[149] they posit the existence of an indeterminable amount of worlds, ours being just one among many. They claim that their theory is "just a regimentation" of these intuitions.[150] This reductive language, though, does not eliminate the extravagance of the theory. First, it postulates the concomitant existence of extraordinarily big entities, such as a whole universe, where things are not exactly the same as we know in this scarcely known world. It uses these worlds in place of modest dioramas, i.e. instead of just conceiving a fragment of how something can be, based on the experience with the world; it claims the existence of multiple entire worlds. Second, it makes the claim without a single piece of evidence. Some World-possibilists claim these worlds to be as real as

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[149] Or "prephilosophical beliefs" of nonphilosophers in CRISP & LOUX, 2017: 154.
[150] CRISP & LOUX, 2017: 155.

ours; others that they inhabit a third realm of existence, viz. they call them "abstract entities".[151]

152.   They try to take refuge in pleading for the *theoretical entity* status, i.e. that we need to posit these worlds for the sake of accounting for our modal intuitions, as we do with many subatomic particles in physics. But, as I have showed, there is no need to adopt such ostentatious theories to explain away our intuitions of capacity. And what is more, entities are postulated in theories based on some evidence. Without this evidential constrain, experience would be useless, since we could just posit wherever would be expedient to raise the probability of the experience given the theory. Matrixes, evil geniuses, brains in vats, and other philosophical fictions would have to be taken as real as the hands we have attached to our wrists. This is to make madness a method to find truth, which it does not have a history of working very well.

153.   That said, how do we decide which dioramas are admissible in modal reasoning? The answer is simple, by providing positive evidence for its modal status. Let us go back to the farming example. Crop rotation is acceptable as a possible course in a modal argument for more efficient farming practices, because there is evidence available of its *prior* use, but also expectable outcomes based on *laws* studied in Earth science and chemistry (how the biosphere and hydrosphere interact with the geosphere, and by what chemical processes entities of the former two provide nutrients to the latter). In this case, the modal status is rendered by *non-deductive inferences*, i.e. *defeasible* inferences dependent on the comes and goes of available data. But there are dioramas not dependent on the volatility of empirical findings. Some are admitted simply by *deducing* them from axioms or definitions. For instance, in a weekly system Thursday *always* (in all dioramas) comes after Wednesday. Any counter-example to this leaves the system, and so, is not a counter at all. The same can be said for all other axiomatic systems, such as classical propositional logic, general set theory, arithmetic, and many others.

2.3.2. The Symbolic Power: Language

154.   But now we need to proceed to our *Symbolic Power*. This is the power by which we associate symbols with pieces of ontology.[152] The science of semantics is the field of study which inquires how ontology and symbol connect; linguistic semantics, the one who delves into how ontology connects with grammar, lexicon, phonetics, and orthography. It is this last specific domain we want to focus on. The symbolic power is classed in the representative powers. McCosh does not provide a justification of why so, but we can speculate about it and agree with his decision. By exclusion of parts, it cannot be the presentative powers or the comparative powers. The former concern our access to the inner and outer world; the latter concern the relations found and

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[151] CRISP & LOUX, 2017: 171.

[152] A quick typology concerning "pieces of ontology": i) Phantasm: a psychic entity which stores inputs from the conjoined operations of the sensorial apparatus, self-consciousness, and attention (presentative inputs); ii) Phantom: the psychic object developed by the composite power and attention whereby stored presentative inputs are recombined into new forms (a phantom can also be stored as a phantasm of self-consciousness, if that was not the case we would not remember our imaginations); iii) Proposition: the product of the comparative powers whereby percepts and concepts are combined in logical relations; iv) Diorama: an imagined, reasonably coherent, and definite ontological configuration made of multiple propositions.

conceived in them. None of these powers relate to the symbolic operations. It seems then, the allocation or tagging of a symbol (grapheme and phoneme) to a piece of ontology is at the hands of the representative powers. When we store presentative inputs, recombine these, and produce various types of notions and propositions out of them, we need to tag them with symbols – it is a necessity.

155.   Why? First, because without it our communication would be terribly impaired, and culture (the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and ideas) would be hardly possible – we would be limited to emoting and pointing. Second, because, consequently, most of the operations of our comparative powers would be useless. We can point to helicopters and to many of its concrete parts (windows, landing skids, etc.), but we cannot point to its aerodynamics or the class it is a member of.[153] With no way to communicate these things easily the mental powers by which we obtain the, would be useless. Without symbolic language – or artificial language as Reid would put it[154] – human progress would be extremely hard.

156.   These operations facilitate thought. By processing presentative inputs as notions, and then tagging notions with symbols, preserving only some informal sense of how to apply grammar, "thinking is abbreviated by using simple words for very complex thoughts, and can be carried on more rapidly and much farther."[155] Language, though not perfectly analogous, works as other formal systems and their respective notations. Both in logic and mathematics heavy ontological configurations are replaced by numbers, constants, variables, and operators. These formal languages are just a step further in the regimentation of our thinking. Their appearance in very small and intellectual circles of society suggests the conditions under which they are needed. Common life does not require such instruments, since it rarely requires the level of precision and clearness that these language systems provide. It is a different case in philosophy and science. Here, the target is, most of the time, truth; and experience suggests that reality is very rich and nuanced, something that requires subsequent refinement over our basic cognitive abilities.

2.3.2.1. How language might create bad thinking: The Frege–Geach Problem

157.   Now, before we finish this grand section of Commonsensist first philosophy, we need to add just one more remark concerning language, viz. how this instrument of thought facilitation *via* abbreviation can also produce bad thinking. One of the problems of too much symbolic education, i.e. too many books and ready-made theories, and no experience and an opportunity to develop (attentively or not) notions by oneself, is that young minds get too much used to only think in abbreviations, and forget – or even may lose completely the ability – to trace back the symbols to the things signified. A paradigmatic example of this phenomena is the general acceptance by contemporary philosophers of an atrocious objection in the field of metaethics, viz. the alleged Frege–Geach Problem. One philosopher puts it like this:

> [i)] [T]he crux of the Frege–Geach Problem […] is that there is no linguistic evidence whatsoever that the meaning of moral terms works differently than that of ordinary descriptive terms. On the contrary, everything that you can do syntactically with a descriptive predicate like 'green', you can do with a moral

[153] MCCOSH, 1889a: 196-200; PORTER, 1886: 419-420.
[154] REID, 1764/1852: 117
[155] MCCOSH, 1889a: 200.

predicate like 'wrong', and when you do those things, they have the *same semantic effects*. So, the Frege-Geach Problem is at bottom the problem of how it could be that moral and descriptive terms have exactly the same sort of semantic properties in complex sentences, even though they have different kinds of meaning

and to solve this we need to

[ii)] explain the meaning of complex moral sentences [and iii)] offer a compositional semantics for English that predicts and explains why despite their differences, moral and descriptive terms function in all of the same kinds of ways.[156]

158.   Concerning i), the burden of proof is mistaken. A Non-cognitivist of moral discourse does not need to prove that such discourse is syntactically anomalous. In truth, it is extremely hard to speak and write outside of syntactical rules, in any domain of discourse. I ask the reader to purposely jumble up subjects, predicates, determinants, direct and indirect objects, and so forth. This is obvious. The problem is semantic, not syntactical. We can come up with the most imbecile sentences without violating any syntactical rules. Consider the following sentence: "That spherical cylinder tastes like stars". Is this sentence syntactically anomalous? No. But is it semantically? It seems so. How exactly does "spherical" modify "cylinder"? How does exactly such a pseudo-entity relate to stars by the two-place predicate "to taste"? There are no answers to these questions, and because of that we determine such sentences as semantically anomalous. We know what kind of "*semantic effects*" the sentence structure (syntax) is supposed to produce; however, there is nothing on the ontological side to satisfy the relation between linguistic expression and ontology. So yes, *expectably*, everything one can do with a predicate like "green" one can do with "wrong" in moral discourse, but, this fact is no rebuttal in the least for Non-cognitivist claims, since it is also a fact that many combinations of lexemes in a well-formed sentence can produce semantically anomalous results. The Cognivist has the burden to show how his moral discourse is not semantically anomalous.

159.   Concerning ii), again, the Frege-Geach supporter mistakes who needs to do what. The positive claim is on the side of the Cognitivist (something we will do in a moment, 3.2.); he is the one who needs to explain how moral discourse connects with ontology, i.e. how *denotation* can take place from the former to the latter. He is the one who needs to "trace back the symbols to the things signified". What is more, all the evasive argumentation to avoid a minimally definite description of a moral ontology on the part of many Cognitivists, plus the recurrent phenomena of semantical anomaly, suggests these philosophers are not capable to do just that, and so, a meaningful moral discourse is something of low plausibility. And iii), there is no need to do that. It is not the object of linguistic semantics to explain why some lexemes or combination of these cannot denotate successfully based on ontology.

160.   The semanticist needs to explain how these denotate based on other grammatical disciplines, such as morphology and syntax, but it is out of his scope to say anything about what there is and is not. Yes, it is true, professional semanticists

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[156] SCHROEDER, 2008: 703.

would claim they are responsible to explain the phenomena of semantic anomaly[157], however, the best they could come up with is "referential implausibility", i.e.

> In the explanation by 'referential implausibility', the semantic anomalies of our examples are attributed simply to the unlikelihood, even impossibility, that in the 'real world' (as perceived and conceived by members of the language community) such referents can be found.[158]

161.   This is a tacit delegation of explanatory responsibility. It is up to the "language community" to decide what there is and is not, not the semanticist; and if we want to bring forward something in the likes of a universal ontology, that work is in the hands of metaphysicians and scientists. The only thing the semanticist needs to do is: if so-and-so is the case, then this is how you connect it to your language system.

162.   The bottom-line is: just because x can be accommodated in grammar categories, it does not follow that x denotes whatsoever successfully. Deep down, the Frege-Geach Problem is just a Non Sequitur. To be fair, moral discourse *can be* meaningful, but not in the way many cognitivists think it is, but that we will explore in the next section.

3. FROM COMMON SENSE TO CALVINISM

163.   After thousands and thousands of words, at this point the reader might be asking "when does Calvinism comes in?", "where does Calvinism fits in all this?" This is the time where we go from our axiomatic nucleus to inferred truths. As I said in the beginning (§44.), Commonsensism is epistemically closer to us – it might be the case that Calvinism, as whole, is false, leaving Commonsensism completely unscathed. However, to do philosophy – to rationally speculate about that which is beyond our immediate purview and indirect empirical evidence – one still needs to start from some granted and assumed positions. And that is what Calvinism provides. It provides views about metaethics, normative ethics, the existence and character of God, political organization, the value of art, the metaphysical order of the world (fundamental realities), etc. Commonsensism, by itself, cannot be a complete philosophical system and provide all the tools we need for diorama building. This is shown by the fact that all Commonsensists leaned on some version of Christianity and Natural Rights theory to speculate on normative issues.

164.   Speaking of normativity, this is our portal for Calvinism. It is through our moral nature that we have our first cognizance of God and the moral realities surrounding Him. However, *natural theology* can only bring us so far and we will see how *revealed theology* covers the remaining holes of our philosophical system.

3.1. The Active Powers: two flavors of Commonsensism

165.   Hitherto we have been talking about our cognitive or intellective nature, and how that translates into metaphysics and epistemology. Now we turn to our sensible or active part. This is the part responsible for our emotions, will, and how these

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[157] CANN, 1993: 7.
[158] HUTCHINS, 1971: 172.

interact with the cognitive part in producing *action*. I understand "action" with a broad meaning. I'm not pointing only to bodily movement, but also to mental change and speech. This subject is where we find most contentions between Commonsensists. They differ a little concerning the nature of common sense principles and the general process of cognition,[159] but they all agree in the existence of such principles and their importance to the possibility of human knowledge. They agree also in the reliability of our internal and external senses. How all this connects with action, God, and morality is a completely different story.

166.   It seems to me from my sample of readings,[160] there are two tendencies: a rationalistic and an emotivistic. In the former, the will is more powerful and the process of acting and deciding more preponderant on the intellective side (Reid, Stewart, Porter). In the latter, the will is weaker, and the mentioned processes more preponderant on the sensible or emotive side (Alexander, Hodge, McCosh).[161] Curious enough, this division tends to walk *pari passu* religious filiation. Reid was a minister of the "new light", a "moderate"; Stewart was his disciple and a freemason; Porter was a "New Haven" Calvinist. Alexander, Hodge, and McCosh were more of the evangelical–sentimental American line of Calvinism, or in a word, Edwardianism.[162] Now, were their speculations conditioned by their theology or was it the other way around? I do not know, nor do I know how this question could be answered. The fact is, their philosophical and psychological views about free–will, moral sense, responsibility, moral qualities, and so forth, were consistent with their views about salvation, regeneration, and original sin.

3.1.1. Deciding: how the sensibilities interact with the will

167.   So now I need to adjudicate between these views. On my estimation, the emotivistic trio seem to be more on the right direction. It is an empirical fact how the sensibilities affect our decision making. By personal experience we feel that many times our behavior was at the mercy of the blowing winds, that we could not steer the

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[159] E.g McCosh, as we have seen, speculates the process to be one of *composition*, i.e. though our final mental products (those we can perceive by self-consciousness) are complex, by analysis we can see that they were assembled in a piecemeal fashion. A certain power at a basic level does A, another at a higher level does B, another does C, and in the end we obtain D as the whole of ABC. Take judgements. Judgements are a comparison of notions; notions are obtained first by simple apprehension; simple apprehension works with representations (phantasms and phantoms); representations are retentions or reworkings of presentative inputs; the presentative powers give us access to internal (mental) reality and the external (organic and extra-organic) reality. Porter speculates the other way around. He thinks D is that which we get first, and then by mental operations *decompose* it into simpler parts. So we start with judgement, not with primitive cognitions (PORTER, 1886: 430). This somehow explains the differences between them concerning the nature of common sense principles. To start with judgement Porter needs a stronger account about what we are born with. He needs finished mental products to be at our disposal in our cognitive development. To Porter the exercise of analyzing our mental products reflects the *real* order by which our mind works. To McCosh that same analysis is akin to reverse engineering.
[160] ALEXANDER, 1891; HODGE, 1872b; HOPKINS, 1869; MCCOSH, 1889b; PORTER, 1895; REID, 1788/1852; STEWART, 1803;
[161] I do not know how to classify Hopkins. From his cited work and reading some fragments of HOPKINS, 1876, I would say he tends to the rationalistic side. He recognizes that our sensibilities (desires, affections, appetites, instincts) have a strong role in our decisions, but in the end, by the way he words his opinions, it seems to me we have a strong and autonomous enough will to counter all of them.
[162] From Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758).

helm. Not only we experience this in us, we can also testify this in others' behavior. By scientific experiment one can see how neurological chemistry changes and affects the brain, and the many biases which result thereof. It is also a fact that the sensibilities are not at the mercy of the will. One cannot decide to desire, repulse, or be indifferent to a certain thing. One cannot also decide to have a certain emotion. Performance artists might elicit "at will" certain emotions, but what they decided was not the manifestation of the emotion, but rather the bringing of representations which induce certain emotions – such as remembering a very special birthday or imagining a family member in atrocious suffering.

168.   Reid and Porter, by the way they phrase their opinions, seem to be very much against this. It is not that they do not recognize that we might have moments of "blind impulse", moments wherewith we lose control of our behavior, but they look at these as just that – moments. Overall, we are most of the time the ship's captain. They admit there are individual differences in this, and men of virtue are those with a "strong will". They theorize the relation between will and the sensibilities to be *non-causal*. They look at the latter as influences or provocations. One still needs to heed them or not:

> [T]he influence of motives is of a very different nature from that of efficient causes. They are neither causes nor agents. They suppose an efficient cause, and can do nothing without it. ... Motives, therefore, may influence to action, but they do not act. They may be compared to advice, or exhortation, which leaves a man still at liberty. For in vain is advice given when there is not a power either to do or to forbear what it recommends. In like manner, motives suppose liberty in the agent, otherwise they have no influence at all.[163]

> Causes, as such, may be supposed at least to be both fixed and free, in the one case to be limited by certain conditions, and in the other case to be free from these limitations.[164] ... the will is free, is to assert that man chooses, and, in choosing, is freed or liberated from any and all of those limitations and constraints which pertain to physical agencies.[165]

169.   To both these Commonsensists, we – the person, the self – are the efficient causes. We are self-causative beings. In fact, it is our entire volitional life – our self-propelled end-seeking nature – which molds our sensible activities. It is the other way around. We are not at the mercy of our sensible nature. It is not its place to dictate to us our ends and pursuits:

> It belongs to the rational part of our nature to intend a certain port, as the end of the voyage of life.[166] ... If a man could not act without a motive, he would have no power at all; for motives are not in our power; and he that has not power over a necessary mean, has not power over the end.[167]

[163] REID, 1788/1852: 608-609.
[164] PORTER, 1895: 66.
[165] PORTER, 1895: 80.
[166] REID, 1788/1852:586.
[167] REID, 1788/1852: 609.

> The emotions undergo changes still more obvious, and often no less striking, both singly and in classes. By the very nature and as the effect of choice, certain natural sensibilities and desires are allowed and stimulated, and others are disallowed and repressed.[168]

170.   Both Reid and Porter theorize about a volitional chronic state which affects one's whole life. Reid talks about "fixed purposes" and Porter of a "state of choice". To them, choice is the absolute beginning. Fixed or natural causation has no explanatory role in human action. The only antecedents we can factor in are the particular situational circumstances of a person (where he was, what was happening at the moment, what were his physical capabilities) and the information available at the moment of decision (what was salient at the time to consider). In short, one cannot choose what one cannot do[169] and think of – one cannot choose that which never went through his mind or was forgotten. But these things are not causes. Rather they are limiting factors. They shrink the range of possible courses of action to the willing self, and that in a non-causal fashion.

171.   But this description of how our will interacts with natural causes does not accommodate the facts of experience. In the social sciences, that being economic behaviorism, marketing, social psychology, clinical psychology, criminology, etc, researchers are able to predict human behavior to a certain point. This behavior is predictable precisely because humans are not only conditioned by environmental factors and salience of information, but also conditioned by *motives*, i.e. by natural propellants to action, such as the sensibilities. If human action was produced solely by a free self, these motives would have no explanatory role. Both Reid and Porter claim that these motives can be attended to or not, that our decision and action is not limited by them, but in that case, what is the explanation for rejecting every active motivation in a certain decision?

172.   They would say, we have *reasons* to reject them or even opt for something out of this active set of motivations. In fact, Reid would consider reasons to be motivations on par with other sensibilities. Reasons are motivations because, by our reasoning, we can see that a certain object is better than another. Once we judge it to be so, we choose it. But to judge anything to be better or worse, first, one must have a *disposition* towards things. This disposition falls on the sensibilities, not on the intellect. Reid says "we may desire what we do not will, and will what we do not desire."[170] I think this is wrong. The first part is correct though. We might desire something we did not will, but it is not the case that we can will something we did not desire. When we choose X instead of Y, X was also desired. We simply adjudicated between the two desires.

173.   These rational motivations Reid calls them *rational principles*.[171] They are two, the *good upon the whole* and *duty*. The former concerns the power to form a general notion of good and bad. We begin our lives with only particular objects which seem to be conducive to our happiness and perfection. By happiness, I think Reid has in mind a

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[168] PORTER, 1895: 93.
[169] Reid exemplified this with willing to go to the moon, but that example does not apply anymore in REID, 1788/1852: 532.
[170] REID, 1788/1852: 532.
[171] REID, 1788/1852: 580.

feeling, viz. a subjective positive disposition.[172] By perfection, in this context, I think he is alluding to the development of our powers by exercising them with their proper objects, e.g. arts and sciences for our reasoning and aesthetic powers, food for our physical growing powers, and so forth. As we age, and experience accumulates, we form a general notion of what is good and bad, and so, that which is conducive to our happiness or misery.

174.   This general notion then becomes a principle of action, not a "natural" principle of action – like the appetites and desires – but a rational one. It is rational because this concept of good was, of course, developed by the intellect.[173] To this I respond, there is no evidence of such concept. Even Porter conceded that much.[174] When I say that this concept does not exist, I mean that there is no concept of happiness capable of arbitrating decisions. Such a concept would have to be *informative*, i.e. applicable to any given circumstance – and that does not exist, I think it is not even conceivable. This concept of good does not exist, and hence cannot motivate whatsoever. "To seek the good and avoid the ill"[175] is not a rational principle of action, but a sensible one. The phrase rather expresses a psychic law. Among other things, we have a drive to seek our happiness and avoid our misery.

175.   Now, concerning duty, it seems to be analogous to the good upon the whole principle. It is a power to form a general notion of duty, or moral obligation, or as we call it today *deontic necessity*. The process by which we develop it is the same, viz. by gradual accumulated experience with moral realities:

> by an original power of the mind, *when we come to years of understanding and reflection* [my italics], we not only have the notions of right and wrong in conduct, but perceive certain things to be right, and others to be wrong.[176]

176.   This perception Reid talks about is similar to sense-perception.[177] The same way we learn, by gradual experience, to judge distance in visual perception, we judge the character of moral relations between moral agents and action.[178] And in the same way visual perception depends on native concepts of externality and extension to render information to our minds about the world, so also moral perception depends on native concepts of deontic necessity to do the same. To me, the way Reid describes this process has flaws. On the one hand, he points to the *acquired* aspect of the concept of deontic necessity, but on the other, he makes it something ready and finished, and active in all exercises of our moral nature, i.e. something *primitive*. Which is it? It cannot be both. If a rudimentary concept is not there from the get-go, there would be no perception of right and wrong. There would be no germ to develop into something more complex and nuanced by experience. If there is such a concept, then it cannot be the result of an intellective process of generalization, like the concept of good.

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[172] REID, 1785/1852: 311, 349; 1788/1852: 538, 559.
[173] REID, 1788/1852: 581.
[174] PORTER, 1895: 35-36.
[175] REID, 1788/1852: 581.
[176] REID, 1788/1852: 589.
[177] REID, 1788/1852: 590.
[178] REID, 1788/1852: 589.

177.   But we are not done with the problems. Reid also recognizes that there is a sensible aspect to it. He says that "Our moral judgments are not like those ... in speculative matters ... but, from their nature, are ... accompanied with affections and feelings."[179] Which is true. Every Commonsensist affirms this. However, Reid looks at these feelings as concomitants. As sensible occurrences parallel to rational ones. What if what Reid takes to be a rational principle is rather another emotive one, like in the good upon the whole? Well, Reid recognized that such views exist[180] but he did not argue against them. Reid proposed an explanation, a description of how our active powers work, but even this was unsuccessful, as we have seen. In the end I can agree with Reid that these principles only exist in rational beings like us,[181] but that does not imply that having reasons for attending a certain good or a certain duty equates to having a motivation. A person has multiple reasons to exercise and have a healthy diet, but if there is no motivation behind it, like longevity or being a popular fitness influencer, these reasons have zero effect. I can also agree with Reid when he says that these principles "*regulate our actions and conduct*",[182] but this regulation is to be understood solely as *directing* or *management*. Ends come with the desired and appetized objects, not with reason.

178.   It leaves me now to say something about this supposed rational principle of regarding duty. Again, moral judgment, on introspection, seems to be the result of some emotional or affective response to something witnessed or thought of. Feelings are not merely "accompanying" moral judgement but precede it. This seems to me a fact of personal experience, but moral psychology is also pointing into that direction.[183] There is a special set of feelings that are usually triggered by social phenomena, and those we call moral. Those feelings can be the feeling of guilt, repentance, approbation, condemnation, obligation, prohibition, among a few others. These feelings, then, interact with concepts of responsibility, deontic necessity, and right or wrong. The origin of these concepts, to my knowledge, positivistic psychologists do not attempt to speculate. It is the province of the philosophical psychologist, and we will talk about it in a moment.

179.   But first we need to close this discussion. The two non-causal motivations, in truth, are causal – they are both manifestations of our sensibilities. The will, as it stands, seems to work completely free. This goes against all personal and systematized experience, as we have talked earlier. By the way the will is accounted, both by Reid and Porter, there is no way to attribute probabilities to two different people. Given similar circumstances, we have no other factors to consider how they might choose, since their sensible motivations can be attended or not. We cannot even look at their history of decisions. The will is free from any prior causes. A person might have been choosing consistently the same thing, but, given this account, the next time can be totally different. This means every choosing moment has no priors. One solution to this problem, provided by Porter, was to explain a particular decision by recourse to a general long-term one. The example is a man who chose to be a great

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[179] REID, 1788/1852: 592.
[180] REID, 1788/1852: 580, 589.
[181] REID, 1788/1852: 579.
[182] REID, 1788/1852: 579.
[183] CUSHMAN et al., 2010: 260-261.

scholar.[184] This decision explains a particular one of studying physics for two hours today. That is fine, but what about the decision of becoming a great scholar? It will come a time that something like a spontaneous activity of the mind brings forth some end, and this will be a sensible motivation.

180.   I speculate that these theoretical deficiencies have two sources: first, theological prejudice, as I mentioned earlier; second, a difficulty in harmonizing facts. It is a fact that we choose – that we have such a thing as free-will – but it is also a fact that our sensibilities have a huge role in our active powers – our powers to produce action. To these men, however, if we posit that our will is causally conditioned by prior motivations, this annihilates our freedom, and as Reid says, we have no power at all. Which makes the fact of free-will an illusion, and that is a huge problem for the general reliability of our self-consciousness – the touchstone or the foundation of all psychology. As a final thought, I'm just going to summarize the main points that lead me to side with the emotivistic strand of Commonsensists. First, the data of my personal experience (the one which is closer to me) and those collected and treated by scientific methodology point to a preponderance on the affections over the will and our reasoning. Second, the rationalistic account does not accommodate these data, and contains very serious theoretical deficiencies, such as the one concerning not being capable of explaining decision and human behavior in general. A third reason is that the emotivistic account coheres well with the rest of my philosophical system and data, but that will only become apparent with the next sections.

3.1.2. The emotivistic Commonsensist account

181.   Our mental realities can be classified under two broad classes: the cognitive (or intellective) and the active. Under the former are all the things we have discussed in section 2. That includes sense-perception, self-consciousness, memory, imagination, abstraction, conceptualization, reasoning, language production. None of these powers produce action. Like I said, they regulate action. Recall section 1.2. To desire or appetize some*thing*, first there must be things mapped out in our belief system or things sensed in the moment by us. These sensibilities then spring into activity over those things, and create a disposition towards them. An indifferent disposition leads to no action at all. An attractive or repulsive disposition elicits some behavioral response – even a waiting, an intentional passiveness.

182.   Now, I have been using "appetites" and "desires" in my presentation, and this may induce the reader to think that I'm talking about two different sensible manifestations. But I'm not. True, Commonsensists took their shots at these words, and tried to give them accurate and definite meanings to them; but I'm using as synonyms – and using both words is me just trying to use a word that better communicates with the reader. By both these words I mean those sensible manifestations we have towards objects. We not only feel a compulsion to obtain or repulse the object, but this compulsion is accompanied by other sensations. These sensations we usually call emotions; in the past some called "affections" and "passions". These are facts. It is a fact that our disposition towards things is twofold: a driven-or-indifferent disposition and an emotive one (whenever indifference is not the case).

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[184] PORTER, 1895: 88.

183. Whenever a desire attaches to an object, whatever that be – something imagined, remembered, or sensed – a goal or end is created, and that being salient or not in a person's conscious life. Our will, our power of election, is that power by which we satisfy or give preference to a certain drive rather than another. This volitional activity can be analyzed into two conjoined powers: the power of *contradiction* and the power of *contrariety*.[185] The former concerns the power to reject or select an action or an object of interest. The latter, the power to select an action or object of interest rather than another. This analysis, however, is wrong. There is no power of contradiction, but only the power of contrariety. This correction is better explained with some diagraming. Let ℸ be an appetized object and a_1 a course of action to obtain ℸ. Let O be the set of appetized objects, A the set of possible courses of action, and R the relation set of requirement:

$$R = \{ \langle ℸ, a_1 \rangle \}$$
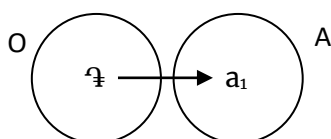
184. The relation of requirement can be phrased as ℸ requires a_1 to be obtained. The power of contradiction is the power to select or reject two things, ℸ and a_1. Let's think of selection and rejection as a YES–NO binary. If the agent wills NO to ℸ, how do we explain this rejection? We cannot explain anything with this isolated analysis of choice. And the same can be said for a_1. The reality is, there is more in O and A:

$$R = \{ \langle ℸ, a_1 \rangle, \langle ℸ, a_2 \rangle, \langle ₪, a_3 \rangle, \langle ₪, a_4 \rangle \}$$
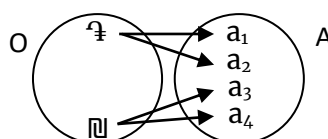
185. As I view things a NO is simply the psychological consequence of a YES. When the agent wills YES to ℸ, he automatically rejects ₪. There is no need to posit two concomitant volitions taking place, i.e. one YESing ℸ and another NOing ₪. The same applies to actions. This to say, the reality of choice only presses the psychologist to postulate a positive power of contrariety, i.e. the power to YES one object or one action rather than another. The psychologist does not need to postulate an isolated power of contradiction to YES or NO a specific object or action, or a negative power of contrariety to NO. By YESing one thing instead of another, one automatically NOs the others. And why should YESing takes precedence over NOing? First, under observation that seems to be the reality, but, second, a theory with NOing taking precedence could not explain anything. A theory of this kind states that YESing is a consequence of NOing; this might work well with two appetized objects or two conceived courses of action, but it is powerless in cases with more than two. By NOing one object among four, the agent is not YESing the other three. But by YESing one the others are NOed, and we can explain this rejection by recourse to the positive selection, something we cannot do the other way around. Perhaps the reader is not following this discussion based on diagramed symbols, and an example with concrete objects is more understandable.

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[185] ALEXANDER, 1891: 132.

186.   Let's replace ₪ with an idealized pair of pants, and ₪ by a pair of pants in the hands of the agent. The agent desires a new pair of pants. He has some vague notion of what he wants. That desire immediately moved the agent to conceive some possible courses of action to satisfy this desire. He decided to go to the mall. In the mall he entered a store and grabbed a pair of pants to evaluate. If this pair resembles enough the idealized pair of pants he YESes it, and now he needs to choose between buying with paper money or with credit card. If the pair does not resemble it enough, then he YESes the idealized pair of pants, and now has to choose between keep looking in the same store or go to another. In preferring the material pants he rejected the idealized ones and vice-versa. In preferring one action he rejected the others. The reader now can go back to the discussion above and see if it makes more sense.

187.   Let us call this theory *Motivationism*. In this theory we do not deny – we cannot – the fact of freewill. However, freewill is conditioned *causally* by motives, by sensible manifestations that urge or propel us into action. We cannot choose outside of these ongoing natural causes:

> A man may do what he pleases, but it is absurd to suppose that he can will to do what it does not please him to do.[186]

188.   A pertinent question here is to ask for the specific mechanism, or how exactly this power (i.e. the will) interacts with these causes. I do not know. This account is an attempt to accommodate the facts. Though the question is pertinent it is not in the least urgent. People did not know what air was made of and from where it came from for millennia, but that ignorance was irrelevant to the reality of air and the ability to breathe it. In the same way, people will not stop choosing and the fact of freewill will not evaporate out of existence because no exhaustive account of it was provided.

3.2. Conscience

189.   A very important part of human experience concerns morality. On introspection and experience with others, it is clear that moral phenomena are both cognitive and active, i.e. we can reason and conceptualize moral phenomena, but we also have special feelings towards that phenomena. These feelings always have a connection with a respective notion of them. This special constant connection between moral notions and feelings also suggests some special power in the human psyche. This power we call *conscience*.[187] By this power we perceive, reason about, and have certain dispositions towards *moral properties*. We know these properties to exist precisely because we have the mentioned special notions and feelings about them. This implies that an investigation over these will provide clues about what those properties are.

190.   One common trait among all moral notions and feelings is the things which trigger them, viz. sensibilities and actions. Reid and Porter would try to shun the feelings and press the will, but we have already dealt with that in the previous sections. By the willing power we simply adjudicate between pushing motives. When our moral feelings manifest themselves over a decision, that has nothing to do with the decision itself, but the *causes* of said decision – what was behind the decision.

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[186] ALEXANDER, 1891: 133.
[187] The reader can find this type of account both in ALEXANDER, 1891 and MCCOSH, 1889b.

Evidence of this are the many cases where our feelings and judgements toward a certain action change once we come to new information about the person's motivations. So, whatever moral properties are, we know that they are associated with sensibilities and actions.

191.   Now let us lean on some of these notions and feelings. Two of them are the right and wrong. As notions they function like right-wrong in math and in every truth-judgement. When we say that a certain conclusion is right or wrong in mathematics (or any other kind of calculus), that means that it was obtained by following or not the *rules*. If the rules are correctly applied, you will have a correct result. The notions of right and wrong imply, always, a *standard*. The other way these notions function is to judge whether something is the case or not. So it is not just a matter if there is a standard, but if said standard is *real* or *operative*. Moral right and wrong also imply a standard and the reality or validity of it. But these notions never come by themselves; they are accompanied with special feelings, which, having no appellations for them, we just say that it is a feeling of rightness and of wrongness – "this feels right", "this feels wrong", people say.

192.   An associated notion and feeling with right and wrong is *deontic necessity* (or more commonly obligation or duty). When we feel and judge something to be right, we also feel and judge that thing ought to be done or to be had, depending on if it is an action or a sensibility. When wrong, we feel and judge that ought not to be done or to be had. This notion and feeling also have associated notions and feelings. One pair is approbation and indignation, another is desert and punishment. Approbation as a notion, relates the person to rightness; as a feeling, it puts said person in our favor. And that usually comes too with desert. We feel a need to recompense the person, to do something nice for him. As a notion, it makes a relational triangle with the person and rightness. The same goes for wrongness, viz. person → wrongness → punishment. Indignation as a feeling puts a person in our disfavor, and this comes also with a feeling of doing something injurious to him.

193.   When approbation and indignation concern the self, they never come alone. When right, a person might feel pleased with himself; when wrong, he feels guilt or remorse. But in all this, also comes one more very eminent notion and feeling, viz. that of justice. Justice is a relational notion that connects action and feeling with *due* consequence, i.e. desert or punishment. As a feeling, when circumstances conform to the notion, we feel content about it – justice was served. When they do not – when the consequences do not follow from the motivations and actions – we feel injustice, a specific sourness and disappointment about the whole thing.

194.   So, what does all this has to say concerning moral properties? Moral properties in sensibilities and actions are: conformity or lack of it to a real and operative standard, and adequacy between said conformity or lack of it and consequence. These are the properties we perceive, reason about, and have dispositions toward, by our conscience. Now we need theories about what are these standards, how are they real, and why tribute or retribution always accompany them.

3.2.1. Conscience in a wider framework

195.   These are facts. We have these feelings and notions; we must have a power to produce them; and sensibilities and actions do have the enumerated moral properties.

These are not to be doubted or argued for, but rather explained. Evolutionary social scientists account for these facts by invoking social adaptation and selection of traits. Moral feelings and notions drive human-beings to be generally prosocial, but also attend to their self-interests. Moral standards are group conventions, and these can have different levels of explicitness. Desert and retribution are regulative social mechanisms, practiced by the members of the group, to assure general conformity. Conscience, as such, would be a cognitive-affective psycho-physical mechanism to calibrate one's behavior to a certain social context.

196.   If the mechanisms of evolution are real – such as natural selection, sexual selection, kin selection, genetic drift, and so forth – and if organisms really do have the powers to change radically by accretion of successful mutations over time; being human-beings organisms, the moral phenomena we have been talking about must be connected with these realities. This means morality did not always exist, and the one that exists now came into existence gradually by an evolutionary process. I'm not sure this whole picture is accurate, but I'm not in a position to discuss it either and come to terms with a definite and grounded opinion about it. So, I am going to defer partially to the large body of research done on this area. I am going to specifically accept that morality has to do with social regulation; that we are organisms with a sophisticated cognitive-affective machinery that deals with group phenomena; that moral properties depend on the activities, decisions, expectations, and agreements, between human-beings. This, however, is not the whole story.

3.2.1.1. Native Theism

197.   A very close and connected reality with conscience is religion. Hodge would phrase it this way:

> If such be the facts of our moral nature, it is plain that we are under the necessity of assuming the existence of an extramundane, personal God, on whom we are dependent, and to whom we are responsible.[188]

198.   Hodge makes this judgment after enumerating the facts about morality. That we have a sense of right and wrong; that morality is something *sui generis*; that our moral opinions are not under our willpower; that our moral notions and feelings imply the notion and reality of a moral standard; and also, that of responsibility. All these, says Hodge, cannot be disconnected with a tendency to put God in the fabric of reality. I'm not sure this is right. I think many people in the history of humanity do not so readily connect morality with supernatural agencies. Specifically, it is not a universal fact that people associate a moral order to supernatural agencies with legislative, judicial, and executive powers. Sure, there was some sense of responsibility, e.g. Hellenists and Asatruar[189] believed in merit, that if you take your life into your hands, and strive to impress the gods, you might get to enter the Elysian Fields or Valhalla. But this is hardly a moral order. Even the gods were under the necessity of fate, and this fate did not seem to be morally laden.

199.   The fact stands, however, that there is a tendency to posit supernatural agencies, that these agencies have some control over our lives, that we owe something

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[188] HODGE, 1872a: 238.
[189] Plural of Asatrui, i.e. a person that worships the Norse gods, such as Odin, Thor, Freya, and Tyr.

to them, that they judge us, and can recompense or punish. Hence, I rather speculate that our *Native Theism* is disconnected with our conscience, in the way Hodge proposed.[190] It seems more plausible to me that that connection is the product of later acquired speculative powers, mainly by the peoples living between the Near East and South Asia. These were the peoples who dramatically extended moral realities to supernatural agencies, and related to them very deeply in this sense. A theistic view radically changes the picture surrounding conscience. If these supernatural agencies are real, and share with us, to a certain point, our spiritual nature (cognitive, sensible, and volitive), evolution does not explain this. There is something else beyond evolutionary mechanisms to our conscience and moral realities.

200.   If *Generic Theism* is the case – a theory based on an extra-mundane, person-like agency, creator, preserver, and governor of the world –,[191] and our Native Theism, like other common sense intuitions, really points to divine agencies; then our conscience is not merely an "organ" to calibrate our behavior towards prosociality and conformity to an emergent ingroup moral standard. Conscience informs and affectively responds to moral realities connected to divine agencies. There are moral standards beyond ingroup conventions; there are recompenses and penalties beyond those acted by ingroup peers; maybe some of our moral judgements and feelings point to moral properties that have nothing to do with the systems we were born into and live in, and many of those concern these divine agencies and not other social peers. This is the claim of the Calvinist. Not only that Generic Theism is true, but that we live under a moral order divinely instituted, by the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the triune God of Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

201.   But before we go to making a case for Generic Theism, which is important to the perceptions of Native Theism, first we should have a look into this claimed common sense intuition. Is there such a thing as Native Theism? One way to defend it is by making an abductive inference:

1. *Explanandum*: Religion is a universal phenomenon of human practice. Religion being a set of stories, notions, and rituals concerning supernatural person-like agencies.
2. There is a special intuition in human beings that makes them perceive supernatural person-like agencies.
3. *Explanans*: Therefore, religion is a universal cultural trait in human societies because it is part of the human mental frame.

202.   The purpose of this argument is to warrant the second premise by showing its explanatory power in the conclusion. It is supposed to suggest that, if one denies the fact of premise 2, the fact of premise 1 gets very weird. That is, if we deny 2, 1 seems an extraordinary coincidence, given that many human societies were completely isolated from others for long periods of time. With the implication that cultural borrowing, which is also a fact, does not do the same explanatory work Native Theism does. Now, as we have seen in the discussion concerning possible worlds, explanatory relations and entities cannot be accepted just because they connect well with the facts to be

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[190] Not all Commonsensists proposed Native Theism. Reid and Stewart were in favor of *acquired* Theism MIRANDA, 2021b: 12-15.
[191] HODGE, 1872a: 204.

explained. We still need some evidence for these relations and entities. Thus, we need some evidence for the reality of Native Theism.

203.   Evidence for this intuition must satisfy the criteria presented above: it must be native, universal, and necessary, i.e. it must be integral to human nature, it must be found in the large majority of human beings, and it must be very hard to avoid its influence in our cognitive activity. Attempts have been made at satisfying these criteria.[192] There are two tendencies, and both seem to fall into incomplete induction. One concludes that the person–like supernatural agencies manifested first as ancestor worship and progressed later, with the enlargement of societies, into higher moralistic deities (TORREY, 2017). The other, the opposite; it started with purely spiritual moral deities, and then developed (in a regressive sense) into animism, polytheism, totemism, and ancestor worship (LANG, 1909; SCHMIDT, 1935). The reality seems to be, there was a mixture of all these practices and conceptions around the world and within the same community:

> The great advances that social anthropology has made in and by field research have turned our eyes away from the vain pursuit of origins, and the many once disputing schools about them have withered away. I think that most anthropologists would today agree that it is useless to seek for a primordium in religion. Schleiter says, truly, 'all evolutionary schemes of religion, without exception, in the determination of the primordium and the serial stages of alleged development, proceed upon a purely arbitrary and uncontrolled basis'. Also, it has been clearly established that in many primitive religions peoples' minds function in different ways at different levels and in different contexts. So a man may turn to a fetish for certain purposes, and appeal to God in other situations; and a religion can be both polytheistic and Monotheistic, according to whether Spirit is thought of as more than one or as one. It is now also clear that even in the same primitive society there may be, as Radin pointed out, wide differences in this respect between individuals, differences he attributes to differences of temperament.[193]

204.   None of these evolutionary theories, anyway, say a thing about the origin of the origin. It is not enough to argue for a starting point. Torrey, for instance, presents a section about the various stages of brain development, from *homo habilis* to modern *homo sapiens*. The purpose of this section is to show the reader the basic structural and cognitive requirements for the development of later beliefs about the afterlife and interaction with deceased ancestors. But then the author jumps directly into the ancestor worship practice, this being a consequence in the belief of the afterlife. But where does this belief in the afterlife comes from? Why did the earliest human farmers believe their ancestors had anything to do with their lives, especially with their successes and failures in farming and hunting? There is no explanation for these facts. Some other theories focus on social utility and intergroup competition. Religion

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[192] The books and articles I read to this point about this matter were the following: AMBROSINO, 2019; BARRETT, 2011; 2012; EVANS-PRITCHARD, 1965; HAIDT, 2013; LANG, 1909; SCHMIDT, 1935; TORREY, 2017.
[193] EVANS-PRITCHARD, 1965: 104-105.

is adaptive because it facilitates social cohesion, and social cohesion has a competitive advantage over more fragmented groups. This might suggest the conclusion that the origin of religion was a cultural trait selected by group competition. This however is no answer to an origins question. It is analogous to present Neodarwinian evolution as an answer to the origins of life.

205.   A better answer is the one presented by Barrett.[194] Person-like supernatural agencies are an accrued development out of a cognitive mechanism of *agency detection*. We constantly attribute agency (intention, purpose) to events and things, even when we are sensible to the possibility of false positives.[195] We also have a tendency, from infancy, to be design theorists, i.e. we readily look around us and posit that a person-like agency authored the world we live in.[196] And it is not very hard really to connect the data of conscience to agencies, and later develop it into a full ethical religion (like the ones originated in the Near East and South Asia):

> So from childhood, we assume that many actions are intrinsically good or bad. We hold intuitions that if someone knows the facts of the situation, that person will automatically know the goodness or badness of the action in question. Gods often do know the facts of the situation, so they know if someone has been good or bad. Fortune or misfortune can look (intuitively) like punishment or reward at the hand of a morally interested supernatural agent. These relationships make the idea of a morally interested god or spirit fairly natural and easy to understand and believe in once you have the idea of a god or spirit in place.[197]

206.   So, yes, there is a "religious instinct". An instinct to posit person-like supernatural agencies. These agencies can influence events related to our lives, they are interested in our lives, and we have a drive to relate to them in a venerating ritualistic fashion. This is a human fact from time immemorial (universal), it is present from infancy (native), it can be developed into more sophisticated theories, it is culturally transmitted, and finally it is a stubborn fact (necessary) – like I mentioned, even when people think these agencies to be false or illusions, in certain moments, where more heavy deliberation cannot be made, or materialist metaphysics are useless,[198] their minds revert to the natural state of positing these agencies:

> A pendulum when at rest hangs perpendicularly to the horizon. It may by extraneous force be made to hang at any degree of inclination. But as soon as such force is removed, it is sure to swing back to its normal position. Under the control of a metaphysical theory, a man may deny the existence of the external world, or the obligation of the moral law; and his disbelief may be sincere, and for a time persistent; but the

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[194] Barrett is not the original author of this cognitive mechanism. But since it was him who first presented to *me* this mechanism, I talk about him.

[195] BARRETT, 2011: 100-103; 2012: Ch 1.

[196] BARRETT, 2012: Ch. 3.

[197] BARRETT, 2012: Ch 5.

[198] I remember watching one of Bill Maher's (a renown outspoken atheist) shows where he says that, when he realized he was unable to stop smoking he made a commitment to God that he would stop, and that worked for him – though he is aware this was a kind of mental trick he pulled on himself.

moment the speculative reasons for his disbelief are absent from his mind, it of necessity reverts to its original and natural convictions.[199]

207.   The important question now is the reliability of this intuition. Can we trust its perceptions? The answer is mixed. The variety of religions strongly suggest that our Native Theism lacks precision.[200] At a basic level it gives very little. "Supernatural person-like agency" can be applied to many things. Hence, much inference and exploration must be made to supplement the rudimentary knowledge it provides.[201] It is like distance judgement. We cannot judge distance by just looking at the way objects lay in front of us. The way they overlap and their different sizes relative to the point of observation, is not enough to make accurate judgments of distance. It requires a lot of experience and inference. That is why, as I mentioned earlier, athletes and sailors are better than other classes of people in these judgments. However, after all this experience, there comes a time we need a *ruler*. Something definite with which to measure distance. The ruler that straightens up our Native Theism is the Bible, or *special revelation*.

208.   Recall the distinction between natural theology and revealed theology in §163. Natural theology is a methodic and systematic research enterprise that extends beyond our Native Theism, by means of empirical evidence and accepted rules of inference. Revealed theology, on the other hand, further pushes and revises the boundaries set by natural theology by adding scriptural data. The qualifier "special" implies that there are other types of revelation. And there are. The data of our Native Theism are classified under natural revelation, but also everything else around us, from celestial bodies, through the history of humanity, to vegetal organisms. So to warrant our spontaneous and rudimentary beliefs, informed by our Native Theism, and get to a proper knowledge of God, we still need to make a case for Generic Theism and for the triune God. In this way, by warranting our Native Theism, we will get to Calvinism, and this will provide a different framework to explain the materials our conscience works with.[202]

4. NATURAL REVELATION AND SPECIAL REVELATION

209.   The way the relation between these two sets of data was described above suggests the order of presentation. We start with natural theology. Since revealed theology goes further and corrects natural theology, it is proper to make a case for Calvinism by following the same order Baxter suggested in the beginning (§50.). First we need to squeeze out, as much as possible, from our natural cognitive powers a case

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[199] HODGE, 1872a: 198.

[200] The same can be said for conscience concerning one true objective morality.

[201] See section 8.2.2.2 in FARIA, 2017. Faria argues that this cognitive trait we have been calling Native Theism does not provide knowledge of God as we understand Him in the great Abrahamic religions. Generic Theism to Faria includes all the omni- traits and perfections and, understood in this dilated sense, Native Theism does not provide any information about them. Hence it cannot provide *accurate* knowledge of God.

[202] Natural Theology: the science of God based *solely* on natural revelation (i.e. without the Bible). Revealed theology: the science of God based *both* on natural and special revelation.

for Generic Theism. Then, we will do the same for the Christian religion. Once this is done, we can step into revealed theology, and start expanding on specific Calvinist claims, and finally get to the Trinity (the triune God).

4.1. Natural Theology: External Evidence for Generic Theism

210.   The first step is to clarify what is Generic Theism. We already enumerated some properties in §200.: a theory based on an extra-mundane, person-like agency, creator, preserver, and governor of the world.

a theory

By this I mean a network of concepts and logical relations that clarify in such a way our understanding of the relevant realities, that those realities cease to be weird, unpredictable, and unconnected. In fewer words, it is a conceptual tool to eliminate anomalies in the ways we picture reality.[203] So "theory", "hypothesis", and "explanation", should all be understood as synonyms.[204] There are two major types of explanations *nomothetic* and *ideographic*. The former accounts for the facts by directing them to the way things regularly function. E.g. a mechanic might posit that the proximity sensors are always beeping because at least one of them might have fallen from its place, and is facing the rear bumper – this is the most *common cause*. The latter tells a story about how the facts came to be what they are. Not a generalized story like the previous, but a specific story. E.g. the mechanic after investigating the problem found out that some of the proximity sensors were rewired in an odd way, and he also found that the rear bumper had some tinkering marks. From these data he conjures up a story that the previous owner hit the car on the back, and then half-fixed the car with lazy shortcut solutions; one of them being the sloppy rewiring of the proximity sensors. Generic Theism would be better classified as mostly nomothetic.

person-like agency

If it is still not clear what is a person, I will repeat it here. It is an intelligent, sensitive, and volitive being. By agency I mean something that has a power to make something else happen. A person has agency in virtue of producing effects by their decisions and actions.

Extra-mundane, creator, preserver, and governor of the world

By world I mean the sum total of *created* reality we are a part of. Hence, extra-mundane means that the person-like agency is *not of this* world. It does not mean that the agency is *out* of the world, though. It is not of this world because the agency created the world, and not only that, but it also preserves it. It means that without its action upon the world, the latter would collapse into disorder and destruction. And this preservation implies the governance of the world. There are laws operating over the world to make it function properly. Being not of this world and having these

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[203] WALTON, 2016: difference between an argument and an explanation 69; how to test if someone understood the explanation 96; criteria for a good explanation 100.

[204] In the positivistic science technolect, these words have different meanings. They are all pointing to explanations, but in different stages. A hypothesis is *tentative* explanation. This means its epistemic status in the scientific community is still low. A theory, on the other hand, is a warranted explanation. This means the explanation was mostly accepted by the relevant parts of the community (scientists specialized in the field), and it enjoys a high epistemic status.

powers makes this agency supernatural – it is above and unconditioned by the intertwined causal chains that connect the various entities that populate the world.

211.   So how are we to go about proving Generic Theism? First by making a case for the possibility of the supernatural. We need to open the possibility for the existence of unbodied persons with extraordinary powers to create, preserve, and govern a physical universe. Second, by showing the possibility that the world had a beginning. If the world is created, it must have a beginning. Third, we have to show that the world order is due to planning. We cannot argue for the powers of preservation and governance if the world is an unplanned chaotic mess. Fourth, we have to make a case for the necessity of a person-like agency behind said creation and order. This would be a case for a best explanation. Given the facts that the world had a beginning and is a well-functioning design, only an extra-mundane powerful person can explain them. If we are successful in these four sets of argumentation, we then can consider the more specific Christian Theism.

4.1.1. Supernaturalism

212.   To better understand what Supernaturalism is, it is useful to first make a statement about Naturalism. By Naturalism I understand a class of theories with the central claim that the whole of reality can be explained in terms of time, space, and causal relations. Supernaturalism goes beyond. It states that there is more than space, time, and causal relations. Naturalism, therefore, makes a stronger claim. Truth is, this claim can never be conclusively proved since no one has access to the whole of reality. Supernaturalism makes a weaker claim. We need only to show a single case of a non-natural occurrence. Supernaturalism is not to be confused with the paranormal. Paranormal occurrences are simply outside of the normal – "normal" meaning that which is usual or recurrent. It might be the case that some paranormal occurrence has a natural explanation, and that would not make it normal. Many people might use "paranormal" to include the supernatural, however I think it is useful to make the distinction. "Supernatural" is a stricter term, and the one that points to what we want to discuss.

213.   Supernaturalism is evidenced by something that is in our purview every day, viz. the mind – the spirit. In section 2.2.3. we talked about the intuitions of duality, externality, and extension. These intuitions point to a substantive difference between internal mental (or spiritual) stuff and external extended stuff, and whatever we are as persons, that is mental.[205] Now, this does not imply Supernaturalism in a clear-cut step. The mental has its own causal constrains. Here are some marks of mental substance:

- It can manifest in matter (in external extended substance).
- It is temporally involved (it occupies intervals of time).
- It is weaved also into causal chains (it is somewhat constrained by causal necessity).
- It can store and process information in a meaningful way.
- It can be volitive.

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[205] I have already put in parenthesis, but I want to highlight that "mind", "spirit", and "soul" as I use them are all synonyms.

214.   The connection of the mental with the material is so close and continuous that it might suggest there is nothing about the former that transcends the natural.[206] However if we think a little about the matter, soon we can see how it is not so. The first thing that comes forth is the fact that mental substance is not completely space involved. We observe that the mental can be *located* – it can be here or there. But this location is diffused. The mental has no extension. It is not tridimensional and divisible; it has no levels of density or rarity, it is shapeless, and it is penetrable (i.e. it can share locality with other things). How do we know this?

215.   First, we have the continuous, 24/7, personal empirical evidence of humanity, for the fact that mind is located in human organic bodies. There is evidence also of out of body phenomena. This evidence comes mostly from unreliable personal testimony. However, we also have the Parnia studies[207] which showed these phenomena to be paranormal (in the above sense). One of the cardiac arrest patients described a very accurate picture of what was happening from a top corner of the room –[208] the evidence would be even stronger if this patient had been taken to a shelved room.[209] This level of consciousness and accurateness of description is very unexpectable and strange. This one confirmed instance of a real out of body experience is enough to open the possibility that mental substance does not require material substance to exist (they can exist separately), and more specifically, it opens the possibility for the mind, as the bearer of our personal being, to survive bodily death – which would be a breach of causal necessity and spatiality, and hence, Supernaturalism. Anyway, both sets of evidence strongly suggest the mental to be located, as I have already mentioned.

216.   Second, another set of evidence that works against full spatiality and causal necessity are the cases of *hydranencephaly*. Many scientists believe the mind to be isomorphic with the brain – an expectable conception given the naturalistic assumptions. But this cannot be the case. Given the naturalistic theory, we should expect lack of brain structures to result in lack of mental features. We can observe some mental features to be preserved by other structures, when the previous are damaged or destroyed. However, there is not much to work with in hydranencephaly. This condition is described by an absence of the "brain cerebral hemispheres and replace[ment] by sacs filled with cerebrospinal fluid."[210] True, many of these people have short life spans, with lots of deficiencies (blindness, deafness, seizures,

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[206] With the implication that everything material is spatiotemporally and causally involved.

[207] PARNIA et al, 2014.

[208] Regarding this one case Parnia said the following: "This is significant, since it has often been assumed that experiences in relation to death are likely hallucinations or illusions, occurring either before the heart stops or after the heart has been successfully restarted, but not an experience corresponding with 'real' events when the heart isn't beating. In this case, consciousness and awareness appeared to occur during a three-minute period when there was no heartbeat. This is paradoxical, since the brain typically ceases functioning within 20-30 seconds of the heart stopping and doesn't resume again until the heart has been restarted. Furthermore, the detailed recollections of visual awareness in this case were consistent with verified events" in https://www.southampton.ac.uk/news/2014/10/07-worlds-largest-near-death-experiences-study.page.

[209] These shelves were purposely installed in some rooms to test the out of body experiences. If the patients really could observe themselves from a top position, they would also be capable of seeing the images in the shelves.

[210] GLOBAL HYDRANENCEPHALY FOUNDATION extracted from https://www.disabled-world.com/health/neurology/hydranencephaly.php

paralysis, hypertonia, cognitive impairments), but others do not. There is an extraordinary case of a man who had a general IQ of 130 and studied mathematics, and he had "virtually no brain".[211] Other cases of normal cognitive function lacking proper structures can be mentioned, but it serves no purpose in my argumentation here.[212] This evidence also suggests a certain level of independence of the mental from the material.

217.   Third, and finally, we have already seen that our will is not *completely* at the mercy of antecedent causes (3.1.2.). We can select which causes to act on us. This ability outright negates natural causality and spatiality. It is a breach in spatiality because we are not dependent on the activity of hormones, neurotransmitters, and other chemicals that concur in human action. The corollary is that we, the personal self, are supernatural entities. We are not completely inline with the spatiotemporal and causal aspects of reality. We can manifest our being in matter, but we are not completely limited by it. Our personal self is mostly located in an organic body, but not always. Our cognition is most of the time intermediated by material structures, but not always. Much of our action might be traced back to causal necessity, but much of it also to decisions, i.e. to the selection of attending sensible causes. All these exceptions open the possibility for the supernatural. I would assert the *fact* of Supernaturalism.

218.   If Supernaturalism is the case, what else might be supernatural besides minds? That conception of the world puts no limits to many of the powers, the effects of which, we regularly observe in our daily lives. But it is one thing to speculate on possibilities, it is another to consider possibilities based on evidence. The evidence for these amazing supernatural powers is indirect. That means the powers are inferred from the observed effects – like all other powers (powers are not observed). We start with the beginning of the world. If the world did not have a beginning, it could not have been created.

4.1.2. Beginning of the world

219.   There is a tendency among Commonsensists to think of causality as one of the common sense intuitions. This intuition is usually phrased as "everything that begins to exist must have a cause".[213] McCosh also says we have such an intuition, but he formulates it differently. The intuition is that of A having a capacity to produce a change B.[214] Porter thinks the same.[215] I think neither of these are correct. First, because there is no evidence of this, and second, because we do not need to posit this intuition operating over our cognition. The intuitions of affectation and capacity are enough to guarantee future cognitions of cause and effect. We have seen that affectation is the basic intuition of the reality that things can make something happen to others. Conjoined with this is the intuition of capacity, which points to the reality that the same individual thing can manifest itself in many different ways. The word we use to designate a thing going from a state of being to another is "change". This is covered by the latter intuition. The words we use to designate a thing making another

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[211] NAHM et al., 2017.
[212] The reader can take a look at the cited article.
[213] REID, 1785/1852: 455; STEWART, 1876: 66.
[214] MCCOSH, 1875: 228.
[215] PORTER, 1886: 572.

change is "cause", and the produced change "effect". This is covered by the former intuition.

220.   However, this is not the same as having an intuition of cause and effect. The concept of causality includes change, and change is something that must be experienced. We are prepared to identify affectation and capacity in change, but we acquire by experience the *processual* character of change in things going from one state of being to another (capacity), and of things affecting other things (affectation). This to say, a notion of cause and effect is something acquired by experience.[216] Now let us connect this discussion with the beginning of the world.

221.   The argument should not be: everything that begins to exist must have a cause, the world exists, therefore the world must have had a beginning and a cause (with the implication that before that there was no world).[217] But, the reasoning is not that syllogistic. First, we notice that it is very hard to find something that was not produced by something else. We then latch our minds into that fact, and start regressing: this did that, and that did that, and so on. After a short while we might reach an unsurpassable horizon. By our iterative tendency we might speculate some more links in this regressive chain, but soon we realize that there must have been a beginning with no further antecedents. There must have been a moment of spontaneous existence. We infer, then, that the world came into existence in this way. But this is just speculation based on daily experience with normal events. Do we have any evidence, or any way to "travel" through this regressive causal chain and reach a starting point, a beginning to observed reality? No. Specifically, there is no evidence for the spontaneous existence of the world.

222.   What cosmologists, astronomers, and other specialized researchers claim about the origin of the world, is that there was a miniscule extremely hot dense state which then inflated into enormous proportions, generating everything we identify as natural reality. However, there are no claims, to my knowledge, that this initial state

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[216] Back in 2020 when I wrote the first half of the thesis – which includes section 2 – I was not aware of most of the contemporary research concerning the innateness (or nativity, which is the word I have been using) of certain intuitions. This to say, most of my proposed common sense principles were speculation based on readings of other fellow Commonsensists and my own introspective explorations. After regressing as much as I could on my infant memories and hypothesizing about how much I had to have in place to have those mental states, I found no causal intuition and no need for such intuition. This method might not be very reliable (epistemically considered), but, now (2021), addressing this specific topic about the innateness of causal cognition, I found that my speculations can be warranted by a more sophisticated account in GOODMAN et al. 2011. The article is above my paygrade, but I think the gist of it is that it is possible to start with more rudimentary (or primitive) intuitions, and through them learn, and acquire a notion of causality. Though these lower intuitions do not apply many times to the perceived intervention events ("which include actions and experimental manipulations"), by successive operations of abstraction, one can get to a notion of causality. Those intuitions are "the feeling of self-efficacy discussed by Maine de Biran, proprioceptive processing as suggested by White (2009), or, more broadly, an agency-detector able to identify the actions of intentional agents (see Saxe & Carey, 2006)", and this "patchwork collection of partial input analyzers [the ones enumerated], which pick out only a portion of intervention variables, is sufficient to bootstrap abstract causal knowledge". The larger framework here, I would guess, is that of evolutionary ecology, i.e. the acquisition of these native "input analyzers" was by multigenerational accretion of successful adaptions relative to some ecological niche. But I think these results might also be accommodated by my Commonsense-Calvinist framework. There is nothing in them that requires an evo-eco wider explanation.

[217] It is not a syllogism of a common sense intuition plus an empirical fact.

before inflation had popped into existence or existed from eternity in the Big Bang framework – it is just there, and then grew exponentially. There are, though, past-eternal theories. Though Big Bang cosmology is mostly dominant in the media and formal education, at the brink of that scientific field it is very uncertain, and there are other theories in competition for the available evidence. This means that there is some likelihood that our reasoning from daily experience with causality is wrong.

223.   What to do now? From what these positivistic scientists claim, we can at least say that the natural world, *as we know it*, is developing into something else. It is expanding with no further adding of matter, and there will be a time that things are so sparsed out that it will look empty. If it is expanding, this suggests it was smaller, and here is where they differ in their pictures of the early universe. Some say spacetime and everything else came with the Bang, others say this Bang is not the whole story; spacetime precedes it and is possibly infinite. Whether the Bang is an absolute beginning or simply the beginning of a different phase of the universe, is irrelevant for the claim of there being a beginning – there was a beginning to the world that specifically *conspired in favor of our existence*. This is the sense in which we think about our supernatural Creator in Generic Theism, and this is the way we intuit Him in Native Theism. It is irrelevant if there are other worlds or other phases of this world; what matters is if there was a beginning to all the features of the world that occasioned our existence.

4.1.3. An ordered world

224.   And this brings us to a discussion concerning what philosophers called the *design* of the world. For about four centuries, arguments from the order of nature (to the existence of God) were mostly an enumeration of various instances of functional traits in organisms and the environment, and a probable conclusion that God authored these harmonies. Most recent arguments were revised into abductions – God explains the harmonies rather than a probable conclusion from them. The adduced evidence can go from physical constants (gravitational constant, Plank constant, etc), to Earth's properties (distance from the Sun, magnetic field, temperature, etc), to human functional cognition, to the intricacies of genetics. However, this is not enough to provide a probable inference to purposeful design, and it is not in the least clear that we are rationally allowed to posit such design as an explanatory entity – would say the skeptics.

225.   If we are here thinking about all this, we can expect to see things "conspiring" in favor of our existence. The factors that contributed to our existence are just those we can observe and understand how their interplay occasioned our existence. So there is nothing extraordinary to explain here, and there is nothing extraordinary to infer from these factors. There are many false positives of this sort. People see too much design around them. Just look at conspiracy theories; how many of those came up to be true? People observe how conveniently this and that factor aligned to a certain end, and they cannot avoid speculating that a person, or a group of people with shared interests, *made* those factors to align. Design arguments, hence, are nothing more than what people do when they infer or theorize conspiracies. However, conspiracies do exist. The question is: what kind of evidence would prove that such a conspiracy took place? I.e. if functional relations between things is not enough to infer design, what else would count as evidence?

226.   I think it is easy to answer this question – to a certain point. We can easily conceive how to prove a conspiracy, at least by human beings. Notes in a notebook, recollections and plans in a diary, meeting minutes, video records, and so forth. This however has no application to the constitution of the world. If the world was designed, we have no access to its blueprints. Also, we have never witnessed somebody designing a world, which makes the claim of that possibility pretty extravagant. In my view, though we instinctively see design in the order of things, it seems impossible to make a probable inference from that order to design. This leaves us with abduction. There are only two possible types of explanation to this order: a theory of design or a theory of coincidences. The former posits that this order is the outcome of careful planning, with the implication that things are what they are to reach a certain end or purpose. The latter might posit different things. It might posit that the world could have been different, but this one is what we got, i.e. if we rewind everything and play again we might have very different results. And it might posit that there is only one way things could have been.

227.   First thing to notice is that, there is no way to prove that the world might have been different or could only be this way. The evidence required to substantiate any of these theories would have to be extra-mundane. When we say that things could have been different, first, we think about the "things" in terms of types (as generalizations of things with common traits); and second, we have evidence that those things happened in different ways. E.g. throwing a ball to a basket ring might result in many different outcomes, and we have evidence of them. To say that the world might have been different we would have to present evidence of other worlds – which we do not have. The same applies to the claim of exclusivity. Without the evidence of other equal worlds, we cannot claim this is the only way this world could have been. This makes any theory of coincidences to be put aside.

228.   Even if we insist in coincidence theories, the evidence we have of barely analogous occurrences to world formation does not suggest them. Whenever we play with the assembling of parts to make a functional whole we can observe two things: that the outcomes never make an ordered whole and are never the same. The former evidence goes against coincidence theories that postulate our world to be a fortuitous outcome among others; the latter goes against coincidence theories that postulate some form of fatalism. Examples of these experiments would be to throw scrabble pieces into the floor and expect any of them to form a phrase or a word; to shake the pieces of a 3D puzzle in a bag and expect to have any of them assembled; to expect hydroerosion to sculpt a staircase at the feet of a coastal cliff; and so forth. The fact is, whenever we find an ordered assembling of parts it has an author. Hives are made by bees; nests are made by birds; dams are made by beavers; tunnel networks with habitable pockets are made by rodents and insects; cocoons are made by insects. All these are forms of life with some level of cognition and feeling; and the natural aspect of the world, when viewed as a system composed of various interconnected subsystems, from gene code to galaxy formation, is much more complex than anything any animal or human-being can create.

229.   Is this assemblage-of-parts property enough to make an inductive analogy to the world? It seems to me grabbing at straws, but at least it gives some materials for a design theorist to work with; we cannot say the same for coincidence theories, which

are based on extravagant speculation – speculation with no evidential basis. So, to summarize, we may not be able to infer design from the large scale order of the world, but we can do it by experimenting with and observing mereological phenomena. We may not explain, right away, order by appealing to design – recall that we are not allowed to posit explanatory entities without evidence –, but from our inductive analogy we get to design, and this allows us to posit design as something related to our world, in such a way that clarifies to us the order that it has. Since design is, as much as we know, a cognitive power, and cognition, on its turn, a power of mental substance, whatever designed this world was mental.

4.1.4. A person-like agency

230.   Hitherto we have seen that Supernaturalism is the case; that the world most likely had a beginning; that its order suggests design – though our evidence is only analogical –; and that design is a mental power. The question now is, what kind of mental thing is behind all this? The first connection we need to address though is the beginning and the design. If the world came into existence in accordance with some design, then the designer must have some relation with the beginning of the world. That relation must be one of control. The designer might have direct control, which would make him the creator too; or he might have indirect control, which makes him a kind of foreman. One might conceive the world to be designed but not created by the same thing. And yes, nothing from what we have seen closes this possibility. It might be the case that the designer and the creator are two distinct entities. We can even conceive the designing and the creating to be some kind of group effort. There are a few combinations on this, but this is irrelevant to our person-like intuition.

231.   This however does not block various theories about the mechanism or the process by which this design is fulfilled. The world can be viewed as a well-functioning machine, with no need of posterior supernatural interventions. It can be seen as a well-functioning machine with regular or scarce interventions. It can be seen as something that requires complete (or incessant) work by the person-like entities. But none of these speculations goes against our intuition of preservation and governance. Depending on the favorite theory, it only suggests more or less presence of these person-like entities in our lives. What is really constrained by what we have put forward to this point is the requirement of these person-like entities to have supernatural agency. To design and give rise to something like the world we live in demands very extraordinary powers. Supernatural powers for sure, and of a very high order – creative powers to give the world a beginning; cognitive powers to design it.

232.   This being the case, it suggests further that this type of being might be purely mental. We have seen in section 4.1.1. that mental substance is not completely restrained by time, space, and causal necessity. Since world design and creation is something completely outside of natural limitations, it seems the only way for a being to be this free from them is to be completely mental. So, to this point we got only to a purely spiritual super powerful world-building machine. In creating and designing there is no need for personality – a pure spirit that wills and has affections. This impersonal world building mind (or minds) is compatible with Pantheism and Panentheism, but not with our Generic Theism and the common intuition that this mind is interested in our lives. We need some additional reasonings to vindicate our Theist theory and intuition.

233.   I think that creation implies a desire, at least. The motivation answers the why question of creation. We can also speculate, in line with the machine metaphor, that this spirit is programmed to create a world like ours. But if we are going to use analogical reasoning, this does not seem to be suggested in creation. Whenever some programmed machine creates something, that programming was coded into it by someone else, and that someone, of course, had some motivation to do it. So, from the experience we have with natural and supernatural phenomena, it seems creative powers are always accompanied, not only by cognitive but also sensible powers. This step revises our machine spirit into an animal-like spirit. This is compatible with Zoolatry (or Zoism), but again, not enough for Theism. To get to personhood we need to combine the titanic designing powers with more complex sensibilities. As far as we know, only personal beings have complex designing powers and sensibilities. Since the level of designing we are discussing is much higher than ours, whatever this mind (or minds) is, we are allowed to say it is person-like. The fact that we can partially comprehend the functional organization of the world, already suggests its designer to be like us, that is for sure; but without this piecemeal inferential exercise, our Generic Theism and intuitions would not be warranted.

234.   From this point, though, we cannot posit their intentions. We cannot speculate how well or ill intentioned are they. We have a mixing of joys and sorrows in the whole history of humanity, but also in a single person's life. Depending on previous theories, about preservation and governance, these agencies can be seen as cold and distant, occasional sadists, or caring masters.

235.   With Generic Theism vindicated, we now proceed to Christian Theism.

4.2. Christian Evidences: External evidence for the Christian God

236.   Many cults and other attempts at religion gravitate around some person or group of persons. They consider them supernatural agencies, the guarantors of life and safety, their kings to whom they owe obedience and reverence. This is especially true of Imperial Cults, such as the Chinese and Japanese, but also the Roman and Egyptian. A few lone wolves also claim this supernatural status to themselves such as Empedocles of Acragas (490-430 BC), Jesus Christ (4 BC-30 AD), and His copycat Simon Magus. However, their claims are incompatible. If one is true, the others cannot be. It might also be the case that all are false. This is to be decided by evidence. And there is no evidence for the divinity of royal bloodlines. Empedocles threw himself of from Mount Etna to prove his claim – he was wrong. There is no evidence to go about evaluating Simon's claims too, but even if it was, this Simon from the start gives an air of carpetbagger.

237.   But we have evidence for Jesus Christ. It is possible to make a case for the Christian religion by arguing evidentially for His existence, claims to divinity, and His supernatural workings on others and Himself. These three facts make the Christian religion a genuine religion. It is a set of beliefs and practices that provide a more accurate picture of and closer relationship with God. The conditional rule that is regulating the overall argument is that, If Jesus is who He says He is, He must be able to perform not only supernatural feats, but also paranormal, i.e. he must be able to defy space, time, and causal necessity; and the specific way this defiance takes place

must be unique to Him. If it was not unique to Him, others could make successful claims to divinity. Now I need to show how to go about the burden of proof.

238.   To prove Jesus' existence, I need to prove past facts concerning Him. Proving these facts should raise the likelihood of His existence. Facts such as His wanderings in Palestine, the disturbances He caused, and His punishment by crucifixion. This puts Jesus at least in natural reality. Then I need to make a case for His supernatural paranormal powers, such as curing blindness, paraplegia, and resurrection. Finally, He needs to view Himself as God – as participating in world creation, preservation, and governance.

4.2.1. New Testament reliability

239.   The biggest source of biographical data is the New Testament. The four gospels are written as biography, and Paul's epistles contain what seem to be oral extra-biblical traditions concerning Jesus' life. Also, it is the New Testament that regulates archeological and other non-biblical textual findings, i.e. first we read it, and then we go seek stuff in the world that we should find given its truth. Coherence between, on the one hand, artifacts and extra-biblical accounts; and on the other, the New Testament, is indicative of veridical reporting, which strengthens its reliability. Now, there are books dedicated to this topic, and I'm not going to add anything to the discussion. My goal is to arrange the data into a specific argumentation sequence that bridges Generic Theism with Christian Theism, as we have been putting things forward to this point.

240.   The New Testament is reliable because:[218]

  i)   Its contents are the most well preserved among all other ancient ones. There are more than five thousand manuscripts and fragments of manuscripts, and though there are many textual variants (500,000), the contents remain intact. This does not make the contents true, but it makes its truth-claims reliably transmitted. Whatever was claimed about its period and places, those claims were preserved – not corrupted by later invention.

  ii)   The earliest manuscripts (the bearers of the biographical data we need) are very close to the originals. One can be dated to only a few decades after the autograph was completed. The Gospel of John can be reasonably dated between 80-85 AD,[219] while P_{52} is dated by most paleographers around 100-150.[220] This also does not make the contents true, but it connects the reports with the witnesses of the reported events.

  iii)   The contents are coherent. There is only one Jesus reported in the gospels and the epistles. One does not finish the New Testament with a sense that its authors talked about different people using the same name and epithets. True, one can make a claim concerning narrative incoherencies, such as the one concerning Jesus' resurrection; but, even if we concede such incoherencies, that only tells us that the authors' observation and memory powers were not perfect. However, I think those incoherencies are only apparent.[221] Again, this

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[218] Bullet points based in HABERMAS, 1984.
[219] CARSON & MOO, 2005: 267.
[220] ANDREWS, 2020: 14.
[221] CHAFFEY, 2015.

does not make the contents true, but it makes them compatible with reality. Of course, this is the case to those that think of reality as a coherent whole made of integrated parts.

iv) There is textual evidence that suggests the authors to be honest. This does not make the contents true, but it puts aside the possibility of purposeful deception. The reader is warranted in believing that what he reads really is what the authors thought and perceived. The probable judgments concerning the authors' honesty is based upon our current understanding of the human psyche. Biased and ill willed people tend to hide things to protect their interests. We can read exactly the opposite in the gospels. The apostles were shown to be coward, disloyal, flawed, and ignorant.[222] Let us not forget these were the men who were spreading the gospel. This means people in church gatherings were reading and hearing about how faulty these men were – the same men who gave them their faith in Christ.

v) Finally, its contents are coherent with facts. It is coherent with the geography of its time and with surviving artifacts and reports of events. By the former I mean that the places, peoples, and travelling durations mentioned in the New Testament cohere with the landscape of that time. By the latter, that found human-made stuff and written documentation from that time are expectable given the picture the New Testament provides. This makes the New Testament, at least, partially true, and also suggests its authors to be competent testimonies. This means they are not only honest, but also sufficiently competent observers, reasoners, and memorizers.

241.   Of course, there are those who argue for the authors' incompetence regarding their geographical knowledge.[223] Their claims of incompetence, however, require too much speculation on the background. They put too much weight on guess work about the authors' epistemic states and use of classificatory terms. Truth is, it is possible to reconstruct detailed chronologies and itineraries of Jesus' ministry, based solely on the gospels. Quoting William Fleming's introductory essay:

> In a record that is confessedly fictitious, nothing is more difficult than to keep up, with any degree of plausibility or success, the congruities of time and place. … One who is describing a place which he has never seen is sure to make some mistake. It may be small, and may escape ordinary eyes; but the most carefully got-up story is sure to be detected in the long-run. Now, the Bible has stood the test of ages; and, so far from any fallacy or fault being found, the evidence arising from the mention of time and place, and other circumstances which characterise a true narrative, has been gathering additional strength. … The more those parts of our globe to which the Scriptures refer have been visited and explored, the more light and confirmation has been thrown around them. Places which have been but slightly and casually mentioned have been discovered, and everything connected with them has been found to accord most accurately with the terms or allusions of the Sacred record. … when we find that the record and the reality accurately correspond, and correspond in a way which cannot be said to have been contemplated or designed, except in so far that

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[222] LANE, 2015.
[223] KLOPPENBORG, 2017; MCCOWN, 1941.

truth is always consistent with itself, then we are more firmly established in the authenticity of the record ... .[224][225]

242.   Next, we will expand on point v of the above list, and see how extra-biblical sources point to the existence of Jesus Christ, and further strengthens the claim of reliability of the New Testament.

4.2.2. There really was a religious reformer causing problems in Palestine

243.   The gospels are not only reliable to give us a chronology and geography of Jesus' ministry's itinerary, they also provide facts about the Man Himself. Luke tells us that Jesus' earthly parents had to go to Bethlehem, to register their names in a Roman census (Lu. 2:1-5). There, Luke reports, Jesus was born (Lu. 2:6). Some of the facts of this report can be confirmed by archeological evidence.[226] The evidence suggests that:

i) Such census practices were common in the Roman Empire and took place in Palestine around the time Jesus was born (10–5 BC).
ii) People were required to return to their native residencies, just like Joseph was.
iii) This happened during the reign of Augustus Caesar over the Empire, and Quirinius' first government of Judea.[227]

244.   This does not prove Jesus was born, but it proves the surrounding facts of His nativity, which give some credibility to Luke's report.

245.   One of the twelve apostles, the most important for Romanists, was Peter. Italian archeologists found in Capernaum the remnants of the house that might have belonged to Peter. Mark tells us about this house in Mark 1:29. The house meets the descriptions by Mark, concerning how small it was and the need to lower a paralytic from a hole in the ceiling. What further points the house to be that of Peter, is the presence of later graffiti about Jesus in Greek, Syriac, and Hebrew, and also of Peter's name; etchings of crosses; and remodeling for a heavier ceiling. This suggests the humble house was remodeled into and reassigned as a holy site of devotion. These findings are not as clear cut as the findings concerning the census, but nevertheless puts some weight on the evidence favoring the reliability of the gospels and the existence of a reformer followed by men residing in Capernaum.[228]

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[224] FLEMING, 1838: xx-xxi.

[225] Also, in reading the Bible, here and there, I like to accompany it with maps and chronological schemes, to help me associate narrative with imagery. Being a frequent user of this kind of didactic materials, it is strange to me there are researchers arguing for the gospel's authors incompetence. In a longer monograph I will have to address this issue more fully. This can be said of any topic here presented from section 2 onward, true, but given the weight this topic has in connecting the New Testament to reality, and there is no Christian Theism without New Testament reliability, it must be further researched in a future opportunity.

[226] HABERMAS, 1984: 171-173.

[227] SCHAFF, 1907: 122-123. For a longer historical case in favor of Jesus' supernatural existence read 100-135.

[228] MURPHY-O'CONNOR, extracted from https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/places/related-articles/peters-house; BIBLICAL ARCHEOLOGY SOCIETY, extracted from https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-sites-places/biblical-archaeology-sites/the-house-of-peter-the-home-of-jesus-in-capernaum/.

246.   The man who ordered the death of Jesus was Pontius Pilate. That he was the governor of Judea in the time of Jesus' crucifixion there is no doubt. In 1961 it was discovered in Caesarea Maritima a block of limestone associating Pilate with the role of prefect (or governor).[229] Again, this is not direct evidence for the existence of Jesus, but it strengthens the reliability of the gospels and further connects other people with the story of Jesus as a trouble-maker dissident reformer.

247.   But perhaps the most amazing artifact from the past, that strongly suggests the biography of Jesus as it is laid down in the gospels is the Shroud of Turin. This linen cloth contains the imprint of a thirty-year-old man[230] of Semitic race[231] (front and back, like it was wrapped around him), bludgeoned to death by various means, and all his trauma seems to coincide with Jesus'. In this cloth scientists found pollen from 1st century Palestine, and the cloth itself seems to be crafted with 1st century materials and techniques. Also, there is a coin imprint on the eye area. The coin seems to be from the time of Pontius Pilate, between 29-32 AD. In 1988 C-14 tests were made to a corner of the cloth. The results contradicted every other piece of data. Something and somebody must be wrong because reality does not contradict itself. The problem seems to lie on the C-14 tests.[232] The Shroud really rapped the body of Jesus Christ.

248.   In sum, the census took place the way Luke described it; one of Jesus' apostles house existed and was transformed into a holy site; Pontius Pilate ruled Judea in the correct time frame; a man from 1st century AD Palestine had exactly the same injuries Jesus had (lashes, crucifixion, puncture wounds in the chest). But this is not all. There are ancient historians who affirm Jesus' existence: Tacitus (56-120),[233] Suetonius (69-122),[234] Josephus (37-100),[235] Pliny (61-113),[236] to name a few. None of these historians were Jesus' contemporaries; they were all born after His death. This, however, is not problematic. Most historians write about events they never witnessed. It would be a different objection to note the sources these authors used. That we can never know for sure, but their claims are confirmed by cross-referencing them with the New Testament and the archeological data enumerated above.

4.2.3. This reformer had supernatural paranormal powers

249.   The gospels and the epistles are reliable and Jesus existed. The question now is what to do with the supernatural reports. Jesus performed 37 supernatural actions. He turned water into wine, healed sickness and disabilities instantly, walked on water, brought people from physical death (including Himself), multiplied food out of

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[229] PETERSON, 2018, extracted from https://www.deseret.com/2018/5/3/20644446/the-pilate-stone-in-israel-s-caesarea-by-the-sea#a-stone-with-a-latin-dedicatory-inscription-of-pontius-pilate-was-part-of-an-exhibit-of-holy-land-artifacts-at-emory-universitys-michael-c-carlos-museum-in-atlanta-in-june-2007-ap-photo-john-bazemore; WINDLE, 2019, extracted from https://biblearchaeologyreport.com/2019/10/11/pontius-pilate-an-archaeological-biography/.

[230] FANTI & MALFI, 2020: 15.

[231] FANTI & MALFI, 2020: 18.

[232] I'm not able to delve into this discussion. It is heavy on statistics, chemistry, physics, and scientific procedures I'm not familiarized with. The reader however can read the source I consulted about this matter: FANTI & MALFI, 2020: 147-167.

[233] HABERMAS, 1984: 189.

[234] HABERMAS, 1984: 191.

[235] HABERMAS, 1984: 192.

[236] HABERMAS, 1984: 199.

nothing. Supernaturalism being the case, these events cannot be ruled out as being impossible. At the same time, these events being present in the gospels does not make them, in the least, less reliable or half-fictious. Have we any evidence to confirm these supernatural events other than the gospels? No, except one. The most important of them all – His resurrection. Making a case for His resurrection does not prove all other supernatural events, but it raises the likelihood that they took place – if this one really happened, it is odd the others are just delusions.

250.   Again, I am going to make an evidential case, and it contains the following bodies of evidence: the Shroud of Turin (again), the empty tomb, and after death apparitions. In the same order, strange things happened to the cloth that have no natural explanations; if the tomb was empty, something happened to Christ's body; if Jesus appeared to other people after His death, this is a clear-cut proof of His resurrection. After this evidential case I will make an abductive case. The *explanadum* is the origin of the Christian religion, the *explanans* is the set of events related with Christ's ministry and resurrection. During His ministry He made a name for Himself – made rumors spread in Palestine about a miracle worker religious reformer – and then His death, resurrection, and apparitions trampolined the apostles and disciples into a sweat-blood-and-tears proselytizing campaign that capitalized over and further spread the stories about Jesus, His deeds, and teachings. The evidential part warrants the things that make the explanatory work; the abductive part further strengthens the case by connecting those things to consequent events, that would be strange and obscure without them.

4.2.3.1. The evidential case

251.   Let us start with the Shroud of Turin. In section 4.2.2. the focus was on Christ's existence, and so the relevant data was channeled to that claim. But there are more data, and that data is relevant for the supernatural claim under consideration. The mentioned imprint itself is a weird fact. For the time being, "it is impossible to explain how the Shroud image has been created."[237] The first point of notice regarding the imprint is that, it does not contain signs of the body's decomposition. This means, the body could not have been more than forty hours wrapped in that cloth.[238] This is important because it corresponds with a third day resurrection. The second point concerns how the imprint was made. Scientists developed four hypotheses: artistic production, gas reactions, direct contact, and radiation. Only the fourth has some plausibility.[239] Specifically, scientists are putting their bets in a *corona discharge*.

> Corona discharges are moderately low-power electric discharges that occur at or near atmospheric pressure. The corona is invariably produced by strong electric fields associated with small diameter wires, needles, or sharp edges on an electrode.[240]

252.   Visually, the phenomenon can be described as a cloud of violet electricity accompanied by occasional violet bolts. The Department of Industrial Engineering of the University of Padua was able to create a similar effect using this technology in a

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[237] FANTI & MALFI, 2020: 20.
[238] FANTI & MALFI, 2020: 24-25.
[239] FANTI & MALFI, 2020: 29.
[240] PODBIELSKA et al, 2018: 163.

mannequin. This hypothesis might satisfy atheists who want to stick to natural explanations. However, this is a very incomplete explanation. How did the body of the Shroud man generate the amount of voltage necessary to create an electric field of the corona type? How did this happen in the sepulcher without any contemporary technology? Let us not forget that the corona discharge, though natural, is the product of human intervention. There is no corona discharge taking place outside human electrical equipment. This bodily radiation, however, is compatible with scriptural descriptions of divine supernatural events:

> Then I looked and saw a figure like that of a man. From His waist down His appearance was like fire, and from His waist up He was as bright as the gleam of amber (Ezekiel 8:2).

> Just then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified (Luke 2:9).

253.   Other examples could be produced. A supernatural explanation for the radiation can be the resurrecting process. Christ's human body went through a process of reanimation and transformation into a glorified state. And what state is that?

> What that state is we know only so far as may be learned from what the Apostle teaches from the nature of the bodies with which believers are to be invested after the resurrection. Those bodies, we are told, are to be like Christ's "glorious body" (Phil. iii. 21.) A description of the one is therefore a description of the other. That description is found in the contrast between the present body and that which the believer is to inhabit after the resurrection. The one is a σωμα ψυχη, and the other a σωμα πνευματικον. The one is adapted to the ψυχη (principle of animal life) and to the present state of existence; the other to the πνευμα (the rational and immortal principle) and to the future state of existence. The change which the "natural body" is to undergo in becoming a "spiritual body" is thus described. "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:" in one word, "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." (1 Cor. xv. 42-41.) It is still a body and therefore material, retaining all the essential properties of matter. It is extended. It occupies space. It has a definite form, and that a human form. ... Nevertheless it is no longer "flesh and blood", for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Flesh and blood are from their nature corruptible; and so the apostle adds, "neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." Hence "this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." (1 Cor. xv. 50-53.) The future body will not be subject to the wants, the infirmities, or the passions which belong to the present state of existence." ... The saints are to be like angels, not in being incorporeal, but as being immortal, and not needing reproduction for the continuance of their race. The risen body of Christ, therefore, as it now exists in heaven, although retaining its identity with his body while here on earth, is glorious, incorruptible,

immortal, and spiritual. It still occupies a definite portion of space, and retains all the essential properties of a body.[241]

254.   In short, it was a process of transformation into its immortal supernatural form. We might say into its original form, prior the condescension into being a natural man. A pertinent question is, why do some of these supernatural entities irradiate so much light? What is in these supernatural phenomena that makes natural light to come by? There are no answers for this.

255.   The Shroud already tells us something about the empty tomb, but what other evidence can we marshal in favor of it? First, Paul confirms in his first letter to the Corinthians that it was a generalized belief among Christians that the tomb was empty (1Cor. 15:3-5). He does not say the tomb was empty, but he says that He was buried, came back to life, and appeared to other people. If He appeared to other people after resurrecting, He had to leave the tomb. Second, Mark, who is believed to have written the first gospel – among those who defend the pre-markan hypothesis –, was under Peter's tutelage. It is most probable that whatever he wrote about the empty tomb was told by Peter himself in their conversations (Mark 16:1-8). Peter is an important character because he was there with John to inspect the tomb (Luke 24:9-12; John 20:2-10). Third, the Jews came up with a conspiracy to cover the fact of the empty tomb, viz. that His disciples stole the body during the night (Matthew 27:62-66; 28:11-15). If the body did not disappear, there would be no need for a conspiracy.

256.   How does the Shroud connect with this account of the empty tomb? The Shroud corresponds with 1st century Jewish burial customs. "If a man died a violent death and blood was shed, the blood was not washed from the body [and] The man was simply buried in a white linen sheet with his clothes to prevent any loss of the blood."[242] Needless to say, wrapped bodies were placed in above ground cave-like tombs. Most likely, a Semite male wrapped in linen cloth was placed in a tomb. He was not buried underground or thrown into the sea – conceivable events who left no trace in the Shroud.

257.   The Shroud connects well with Jesus being in a tomb, which is necessary for Him then to disappear from it; but the Shroud also connects with the apparitions. The supernatural resurrecting and transformation process – which left the imprint in the Shroud – opens the doors for the possibility of apparitions. The possibility of apparitions does not make the reports true, but it makes them more likely. Jesus appeared to many people: Mary Magdalene (Matthew 28:9; John 20:14-16); Mary (mother of James) (Matthew 28:9); two disciples walking to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-16); to all the disciples (John 20:26-28); to five hundred people (1 Corinthians 15:6); to Paul (Acts 9:3-5).

258.   So, from the beginning in one straight sequence: Supernaturalism is not only possible, it is most likely the case; Jesus existed; Jesus was buried according to Jewish customs wrapped around a linen cloth and in a tomb; He resurrected and transformed into something else by a radiating process; He left the tomb and created a fuss among Roman and Jewish authorities, but also among His followers; He then appeared to many of His followers.

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[241] HODGE, 1872b: 628-629.
[242] LAVOIE et al., 1982.

4.2.3.2. The abductive case

259.   William Lane Craig and Philip Schaff also made a similar case for the origin of Christianity.[243] However, they seem to be too much bent on only one variable, viz. the disciples' genuine belief that Jesus resurrected. This belief motivated their proselytizing campaign against every ordeal. Craig asserts that this belief could only come about by a real resurrection, since there were no cultural borrowings that would influence the formation of this belief. Schaff, on the other hand, says they "underwent a complete revolution", a "inner revolution" only possible given a "corresponding outward revolution in the history of Christ". I think this is one more case of trying to explain too much with too little, but it is common knowledge among social scientists that very rarely social events can be explained with univariate explanations.

260.   A better explanation must include other variables. Namely, we can think of other memories. Sure, witnessing the empty tomb and seeing Jesus alive after His whole deadly suffering, motivated their efforts, but they also accompanied Him for three years. They heard His authoritative wisdom on the mount; saw Him curing paralysis, blindness, deafness, muteness, and leprosy; bringing people to life; expelling demons from crazed people; prophesying His own death; walking on water and calming a storm in the sea; multiplying fish and bread out of nothing; making large quantities of fish appear on their nets; etc, etc. We might also speculate that they felt an aura, a special presence, in Jesus – something special about Him that one can feel in His presence. Everything compounds into a motivating whole. Not only that, word spread around about Jesus' ministry. He travelled back and forth around Palestine doing all the things enumerated above. People knew about Him in the region (Mark 6:14-15) but also outside of it (John 12:20-50). We have an open door to speculate that there was some groundwork made, extending far beyond Palestine, maybe touching distant parts of the Mediterranean. It seems possible that when the disciples began their proselytizing campaign, they were not conquering virgin lands, but were building on what Jesus and word-of-mouth did before their efforts began.

261.   A clear objection to this abductive maneuver is to compare it with other successful sects, such as various forms of Hinduism and Mohammedanism, or even Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses. One can also explain these religious movements as having a real supernatural origin. But, again, it was not an arbitrary choice to begin with the evidential case. The entities and relations in the *explanans* not only need to be relevantly connected with the set of facts in the *explanandum*, they must also be warranted by a satisfying evidential case. Without having a formal way to quantify how well my overall case (from section 4.1.1. to this paragraph) satisfied a burden of proof, I speculate that, at minimum, I reached a level of preponderance of evidence, i.e. it is more likely to be true than not that the Christian religion had a supernatural origin in the person and actions of Jesus of Nazareth. Unless these sects can make a similar or better evidential case for the things in their *explanantia*, they cannot use them, and, hence, there is no comparison to be made here.

262.   Now, there is only one more step to give, viz. to connect Generic Theism with the events related to Jesus and those that followed by the actions of His disciples.

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[243] CRAIG, 2000: 127-134; SCHAFF, 1907: 172-175.

4.2.4. This reformer claimed to be God: bridging Generic Theism with Christian Theism

263.   Let us recall the core of every Generic Theist theory: an extra-mundane, person-like agency, creator, preserver, and governor of the world. What we need to do now is to connect Jesus to these properties. This is easy to do. First, Jesus claims to be God. He did this when talking to a multitude of Jews (John 10:30), and they correctly understood Him to claim divinity for Himself (John 10:31-33). Also, Thomas called Jesus God (John 20:28) whom Jesus did not bother to correct. Second, Thomas was not the only follower to recognize divinity in Jesus, Paul and John also recognize this fact (John 1:1, 3, 14; Colossians 1:16–17; Titus 2:13). Today this is a core belief in Christianity. Third, when Jesus asserts His own divinity, He has in mind the God that has been in the minds and mouths of the Jews. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Creator in Genesis; the moral Governor in Exodus; the Preserver mentioned in Job and in Whom all things hold together (Colossians 1:17); Who talked and had feelings towards the ancient Hebrews. So Jesus claims to Himself the type of divinity in the core of Generic Theism. This claim, in my view, is not hard to believe given all the events related to Jesus' life.

264.   All the realities about Jesus further confirms the truth of Generic Theism, i.e. if everything about Jesus is true, then Generic Theism is also true. But it does not end here. We do not live in a Theist world, we live in a Christian Theist world. There is more about God beyond what is at the core of Generic Theism. These things, though, are not at our reach in natural revelation. We need to step into special revelation to know them. Thus, we need to leave the domain of natural theology and start an exposition in revelational theology. But we cannot do this without a methodology to treat scriptural data. This methodology includes some claims about what Scripture (or the Bible) is, its importance, and how to interpret it.

4.3. Rule of Faith: basics of Protestantism

265.   The rule of faith can be understood in two ways. The first is interchangeable with terms like "confession", "creed", or "symbol of faith". It points to a list of beliefs every Christian must have, to claim membership in a certain denomination. This is not the sense intended here. By rule of faith I mean *the criteria for the sources of theological knowledge and religious practice* – "the source or standard of religious truth."[244] This is the foundation of every enterprise of revelational theology. If there are substantial differences at this stage, one cannot expect any given two different theologians to be able to discuss conflicting opinions.

266.   The rule of faith that matters in this work is the Protestant rule of faith. Calvinism is an outgrowth of the Protestant reformation, hence some Church historians calling that strand of theology *Reformed Protestantism*. This rule of faith applies not only to Calvinism, but also to other Protestant rooted theologies such as genuine Lutheranism, Anglicanism, and Arminianism.

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[244] HODGE, 1872a: 104

4.3.1. *Sola Scriptura*

267.   At the core of this rule of faith is the principle of *Sola Scriptura*, Latin for Scripture alone. This principle is present in many of the most important protestant symbols.

268.   The Lutheran Formula of Concord (1577) states: "the Word of God alone should be and remain the only standard and rule of doctrine"; the Gallican Confession (1559) states: "We know these books [the Bible] to be canonical, and the sure rule of our faith"; The Scots Confession (1560): "we believe and confess the scriptures of God sufficient to instruct and make the man of God perfect"; the Second Helvetic Confession (1564): "We believe and confess the canonical Scriptures of the holy prophets and apostles of both Testaments to be the true Word of God, and to have sufficient authority of themselves, not of men. ... And in this Holy Scripture, the universal Church of Christ has the most complete exposition of all that pertains to a saving faith, and also to the framing of a life acceptable to God; and in this respect it is expressly commanded by God that nothing be either added to or taken from the same"; the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647): "Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testament ... All which are given by inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life".

269.   This general acceptance of the authority of scripture as the sole rule of faith among protestants is also shared by Commonsensist Calvinists:

> Every book that is the a genuine work of an inspired man, is an absolute rule of faith or life for all who are addressed by it.[245]

> [The Scriptures] are the guide, at once authoritative and sufficient or exclusive, on all matters pertaining to religious belief and moral conduct.[246]

> there is to be recognized a very substantial truth in the common affirmation that the Bible is a perfect and infallible rule of faith and practice.[247]

270.   And some of them claim this rule of faith to have precedents in the primitive Church, unmaking the accusation of being a modern innovation:

> It has never been doubted among Christians, that the canonical books only were of divine authority, and furnished, an infallible rule of faith and practice.[248]

> The idea of the authority of Scripture is not younger, but older, than Romanism. It is not a late invention of Protestantism. It is not something that Protestants invented and substituted for the Roman conception of the infallible Church; but it is the original conception that lies in the Scriptures themselves.[249]

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[245] CHALMERS, 1836: 213.
[246] FISHER, 1890: 1.
[247] MEAD, 1893: 347.
[248] ALEXANDER, 1851: 39.
[249] ORR, 1909: 10.

the church has not failed to bring this, her vital faith in the divine trustworthiness of the Scripture word, to formal expression in her solemn creeds. The simple faith of the Christian people is also the confessional doctrine of the Christian churches. The assumption of the divine authority of the scriptural teaching underlies all the credal statements of the church; all of which are formally based upon the Scriptures. And from the beginning, it finds more or less full expression in them. ... Needless to say that a no less firm conviction of the absolute authority of Scripture underlies all the Protestant creeds. Before all else, Protestantism is, in its very essence, an appeal from all other authority to the divine authority of Holy Scripture.[250]

271.   The exposition of this rule of faith, then, is an expansion of what it means to have Scripture as the sole authority in matters of faith and religious practice. These two heads can be a first step in this direction:

   i.   The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are pronouncements of God put in writing by inspired authors. These authors were supernaturally inspired by God Himself, as the Holy Spirit, and their writings are infallible guides to every subject matter relevant to faith and religious practice.
   ii.   The Scriptures are perspicuous enough to be understood by every literate person, and everyone can draw from Scripture all the salvific knowledge he needs, through the light (or spiritual discernment) wrought inside him by the Holy Spirit.

272.   These two heads can be further elaborated in five sections: canon (what scriptures? Why these?); inspiration (what is to be inspired? How does God relate to His sacred writers?); perspicuity of scripture (is it perspicuous to everybody? Is it perspicuous in all its parts?); and Exegetics (how are we to understand its texts? How do we read them?).

4.3.2. Canon

273.   The Protestant canon of Scripture is composed of sixty-six books – thirty-nine in the Old Testament, twenty-seven in the New Testament. There are Christian denominations with larger canons, but Protestants accept only these. The division into old and new, is very straightforward: the former concerns pre-Jesus-first-coming revelation; the latter post-Jesus-first-coming revelation. Protestants include only thirty-nine books in the Old Testament, because those were the ones recognized as authoritative by Jesus and His apostles.[251] In the same way, the books of the New Testament are selected considering the authority of their authors: were they apostles? Were they people close to the apostles and their writings approved by them? Positive answers to these questions give a place in the Christian canon.[252] However, this is only external evidence for the canon.[253] This external evidence draws a first circle around the most probable books of the Bible, but this is not all. Assurance comes with the internal evidence of the books themselves.[254] This internal evidence includes:

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[250] WARFIELD, 1894: 620-621.
[251] ALEXANDER, 1851: 27-28; HODGE, 1872a: 152
[252] ALEXANDER, 1851: 117; HODGE, 1872a: 153
[253] BRIGGS, 1899: 150.
[254] ALEXANDER, 1851: 115.

their [the various texts in the Bible] recognition of one another, their harmony with the idea, character, and development of a divine revelation, as it is derived from the Scriptures themselves, as well as from their own well-tested and critically examined claims to inspiration and authority, and, above all, from the divine authority speaking by and with them to the Church and the Christian.[255]

274.   Or as it is written in the Westminster Confession:

the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole, (which is to give all glory to God,) the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof.

275.   The theological sciences occupied with the history of Christian canons and defense of the correct canon are Canonics, Critical Canonics, and Christian Evidences. The first, concerns only the formation of the various Christian canons – the various historical events and people related with their coming into existence. The latter two are mostly normative. Critical Canonics investigates and marshals arguments in favor of a certain canon; Christian Evidences tries to make these arguments not only acceptable to Christians but to unbelievers. It tries to make an evidential case for the revelatory and inspirational character of these books without, of course, assuming the subjective conviction the Christian has for the word of God.

4.3.3. Inspiration

276.   This last remark brings us to the topic of inspiration. Inspiration is not to be theorized or defined by philosophical speculation under the prejudice of ready-made philosophical systems – something that plagued the Church since the Patristic period, down to the 21st century. A satisfactory answer to what is inspiration must be produced under the first and simple statement of Scripture alone: whatever is to know about inspiration must be found in Scripture. Under this rule of faith Hodge answers:

inspiration was an influence of the Holy Spirit on the minds of certain select men, which rendered them the organs [or instruments] of God for the infallible communication of his mind and will. They were in such a sense the organs of God, that what they said God said.[256]

277.   Three confusions must be avoided. First, this influence should not be confused with the ordinary operations in preserving and governing the universe. These operations are *natural*. God acts in the world through second causes, i.e. God has a mediate influence in world events through causal chains spatiotemporally conditioned. Inspiration is *supernatural*, God has an immediate influence over the sacred writers, i.e. there is nothing between God and the writers, there are no intermediate links in the causal chain, no intermediate steps or processes. Second, inspiration should also not be confused with *illumination* or *spiritual discernment*. This is the mystic mistake of conflating these two supernatural influences. Inspiration applies only to a few selected men, illumination to all the body of true believers, the Church. Inspiration is given so as to make men infallible teachers; illumination is

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[255] BRIGGS, 1899: 22.
[256] HODGE, 1872a: 154.

given so as to make men holy. As Hodge says, one can be inspired without being holy and vice versa. Balaam was inspired, but far from holy; Bunyan and Aquinas were holy, but not inspired. Third, a last confusion is between *revelation* and inspiration. Revelation is simply a communication of knowledge; inspiration does not require knowing the words impressed in the mind for teaching purposes:

> The effect of revelation was to render its recipient wiser. The effect of inspiration was to preserve him from error in teaching.[257]

278. This real distinction does not imply incompatibility between the two. The same person can be a recipient of wisdom and an organ of God at the same time. Paul is a good example of this combination. As an apostle, he also received the Spirit to testify about Jesus (John 15:26), teach and remind all His lessons (John 14:26), speak for him (John 16:13) and aid in everything needed (John 14:16):

> What as yet was not in their minds He was to impart to them; and He was to mediate and maintain communication between the absent Lord and themselves.[258]

279. Not only with the apostles, but in every inspired man, being under the supernatural influence of God does not coerce or take the organ out of his character. This is not to be equated with a trance-like state, such as the female oracles of Delphi; or with demon possession, as is fantasied in Hollywood. The old saying of the sacred writers being the pens of God is not the right picture of what happens. That would be the old *mechanical theory of inspiration*. We know this to be the case because there is variety of style and expression in the various books of the canon. Let us listen to Orr again:

> A very evident illustration of the untenableness of this theory is in the reports of the Lords' own sayings in the Gospels. It is well known that in the reports of Christ's words in the Synoptic Gospels there is often a very considerable variation in expression—a difference in phraseology—while yet the idea conveyed in all the forms is the same. At most one side or another of the truth is brought out with slightly different emphasis. ... Another palpable illustration of this freedom in regard to the letter, while the sense is accurately conveyed, is found in the New Testament quotations from the Old Testament. In these, it is again well known, great variety in the method of quotation prevails. Sometimes, where the end is better served, the quotation is taken directly from the Hebrew (e.g., Matt. ii. 15); occasionally the translation is free (Matt. ii. 6); ordinarily the quotation is made with more or less exactness from the Greek version—this even where the Hebrew is somewhat widely departed from (Matt. xii. 17-21 ; Rom. ix. 33 ; 1 Pet. ii. 6 ; Heb. x. 5-7, etc.).[259]

280. Based on all this, I speculate the following: the process we call inspiration (θεόπνευστος, theo-pneh-stos) is God using the organ's (the person) mental lexicon, speech patterns, and verbal intelligence to communicate His teachings. This explanation accommodates both the careful selection of words to convey correct

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[257] HODGE, 1872a: 155.
[258] DODS, 1908: 209.
[259] ORR, 1910: 210-211

teaching and the variety of style and expression. It also accommodates the distinction between inspiration and revelation, viz. the inspired organ might not understand what he is saying or writing. Having the words in one's mental lexicon and using them in various circumstances does not secure knowledge of everything that can be said with them. This is true of idiomatic expressions in certain sociolects, but also generally in technolects.

281.   To illustrate, in my native language (Portuguese) "go through the embers" might not mean a person running through a pile of embers; most of the times it means taking a nap. However, I bet every English speaker has in his mental lexicon the four words in this expression. And a person completely oblivious of what this idiomatic expression means, might communicate it flawlessly to others who might understand it. Regarding the technolect, among people in academia, laboratories, and some scienticist-types, "theory" points to well established hypotheses in the scientific community. When these people interact with other people outside their language conventions, and make no effort to clear out terms, we might end up with a spectacle of people talking over each other's heads; since "theory" for most people is nothing more than an informed hunch – something with a very low epistemic status. Most people simply cannot understand, and might even find it ludicrous, the amount of value others put on these things they call "theories". But they would still be able to accurately communicate some considerations about scientific theories, if they could chain the words properly.

282.   But this is not the only way one can disconnect inspiration from revelation. If God wants to communicate X, and the person who He is going to use for that purpose already knows about X, then God does not need to reveal X to that person. There is no need to impart knowledge or understanding of X. The only thing God needs to do is secure the proper linguistic means to communicate X, and this He does through inspiration. Inspiration might be needed because the person might have a bad memory; because the facts in question are not salient enough in the person's mind; because the person might, out of fatigue, jumble up names and the chronology of events; because there might be some difficulty selecting the right words to express a certain thought.

283.   To wrap up this section, I just want to mention two more points: the extent of inspiration and its sufficiency. Regarding the former, inspiration extends equally to all parts of Scripture:

> This means, first, that all the books of Scripture are equally inspired. All alike are infallible in what they teach. And secondly, that inspiration extends to all the contents of these several books. It is not confined to moral and religious truths, but extends to the statements of facts, whether scientific, historical, or geographical.[260]

284.   This does not contradict and is not in tension with the relevancy constraint in the first head (§271.-i): "to every subject matter relevant to faith and religious practice". The domain of religion is not confined to normative truths about God's covenant with man and other spiritual realities, it also concerns many natural occurrences in the world. The Bible says nothing about, for instance, set theory or

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[260] HODGE, 1872a: 163.

statistical regressions, but it says about Near Eastern and Mediterranean Geography, Topography and History. These ought to be taken as true, and they are relevant to our Christian faith. To properly understand the land and social environment of the sacred writers helps us in the interpretation of Scripture. The word of God is not to be interpreted in an anachronistic fashion; we ought not to project our own feelings, experiences, and speculations about the world, into His word. We have to transport our minds into those times and places, and think about how the words were used in them. This is not absolutely necessary to draw salvific knowledge from Scripture, but it sure is when we are approaching the Bible scientifically.

285.   Regarding the latter, Protestants believe that Scripture is *complete*:

> By the completeness of the Scriptures is meant that they contain all the extant revelations of God designed to be a rule of faith and practice to the Church.[261]

286.   Protestants believe this for two reasons: because it is the only safe place we can find God's word, and because in Scripture we can find prophets, apostles, and God Himself exhorting their interlocutors to search Scripture, to meditate on it, and use it for wisdom and correction. The first reason is prudential; the second is moral. This means the protestant rule of faith is judicious and lawful. Reasons to justify this prudence can be marshalled with the fields mentioned in section 4.3.2: Canonics, Critical Canonics, and Christian Evidences.

4.3.4. Perspicuity of Scripture

287.   Protestants also believe Scripture to be perspicuous. In what concerns "all things necessary to salvation they are sufficiently plain to be understood even by the unlearned".[262] Of course, they need spiritual illumination. This illumination does not concern intellectual apprehension only, even atheists and demons can understand what is written in Scripture; but rather feeling the power of the word of God. The body of believers believe in the realities communicated in Scripture, and not only that, they take it seriously. Those realities become their worries and joys, they become factors to consider in decision making, they transform their view of the world and of themselves. What is more, without perspicuity, the command to search the Scriptures would make no sense (Jos. 1:8; Ps. 19:7-11; Prov. 30:5; Matt. 22:29; Rom. 15:4; 2Tim. 3:15-16). The command is not to ask somebody to search the Scriptures in our behalf; but for us, ourselves, to do that: "Every man is responsible for his religious faith and his moral conduct".[263] So every Christian has the right and duty to make up is own mind about what God requires of him.

288.   The extent of perspicuity, however, does not track that of inspiration. It must be readily admitted that there are parts of Scripture hard to understand and provide a definite unambiguous exegesis. This fact, though, does not conflict with the above statement. That which concerns salvation is clear to every average language user. Everyone can find in the Bible the simple statement of faith of the Apostles Creed.

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[261] HODGE, 1872a: 182.
[262] HODGE, 1872a: 184.
[263] HODGE, 1872a: 184.

4.3.5. Exegetics

289.   Exegetics is the foundation of all systematized theology (or Systematics). To draw from Scripture any concept whatsoever, to produce any theories about the Trinity or the economy of salvation, to develop any kind of didactic and summarized form of doctrine, first one must have an understanding of what is communicated in Scripture. This is the role of Exegetics. Exegetics is the science of textual interpretation – it is the science which arranges the data for subsequent systematic treatment. And exegesis is the activity of developing e*xegetical hypotheses.* A hypothesis is the explanation of the attributed meaning to a texteme or group of related textemes, and frequently goes beyond the text itself.

290.   Protestants, though they revere Scripture and understand it as supernatural, do not treat it any different from other texts. It follows from the theory of inspiration given above that the text, though supernaturally assisted, was produced by natural means. The language faculty used to produce such texts is still human, and hence, there is no reason to apply any other method or principle, than that one would apply to any other text to interpret it. Exegetics, being a science, it seeks the reality of things. The reality one tries to uncover in Exegetics is what both the inspired men and all biblical characters had in mind when they produced speech, oral or written. Any Exegetical research, then, must include, as objects of study: the author and characters, the text (language and written form), and ontology (that which is communicated through the text).[264] To produce a plausible exegetical hypothesis one needs:

i)   Empirically informed lexicons, grammars, and textual criticism.
ii)   Empirically informed speculation concerning the narrator's and characters' psyches. They were members of a certain language community, and it is important to research what these people believed, how they behaved and communicated, and their culture in general.
iii)   Historical, archaeological, and geographical studies to build the world, as it was, around the narrator and other characters.
iv)   A structured argument, logically coherent, and evidentially relevant.

291.   That said, here are some specific guidelines on how to exegete the Bible:

v)   Ontology is drawn out, most of the times, *compositionally.* This means that meaning is formed going through the specific sequencing of the words, i.e. respecting their syntactic relations. In writing, this mostly means, one builds meaning by reading from top to bottom and left to right (in western languages at least). There might be rhetorical devices such as metaphor, simile, or hyperbole, or idiomatic expressions; but these can be identified, and other procedures applied to their interpretation.
vi)   Ontology is drawn out *chronologically.* This means that given two causally related events in T_1 and T_2, the ontology drawn out in the former conditions the ontology drawn out in the latter. Hence, it makes no sense to read the New Testament without reading first the Old. Jesus and the apostles cite the Old Testament many times, and unless one has an understanding of what they are citing, there is no way to understand what they mean in using those texts. In

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[264] The connection between text and ontology is studied in Semantics.

the same way, it makes no sense to read the book of Acts or the Epistles without reading the Gospels.

vii) Ontology is drawn out *historically*. This means that meaning is formed the way words were used in a certain language community, which is situated in a time and a place, had certain customs, and went through certain events.

viii) Ontology can be expanded despite the text, but not arbitrarily. E.g. in Acts 16 we have the story of Paul and Silas going to jail. Through the text we know they were in the same cell block, but we cannot know if they were in the same prison cell. If we can find something about cell blocks in ancient Philippi, we can make an empirically informed guess about Paul's and Silas' positioning. This would allow us to extend the ontology beyond what the text provides.

ix) Where some text is not clear, two courses of action can be taken: a) find another *relevant* text that gives a more definite ontology, and consequently, clears the obscure text; b) in case there are no relevant clearer texts, no ontology should be drawn out and remain a mystery.

5. SYSTEMATICS: CALVINISM PROPER

292. With a protestant methodological framework at hand, we can now proceed to doctrinal theories, i.e. theories concerning the spiritual realities revealed in Scripture, and which Christians ought to believe. This is made in Systematics, specifically in Dogmatic Theology. Many theologies of this kind are produced from top to bottom, i.e. from God to man – from theology proper to anthropology. However, there are exceptions. Thomas Chalmers, whom I already cited in a number of occasions, starts with man, in what is closer to us, and progresses to God.[265] I will be using this same order. It is the one that fits into this work. We started in section 2 with the first metaphysical axioms we can draw from the human psyche. As we have seen, without these axioms there is no thinking, no reasoning, no learning, no knowledge. All epistemic endeavors, that being philosophy, science, or problem solving in daily life, rely on these axioms. From here we turned to our moral and religious nature, and built an evidential case[266] for Generic Theism, and then Christian Theism, centered on the events of Jesus' life. We have seen that to expand our knowledge beyond natural theology, we need to access other sources of data, viz. special revelation. We find it in Scripture, and there are proper ways to treat its data, as we have discussed in the last section. Following this order, the first step into revelational theology must concern how human beings relate to God. What are the hidden spiritual realities concerning our relation to God? And where does Jesus enter in all this?

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[265] CHALMERS: 1849a; 1849b.
[266] A case reasoned mostly from empirical evidence. Which is the correct way of reasoning from more secured realities to more distant/intangible ones. Possibilities are warranted by presenting evidence in their favor, not by imagining fictional scenarios disguised under sophisticated sounding wording, such as "such-and-such is logically possible" – a very unfortunate trend in academic philosophy.

5.1. The Covenants

293.   The special way God relates to us is through covenants. A covenant is an arrangement between parties, which establishes dos and don'ts, deserts and penalties. God relates to us through two covenants: the *Covenant of Works* and the *Covenant of Grace*. Both promise "the happy, holy, and immortal existence of the soul and body",[267] but the conditions under which this desert is received are very different.

5.1.1. The Covenant of Works

294.   In the Covenant of Works, the condition to receive the blessing of this immortal life was perfect obedience to God. The standard of obedience is God's Law. The general principles of His Law were communicated fully to Moses under ten articles – the famous Ten Commandments –, but we can also find some of them in ourselves, as we have seen in section 3.2:[268]

> That there is a binding revelation of the law, independently of any supernatural external revelation, is expressly taught in the Bible. Paul says of the heathen that they are a law unto themselves. They have the law written on their hearts. This is proved, he tells us, because they do, φύσει, by nature, i.e., in virtue of the constitution of their nature, the things of the law. ... What is thus taught in Scripture is confirmed by consciousness and experience. Every man is conscious of a knowledge of right and wrong, and of a sense of obligation ... we do not refer the sense of moral obligation to an externally revealed law, as its source, but to the constitution of our nature. This is not the experience of any class of men exclusively, but the common experience of the race. Wherever there are men, there is the sense of moral obligation, and a knowledge of right and wrong.[269]

295.   The penalty of disobedience – or sin, the actual failing and mental states propitious to failing (a sinful state) – is death. "Death" here points to more than the disintegration of our present material bodies; it also points to a disconnection with God, by indifference or any negative affective state (hate, disgust, unpleasantness, etc), and that eternally. This means, the sufferings and inconveniences that constantly prickle physical life, will extend beyond it after physical death. The specific parties in this covenant are God and Adam, the head-representative and progenitor of the human species. This means the conditions of the covenant extend to all human beings – the deserts, the penalties, and the duties – through Adam. If Adam succeeds, we succeed; if he fails, we fail. Alas, Adam failed his duty – what is usually called The Fall – and in him all humanity failed. This puts Adam and the rest of humanity under God's penalty of death in the sense described.

296.   This penalty should be understood to be judicial (or forensic). Adam sinned, i.e. committed a crime, was found guilty, and received its sentence (the wages of sin). In virtue of his relation to his progeny – humanity – the guilt and sentence extends to all of them. The relation was already mentioned and is twofold:

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[267] HODGE, 1872b: 118.
[268] The theoretical consequences of this reality alluded in 3.2.1.1, will be shown in section 5.3.
[269] HODGE, 1872c: 266.

> The union between Adam and his posterity which is the ground of the imputation of his sin to them, is both *natural* and *federal* [my italics]. He was their natural head. … No fact in history is plainer than that children bear the iniquities of their fathers. They suffer for their sins. There must be a reason for this; and a reason founded in the very constitution of our nature. But there was something peculiar in the case of Adam. Over and beyond this natural relation … there was a special divine constitution by which he was appointed the head and representative of his whole race.[270]

297.   This special divine constitution are the conditions under which the Covenant of Works is established; specifically, Adam being the only man in the world, the covenant could only be established through him, and later extended to his progeny, which includes the first woman (Eve), who was conceived supernaturally based on his rib or his whole side – depending on how one translates צֵלָע (*tsela*). This judicial principle (federal headship) is common in Scripture, which suggests it is the way God understands and applies justice.[271] This state of affairs – the existence of a broken covenant by humanity's federal head – is the reality behind the common expression of "being born in sin".

298.   The immediate and, maybe, kneejerk objection to the reality of this covenant is that it violates our contemporary sense of justice, that it is "counterintuitive"; and if God administers perfect justice, He cannot impute the penalty of the sins of one man to another. This is no defeater, however. Contemporary and culturally pervasive notions and feelings of justice are irrelevant to evaluate the veracity of the clear statements of special revelation. Another objection could be made in the form of a cascade of worse and worse consequences. If we accept such principle of justice, and model our legal systems and moral conventions in its likeness, such a thing would create chaos, oppression, abuse from ill intended grifters, etc. This objection is also irrelevant. This is how God dispenses justice; there is no commandment to do the same in our part. We do not have the wisdom nor the moral fortitude to carry out such dispensation of justice – as is clearly shown by recent reparations movements in former colonial nations.

5.1.2. The Covenant of Grace

299.   If God related to us solely through the Covenant of Works, He would not be able to bestow His promise to anybody. But He wants, out of His benevolence, to fulfill this promise – He did not make the promise in vain. Hence, in order to remedy this covenantal breach, He established another covenant. Maintaining the principle of federal headship, the parties are God (the Father) and Jesus Christ (the Son). The same way Adam's actions have judicial consequences to his representees, Christ's actions have to His. Jesus, then, is the One who is going to secure the promises made in the Covenant of Works, hence the two covenants sharing the same promise. The Covenant of Grace is God's plan of salvation to humanity. It is how God, literally, rescues humanity from the penalty of death.

300.   The condition to receive the promise is not perfect obedience, but rather *faith in Christ*. The character of this condition should not be confused with that of perfect

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[270] HODGE, 1872b: 196-197.
[271] HODGE, 1872b: 198-199.

obedience. Perfect obedience was a condition of merit. God expected Adam – from his own ability (or power) – to keep the terms of the covenant. This same expectation is not the case in the Covenant of Grace. Faith in Christ is a checkbox, a necessary condition (in the logical sense) that must take place regardless its provenance. This condition, however, applies to humanity, not Christ, and hence is not a perfect analogue to the condition applied to Adam and his progeny. So, what is that Christ must do, by Himself, to rescue us from God's judgement; the same way Adam did, by himself, to condemn us all?

301.   Jesus must *redeem* us. To redeem is to deliver someone by purchase in the judicial sense. Through Adam humanity is under penal death; Christ purchases our life back through His own blood sacrifice in expiation for our sins, i.e. absolves us of our sins through His sacrifice. In this way He reconciles humanity to God and keeps the promise of life. And only He could do this. Any other sacrifice would not have this judicial purchase effect. Only the blood and suffering of a sinless God-man, who lived a perfect lawful life can do this. This plan of salvation – The Covenant of Grace – is the spiritual reality behind the events related to the life of Jesus, that we already addressed in section 4.2. Some pertinent questions here would be: why can't we, normal human beings, live this holy life? Why this Covenant of Grace? As it stands, the Covenant of Works already has a way out for humanity. Adam condemned us all, but if we prevail where he failed, i.e. if we obey God perfectly, we can save ourselves. These questions require answers about *internal* aspects of human beings, i.e. things about us only, and not our *external* relation to God. I will address these questions in section 5.3.

5.2. Christ's Satisfaction

302.   This whole work of Christ under the Covenant of Grace is packed in one word: *satisfaction*:

> By the satisfaction of Christ is meant all He has done to satisfy the demands of the law and justice of God, in the place and in behalf of sinners.[272]

303.   The satisfaction of God's justice, as we can observe in the Covenant of Grace, has a sense of *proportionality*. The sins of humanity, by their gravity and quantity, require a proportionate punishment; and in the case of a substitutionary redemption – purchasing deliverance by taking the criminal's place – the substitute must provide something of proportionate value. Hence, only Christ – the God-man – being able to substitute humanity in their sins:

> All ... that the Church teaches when it says that Christ satisfied divine justice for the sins of men, is that what He did and suffered was a real adequate compensation for the penalty remitted and the benefits conferred.[273]

304.   This satisfaction should also be understood as an act of grace, i.e. of undue favor. God had no covenantal obligation to secure the bestow of His promise – that was on humanity's side. As was said, out of His benevolence, and knowing that the Covenant of Works would be breached, He safeguarded it with a parallel covenant to

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[272] HODGE, 1872b: 470.
[273] HODGE, 1872b: 471.

secure His promise. This does not mean, however, that people are not born in sin and under the penalty of death. The satisfaction is still under the terms of the covenant. Until faith manifests in a person, Christ's satisfaction has no effect. One more point of clarification concerning satisfaction is that, the substitution does not imply a *transference* of guilt from the perpetrator to the substitute. Specifically, the guilt from humanity's sins was not transferred to Jesus. This cannot be done, it is an impossibility. What a man has done in the face of the law stays with him. Yet, God's justice allows someone else to provide something of at least equal value (or weight) to compensate for the crime committed. Thus, the blame is not expiated by transference of sin from the sinner to the substitute, but by elimination through purchase.

305.   This satisfaction is also *complete*. It means that nothing else must be done to secure the expiation of blame and the fulfilment of the promise of immortal life to those who have faith in Christ. Hence, the sufferings of this life – physical death, disease, violence, worry, angst, betrayal, etc – are not judicial punishments, but rather profitable hardships (in the likes of reprimands) to the development of souls ripe for immortality. Nothing a man can do in this life, or the next, will make his judicial condition better or worse, once the satisfaction of Christ is dully (under the condition of faith) applied to him. This implies that Adam's progeny – humanity – is free from the law, i.e. from the condition of perfect obedience. Not free in the sense that the law has no bearing or no relation whatsoever to us, but free from the *penalty* of death associated with not having an unblemished personal record of sin; but also free from the *necessity to obey* it perfectly to be saved. The law was not revoked, it will always be operative; but Christ intercedes for those who have faith, *pays their debts* to justice and *offers His perfect righteousness* in their stead.

306.   Not only this satisfaction delivers the faithful from the penalty and from the condition of perfect obedience; it also delivers them from *sin itself*. The faithful, once under the benefits of the Covenant of Grace, can expect their sinful lives to get thinner and thinner as they progress through the years. The image God impressed in Adam, and present in all humanity, is restored gradually. The new life is not something that takes effect only after physical death; it begins in this earthly life. By implication, Satan and his legion of fallen angels also lose their influence. Their tempting and provoking schemes have no more hold on their victims; their freedom to torture and punish fallen humanity also ceases on those who have faith.

307.   An objection to this scheme of salvation is to assert that the innocent – in this case, Christ – cannot suffer or bare the penalties of the guilty; and also, that the guilty cannot be absolved of their crimes. This objection, given the framework established in previous sections, is no defeater. Wherever these moral claims come, if they are not from special revelation, they have no defeater status. Special revelation has the highest epistemic status, and in defeasible reasoning, epistemic sources with lower status cannot defeat those with higher – it is like discrediting the sense of existence and personality with intricate philosophical theories, made of hundreds of doubtful inferences and conceptual distinctions. If in special revelation we find a law and sense of justice that allows such judicial transactions to take place, there are no arguments to make against it. It is like arguing against autolysis for making difficult the storage

of organic materials.[274] One cannot make autolysis go away by making specious arguments against its existence, and the same applies to God's justice.

5.3. The Regenerated Man and the Natural Man

308.   So far, I presented only how God relates to humanity *objectively*, we now turn to how He relates *subjectively*.

309.   As was said in 5.1.1, the federal penalty through Adam was that of death. Adam and Eve – and all their progeny – lost their connection with God and with it everything spiritual conducive to Him. This punitive severance occasions an immediate corruption of their whole being – body and mind (or soul) –, and they are completely unable to do what needs to be done to go back to God's favor. This condition is what Calvinists usually call *Total Depravity*:

> that the whole man is the subject of original sin; that our cognitive, as well as our emotional nature is involved in the depravity consequent on our apostasy from God; that in knowing as well as in loving or in willing, we are under the influence and dominion of sin.[275]

310.   This total corruption of man's original (or Edenic) nature explains, first, why no single human being is capable to perfectly obey the law, as is stipulated in the Covenant of Works; second, why there is so much confusion concerning religion and morals; third, why there must be a substitute to make compensation *if* the promise of immortal life is to be fulfilled in some manner; and why Christ's satisfaction includes not only a deliverance from the penalty of sin, but sin itself – meaning that He also does something for us to secure our adherence to the Covenant of Grace, i.e. by securing a *saving faith*. Before we proceed to what this something is, I will elaborate on this depraved condition of ours with the words of Baxter, who was cited in the beginning of section 2 (§50.):

> we are all born with corrupted natures, inclined to earth and earthly things, and strange and averse to heaven and heavenly things; prone to evil and backward to good! estranged from God, and making our carnal selves our God; pride, self-love, covetousness, voluptuousness, unbelief, ignorance, error, hypocrisy, ungodliness, strife, contention, cruelty and all wickedness have their roots at once in us, and if temptation serve, we shall bring forth the fruit.[276]

> He that is in a state of sin, hath habitually and predominantly a greater love to some pleasures, or profits, or honours of this world, than he hath to God and to the glory which he hath promised; he preferreth, and seeketh, and holdeth (if he can) his fleshly prosperity in this world, before the favour of God and the happiness of the world to come.[277]

311.   A pertinent question here is, how are these manifestations occasioned? What are the psychic effects of the penal severance from God? It is of the character of a cognitive blockage. Metaphorically, Acts 9 describes the moment Paul could cognize

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[274] Autolysis is the process of cell self-destruction.
[275] HODGE, 1872b: 256.
[276] BAXTER, 1657/1830: 22-23.
[277] BAXTER, 1673/1830: 19.

God properly as scales falling from his eyes. He was blind, but now he could see. Paul, himself, in Romans 11 uses the expression ἐπωρώθησαν (epo-ro-thi-san) which means insensible, hardened, or callous, to point to that same state. Callous hands cannot feel, they are impregnable to any information about what is going on surfaces, i.e. to the realities we should perceive through them. This affects all the operations we discussed in section 2. And that which we cannot perceive or think about, or perceive or think wrongly about, we cannot also value and have the right affections to.[278] And this condition "lies below the will, and is beyond its power, controlling both our affections and our volitions." With that said, it is clear what Christ must do for us, viz. He must provide some mean by which this cognitive blockage is removed, or at least, sufficiently removed and that is *regeneration*.

312.   Regeneration is a supernatural act of God, out of His benevolence and special favor – specifically the Holy Spirit – over a passive subject; its effects are instantaneous, and consists in the infusion of a new life, which will stir up faith, desires, and feelings conducive to a proper relation with God. The infusion of a new life is a change from a state of sin to a state of salvation. The whole being is animated toward a new direction. This new life is the product of a new power, viz. *spiritual discernment,* or in one word *illumination*. Perceiving the things of God in this new way causes faith and a change of character. The Bible ceases to be a book of Semitic myths, and turns into the delightful and reverential word of God almighty; the superstitious hopes of the Christians turn into personal hopes; the despicable and nonsensical law and justice of God, turn into accepted duties for one's own good. Hodge analogizes with the aesthetic sense.[279] Two men might look at the same Scottish glen; one sees a diversity of topographical features and a certain color palette of greens and blues, the other revels in its beauty.

313.   Now, I think some clarifications are needed. Regeneration does not transform a depraved sinner into a perfect saint. It initiates a *process of restoration* of the image of God in the subject. This process, in the sense of being a gradual change over time, is called *sanctification*. This progressive work is also wrought by the Holy Spirit, making it a supernatural special intervention. Its progressiveness implies that the subject, in this life, still needs to deal with sin and its consequences (not penal or judicial consequences though).[280] Hodge summarizes in two heads the work of sanctification: it is a progressive removal of accrued habits, instincts, modes of thinking and feeling, etc, from the time the subject was under the power of sin and Satan; and it is, likewise, a progressive restoration of the original image of God in those same mental activities and faculties.

314.   Sanctification also differs from regeneration in their causes. The former is *synergistic*, the latter is *monergistic*. One is produced by a cooperative work between the subject and the Spirit – they are both active in the process of sanctification, though God has the prominent role. The other is a one-sided job – only God is active. Repeating from the top: God one-sidedly occasions the circumstances to initiate the process of restoration (Regeneration), and then secures all our new efforts in making them profitable to the process (Sanctification). Metaphorically, Regeneration plants

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[278] HODGE, 1872b: 261-262.
[279] HODGE, 1872c: 33.
[280] HODGE, 1872c: 220-221.

the seed, Sanctification nurtures the seed – though the seed already has everything in itself to grow, it still needs a third party to secure its growth.

315. So we see the clear difference between the regenerated man (under a process of sanctification) and the natural man. As Paul says, for the natural man the things of God are foolish (1Cor. 2:14); he cannot understand them – it is impossible to him. He is still under the penalty and the power of death. There is nothing the regenerate can do to convince or persuade a natural man of the benefits and joys of following Christ, or of the danger and evil of his condition. But this raises a question to many: this plan of salvation completely destroys human capacity, and with it all responsibility; God must initiate salvation, to the point that it seems He already agreed with Jesus about who is saved, i.e. who receives the works of the Holy Spirit which guarantee the observance of the CoG's terms; if it is impossible to us to have faith by ourselves, how can God punish us for not having it? All this is correct, but the final question assumes one error.

5.4. Predestination and the Problem of Accountability

316. In saving humanity there is no need to save every single specimen. In keeping the promise to humanity, it suffices to be fulfilled only to some. This mode of thinking and planning is not distant from our practices. To secure the preservation of an animal species, we only need to protect a certain critical amount of males and females to ensure replacement levels of reproduction. If we can do this, the existence of the species is safe. God planned our salvation in the same way. As was said before (§§296–297), the federal principle is commonplace in the word of God, so we can expect that only a small remnant representative of humanity suffices for God's purposes.

317. We can also speculate on why He does not save everybody. Maybe everybody is too many people. So far (2021) around 105 billion people walked this earth. Much more, expectably, will come by until Christ's second coming, the end of this world, and the beginning of the new. The promised resting place for those who are saved, who will have an immortal life in a glorious new body, is this earth, though restored and delivered from evil. These new bodies also occupy space, have extension, and many of the properties that characterizes matter.[281] Supposing planet Earth keeps its current dimensions and resources, it would be impossible to comfortably accommodate every single human being in history. Maybe optimal conditions for an eternal joyous life require a certain population density not compatible with a hundred billion plus population.

318. Whatever the case may be, the reality is that God elected a limited group of individuals to partake on the benefits of the CoG, and left the rest to their own devices. This act of election is usually accounted in the doctrine of *Predestination*; the effects of this election concerning the benefits of the CoG are usually accounted in the doctrine of *Limited Atonement* or *Definite Redemption*. Putting everything in one short description: From the point of extramundaness God planned the creation of the world; this creation would have creatures in the image of God, i.e. persons; these persons would fail to follow His law, and hence He included in His plan the CoG; for some reason (speculated above) God saw it wise to only keep some of these creatures under the benefits of the CoG and leave the others to perish for their trespasses.

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[281] HODGE, 1872b: 628-629; 1872c: 783.

319.   From the plan to actual creation, all these things came to pass at the same time. This implies that the world is *determined*. There are things that we can be sure to happen. Some from natural causation, others from God's supernatural special acts. We can be sure of our physical death, as much as we can be of predestination. To some this might appear to imply that every single movement, event, or change is already in place. Yes, it is conceivable that way, but that is not the only way; and it is incompatible with God's providence (i.e. the way He preserves and governs the world)[282] and the indisputable fact of free-will (3.1.1-3.1.2). Therefore, we can put that conception on the side. A better speculation on the matter is that certain things must happen, but the way they happen and everything in-between them is more or less open. To illustrate, we can conceive the murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in different ways. All of them would cascade into WWI. The first bomb thrown at the car could have landed inside it and killed the Archduke and his wife; or the revolutionaries could have attacked the Archduke in his private chambers during sleep.

320.   With this in mind, when God severs our link to Him, and we fall away from Him and His law, that which remains and is prone to sin, still is our personal nature. The sinful sensibilities, the complacent will, the erroneous reasonings and conceptions, it is all on us. When we fester on sinful sensibilities and act on them, no one is making us be and do those things. A didactic illustration is the following: suppose x is a good influence on y; x's close friendship with y keeps y out of trouble; it mitigates and avoids some of y's tendencies; y does something x warned y not to do, on the condition that that would violate their friendship; x steps away from y and y does the same from x; away from x, y gets in trouble and goes to jail; y did something serious and must be judged in court. Should x also be called to the bar for y's faults? Should x be exonerated from his deeds? Not according to God's justice, but I think that if we did a survey many would intuit a negative answer too. We usually do not abstain from condemning people because a third party did not do something to prevent what they are and did, when they are physically and mentally competent. People still have a sense of justice, of duty, of right and wrong, of divinity (or transcendence), so there is no excuse. When a murdering sociopath, or a mischievous thief and pathological liar commit crimes, we do not abstain from punishing them because they lacked in proper upbringing and good relationships, and we also do not go after their friends, family, or closes acquaintances.

321.   So does God with us. He created us in His image: free-willed, rational, sensible beings with a taste for beauty, a conscience for law, and a sense of divinity. He has no further duties towards humanity. It is on humanity's side to abide by the law: receive the benefits of following it and the penalties for not. The CoG is pure grace and benevolence. He did not have to save a single human specimen, and notwithstanding He did, by the sacrifice and blood-suffering of the eternal Son. I think my words are perfectly clear and the illustrations comprehensible, but I will let Hodge paraphrase the same ideas once more:

> We are responsible for external acts, because they depend on our volitions. We are responsible for our volitions because they depend on our principles and feelings; and we are responsible for our feelings and for those states of mind which constitute character, because

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[282] HODGE, 1872b: 575, 581-582, 586-590, 605-616.

(within the sphere of morals and religion) they are right or wrong in their own nature. The fact that the affections and permanent and even immanent states of the mind are beyond the power of the will does not (as has been repeatedly shown in these pages), remove them out of the sphere of moral obligation. As this is attested by Scripture and by the general judgment of men, the assumed axiom that ability limits obligation in the sphere of morals cannot be admitted. Moral obligation being founded upon the possession of the attributes of a moral agent, reason, conscience, and will, it remains unimpaired so long as these attributes remain. If reason be lost all responsibility for character or conduct ceases. If the consciousness of the difference between right and wrong, the capacity to perceive moral distinctions does not exist in a creature or does not belong to its nature, that creature is not the subject of moral obligation; and in like manner if he is not an agent, is not invested with the faculty of spontaneous activity as a personal being, he ceases, so far as his conscious states are concerned, to be responsible for what he is or does.[283]

322.   So again, "if it is impossible to us to have faith by ourselves, how can God punish us for not having it?"

i)   Because we still preserve in our nature the faculties of a moral agent, and those are the criteria to impute responsibility on things done and duty on things to be done.

ii) Because God has no duty and no need to save and guarantee the fulfilment of His promise of life to everybody, but has the duty to punish covenant violations.

323.   There is no problem of accountability.

5.5. God's Law, Evidence of Regeneration, and Christian Communitarianism

324.   A pertinent question is how the CoW and the CoG interact. The way everything was presented here might suggest the CoG supersedes the CoW at least for those who enjoy the benefits of Christ's satisfaction. If Christ purchases their freedom from all evil, sets their relation right with God, and secures their faith by providing them the Spirit for the working of regeneration and sanctification; what is the purpose of the law attached to the CoW? This transaction seems to free Christians also from the duty to follow the law. This, however, would be a wrong conclusion. These laws are as fixed as the laws that govern natural necessity. God governs the world with both; the former, however, is no force but rather the deontic conditions under which justice is applied. The reality of these laws is God's expectations towards moral agents. God expects humanity to follow these laws, and as long as God has this expectation, and judges upon it, these laws will continue to exist.

325.   This means even the elected beneficiaries are required to follow God's law. Being free from the burden and wages of sin does not imply a disconnection with God's law. That would be to disconnect from God Himself, and that is the state of all those outside the circle of redemption. As was said earlier, by regeneration and sanctification the elect is transformed inside-out. By knowing, loving, and enjoying God more and more, the elect is also more disposed to follow the law. The law ceases

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[283] HODGE, 1872b: 275.

to be a dread in one's life – obligations designed to torture and oppress. It is viewed as good for us – it promotes our wellbeing on this earth and the next. Following it brings joy, and its beauty is unescapable when materialized in single acts and when it molds a family or a community. Without the Holy Spirit, however, we can be sure no good thing would ever come out from a person, that being ideas, reasonings, feelings, desires, or deeds.

326.   This is a completely different way of looking at following God's law. As was said in 5.2, Christ already did everything needed to secure our salvation. Hence, following the law, does not add anything. The elect follow the law because that is the *effect* of being under God's special grace, i.e. having Christ in one's life and being under the workings of the Holy Spirit. Following the law is not viewed as something that will produce a certain outcome in God's judgement, but rather as *evidence* (or *signs*) that a person is saved. By diligent introspection, one can be progressively surer of one's state, by looking into one's beliefs, moral and aesthetic sensibilities, habits, decisions, etc. Even worrying about one's saving status might be positive evidence for being in a regenerate state. Nevertheless, all this effort to seek assurance (or certainty) of one's salvation would be misguided and pointless without the law. As Paul says in Romans 3:20 "the law merely brings awareness of sin", and again in 7:7 "I would not have been mindful of sin if not for the law." The law is *useful*, and not only deontically binding. It is our *objective* criterion to evaluate ourselves, but also others.

327.   This is important because Christians do not live individually isolated in an island. Hermits are extremely far outliers. God created human–beings as social, and odds say, the regenerated will be found living amongst themselves, and most probably amongst unregenerates. So the law is also useful for Christians to find others with whom to socialize and form churches, i.e. social bodies of Christians: a Christian *community*. Nowadays, the word "church" normally is used to point to religious facilities. But not in the mouth and minds of inspired men. To them "church" can point to two things: it might point solely to the body of regenerates – this would be the Church (capital C) or the body of Christ – or it might point to particular Christian communities wherein one might find regenerates mixed with unregenerates.

328.   In the first sense, Protestants usually distinguish two *states* of the Church: the Invisible Church and the Visible Church. The former is constituted by all the elect, from Adam to the Eschaton; the latter by all the elect alive at a certain point in time. The former points to the Church disregarding time and place; the latter disregards place only. In the second sense, Protestants point to local churches, or visible Christian organizations.[284] There are no known local churches harboring *all* of the Visible Church; or, harboring *some*, that slice of the Visible Church exhausting its membership. This to say, all local churches, with certainty, are contaminated with impostors, hypocrites, and deluded unregenerates. This contamination however does not eliminate the Christian character of the organization. As long as there is a majority, that being of laity and leadership (elders, pastors, deacons, teachers, etc), securing the principles of the Christian religion and their manifestation in the church,

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[284] BAIRD, 1864: 14-17; BINNIE, 1882: 4-6, 10-11; HODGE, 1872a: 134-135; 1872c: 545; SMITH, 1884: 591-592; MACPHERSON, 1898: 414-219; MILLER, 1842: 17-21.

that local church is still a church. This explains why the law is important: it helps the Christian to identify regenerate led local churches:

> It is the duty of those who have been brought to God by Christ to associate themselves together for His worship and service, and for their mutual edification … . This is Christ's command; and the Spirit of Christ working in the hearts of the faithful impels them, as by a gracious instinct, to draw towards one another and to take pleasure in each other society. [However] no man can safely join himself to a given society simply because it professes to be the Christian Church of the place. And this being so, the question must be faced, … How shall I make sure that a given society, which invites me into its fellowship, will be found to be truly a Christian Church?[285]

329.   These particular communities have God as the highest authority. The laws that arbitrate their daily business are God's. And priority must be given to fellow congregants and to other Christian communities. Whatever mode of government Christians choose to manage their church, that government has precedence over any other government, including, yes, civil government. The last statement must be clarified. The church ought to be organized as to maximize piety in itself and other churches. If a civil government legislates and acts against this, by creating difficulties or outright prohibitions, resistance to it must take place, and obedience to church leadership given precedence – as long as it preserves God's law:

> The principles which limit the authority of civil government and of its agents are simple and obvious. The first is that governments and magistrates have authority only within their legitimate spheres. As civil government is instituted for the protection of life and property, for the preservation of order, for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of those who do well, it has to do only with the conduct, or external acts of men. … A second limitation is no less plain. No human authority can make it obligatory on a man to disobey God. If all power is from God, it cannot be legitimate when used against God. This is self-evident. … On this point there can be no dispute. It is important that this principle should be not only recognized, but also publicly avowed. The sanctity of law, and the stability of human governments, depend on the sanction of God. Unless they repose on Him, they rest on nothing. They have his sanction only when they act according to his will; that is in accordance with the design of their appointment and in harmony with the moral law.[286]

330.   Obedience is due to civil government, no doubt about that; and what is more, that government does not even need to be Christian in its institutional character.[287] However, at minimum, no laws and no executive activities must take place that actively influences or coerces Christians to disobey God, or strains and interferes with Christian church life. The state, or the nation, or the commonwealth, or whatever political civil unit or institution one can think of is not above God and the church.

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[285] BINNIE, 1882: 5-6
[286] HODGE, 1872c: 358-359.
[287] HODGE, 1872c: 357-358.

331.   But who is this God who presides over every local church? Who established the covenants of grace and works? Who mandates the law and secures redemption? And how does God relate to Jesus Christ, if He Himself declared to be God? Questions as these are answered in the next section.

5.6. The Holy Trinity

332.   One of the greatest blunders of traditional confessional Calvinism, and of theological science in general, is their conceptions of God. It started with the Chalcedonian (451) and Pseudo-Athanasian (5th century France?) creeds, as attempts to distinguish Nicene Christianity from Arianism (among other so called heresies), and it opened the doors for much unprofitable philosophical technolect and groundless speculation (as I see it). Even today, western Christianity did not yet get rid of these things, and it seems it is making a comeback, for a number of factors irrelevant to this present work. It is relevant, however, to preface this section with this view, since my theory of God, and His Trinitarian character, will be very different from everything hitherto taken as dogma.

333.   From all that was presented in previous sections, we can know this about God:

  i)   He is spiritual as well as material. God is not a "pure Spirit" as many claim Him to be. Jesus is God, and Jesus walked this earth as a man. This fact contradicts blatantly any claims to pure spirituality.

  ii)   He has great enough powers to create the world, sustain and govern it (by causal and moral laws); and also judge and dispense justice over all moral creatures. This however does not imply (deductively) or suggest (empirically or abductively) that God is omnipotent. Again we know only that He is powerful *enough* to make happen the things we know about.

  iii) God is personal. He has intellect, desires, will, and emotions. These facts outright falsify theories of divine impassibility and immutability. Of course God changes. If Jesus is God, and He moved, thought, laughed, suffered, etc, then God changes. Not only that but the Bible is full of examples of God having emotions, coming and going, of speaking and being silent, of being materially present and absent from His people. These scriptural facts cannot be dispensed with in order to save some philosophical theory.

  iv)   He must have a tremendous intellect, full of knowledge and with an astounding memory and computational capacity. Once again, this says nothing about omniscience.

  v)   He is extramundane and eternal. He is extramundane because He existed before creation, and does not seem limited by creation. He is eternal because He promised human beings immortal life. Since it is Him who governs and sustains the world, His promise cannot be fulfilled, if at any moment He ceases to exist.

  vi)   God must be immense and ubiquitous. To supervise and sustain creation there can be no secret places to Him, as He says "Do not I fill the heaven and earth?" (Jer. 23:24). By "ubiquitous" I am not saying omnipresent. By "omnipresent" theologians refer not only to divine presence in the world, which is finite, but also God's presence in His own extramundane realm, which is conceived as infinite. So, like the rest of the omni traits, omnipresence is also connected with God's infinity. By ubiquitous I mean that God is everywhere in the world.

No one has the slightest idea of what is God's celestial kingdom; and claiming it to be infinite in every direction (spatially or temporally) is, once again, groundless speculation.

vii) God is not one being, but three. By this I mean there are three separate existences – Father, Son (Jesus Christ), and Holy Spirit. Historically, western theologians tried to mask their theories of the Trinity with semantically anomalous jargon. They thought (and think) Monotheism requires the impossible task of theorizing three numerically distinct persons, as only one being – hence the obscure and empty technical philosophical jargon. This is unacceptable. It forces the mind into states of double thinking and other phenomena that prevents the person from acknowledging the nonsense he is trying to think about; and it veils the truth about God.

334.   Let us delve deeper into the subjects.

5.6.1. Disproving Pure Spirituality

335.   It is commonplace to say that God is a "pure spirit". We can see this in the eminent Westminster Confession,[288] in many reformed theologians that defend this same dogma,[289] and in Romanists such as Thomas Aquinas.[290] With such a long-standing dogma in the Church, I cannot simply push it out to give place to my new claim. Some discussion needs to take place here. So let us start with the oldest of the sample given above, Thomas Aquinas.

5.6.1.1. Aquinas

336.   Aquinas claims positively, through the apostle John, that God is a spirit; and negatively, that He is bodiless. His reasons are:

i)   Because bodies cannot exist unless something else makes them exist – to Aquinas, existence is to be in motion. Since God is ontologically autonomous (He makes Himself move), i.e. does not need anything to bring Him into existence, He must be bodiless.

ii)   Because bodies have capacities – to Aquinas, capacities are referred as potentials or potentialities. This means that bodies or properties not yet in existence, come into existence in certain circumstances. Whatever are those circumstances, those capacities (or potentials) can only come into existence by God's action on them, i.e. putting them in motion. Since, God self-exists, He must be pure existence; and thus He has no potentials. Therefore, God must be bodiless.

iii)   Because bodies are merely contingently animate. Bodies like rocks and twigs are inanimate; we are animate because there is something else – our soul – doing that for the body. This makes the body an existent of very low nobility. God, however, is the highest noble Being, which makes it incompatible with being bodily. Therefore, He must be bodiless.

337.   There is one difficulty here. Aquinas has a very definite framework from which he produces his theories, viz. that of Aristotle. However, this is not the place to make a

288 Ch. 2, art. 1.
289 GEISLER, 2002: 553-559; GERHART, 1894: 428-436; HODGE, 1872a: 376-380; SMITH, 1884: 21.
290 AQUINAS, 1485/1920: P. 1, Q. 3, art. 1.

refutation of Aristotle's whole system, so one can expect some things to be left out in my attacks. That aside, first, there is no reason to think bodies can only exist if caused by something else. Aquinas claims this can be observed and generalized in a truth statement – "as is evident by induction" (his words) – but what kind of observations would allow such generalizations? Aquinas has no answers for this. He provides no evidence, arguments, or explanations for why bodies cannot exist eternally, as spirits do. Second, Aquinas is all over the place with his technolect. He must concede and affirm God to have powers – it is explicitly stated in Scripture and contradicts his claim of pure actuality – but then, in virtue of his theoretical prejudices, he must deny potentiality in God. To get out of this he conceives a linguistic distinction between "active power" and "passive power". In the translation he says:

> Active power is … founded upon [act], for everything acts according as it is actual: but passive power is contrary to act; for a thing is passive according as it is potential.

338.   So it seems, active power is just action and passive power just potential. He even says that "God's action is not distinct from His power". If there is no distinction in *reality*, i.e. two types of powers, then, as I said, the distinction is merely *linguistic* – he is denying powers to God and disguising this theoretical trait with a linguistic distinction between "active" and "passive" powers. Linguistic distinctions are welcomed in rhetorical speech, to make things sound better and less repetitive, but not in theoretical exposition. This is a blatant contradiction disguised with a linguistic distinction. The contradiction is, on one side, God has powers (or potentials) and, on the other, God is pure action. Hence, God only having "active power" is no defeater for having a body. Third, what is this nobility property? What is there in nobility that tracks second-hand animation? No answers to these questions. Without an answer to these questions, Aquinas would not be able to reply to a "so what?" objection: what is the problem of body being inert without a soul animating it? How does this dis-ennobles God?

5.6.1.2. Hodge and Gerhardt

339.   Moving on to Hodge. Though I have been citing Hodge as the voice of reason in theological matters, he is very disappointing in this matter. He makes no arguments for the claim of pure spirituality. He does a good job in listing the properties of spirit that can be predicated to God, and in supporting those with some scriptural evidence; but this does nothing for proving the claim. Even in his Christology I could not find any discussion concerning how the humanity of Christ might be incompatible with a claim to God's pure spirituality.[291] If Christ is God, and Christ has body parts, organs, fluids, etc, then God has material properties. One can object that these belong to Jesus' "human nature" and not his "divine nature". Again, is Jesus God? Yes; is Jesus human? Yes; is Jesus nature divided? No, it is united; then God is also material. If God is not being conceived as a property of something else, but *the* something else; this implies identity. "God" and "Jesus" would be just names we use to point to the same entity:

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[291] HODGE, 1872b: 378-405.

g: God	1. g=j
j: Jesus	2. Hj
Hx: x is human	3. (∀x)Hx → Mx
Mx: x is material	4. ∴ Mg

340.   There is no way around this. And there is no space to cry for mystery:

> Christ is both God and man, in two distinct natures, and one person forever. This is the great mystery of Godliness.[292]

341.   The theologians created the mystery. The theoretical complications of apparent incompatibility between Christ being fully human and fully God do not stem from the Bible, but from philosophical prejudice. This to say, Hodge – and any other theologian – cannot appeal to mystery after his theory is pressed with probing questions and objections. It is the wording of the metaphysical theories that is obscure and unintelligible, not Scripture.

342.   Next, we have a venerable name from the seminar of Mercersburg, Emanuel Vogel Gerhardt (1817-1904) – a contemporary of many of the philosophers and theologians cited in this work. However, he too falls into Hodge's mistake. He assumes God's pure spirituality and develops this into a formidable philosophical theory of triune spirituality. From these three, Aquinas was the only theologian that felt the need to prove his point, before developing it further. Though very different in their theories and mode of exposition, they agree in one thing, which can be surmised in Salmond's words:

> Even this one, *God is a Spirit*, is given by Christ not as a theoretical expression of what God is, but to help a poor woman to understand what it is to worship God. … this one is the largest and most absolute. Christ's use of it warrants us to believe that God is in perfect measure that which we understand by the word Spirit in ourselves.[293]

343.   They all think Scripture, somehow, warrants their point of departure. Their go-to verse is John 4:24. So let us take a closer look. The expression in question is "πνεῦμα ὁ θεός" (pneh-ma o theos). The correct translation is "Spirit God is", or in a more current syntax, "God is spirit". By affirming God to be spirit, this does not close the door to materiality. We, human beings, are also spirit. By affirming our spirituality, I'm not making an exclusive claim of such characteristic. "But the context!" would say the contrarian, "what about the context?". Here is the context. Jesus was talking with the Samaritan woman by the well. She told Him that she sees Him as a prophet, that her ancestors worshiped on the mountain they were standing

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[292] HODGE, 1872b: 384.
[293] SALMOND, 1900: 17

on, and that Jesus is saying she should worship in Jerusalem. It does not matter why the woman thought this about Jesus; what matters is His response:

> Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ... But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. *God is spirit*, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

344. Jesus seems to be saying that it does not matter where *physically* one worships, since God is spirit. This statement has one implication, viz. that communication with God (i.e. worship) is not constrained by physical barriers like sound is. It is a supernatural communication that occurs in the spiritual domain of reality. So, mentioning God's spirituality was to a make a point, viz. for the Samaritan woman to not care about superficial things, such as the place of worship, if she wants to worship the true God. This context does nothing for a claim of a strict (or exclusive) predication of spirituality to God.

5.6.1.3. Geisler: mining traditional conceptions of immutability, simplicity, perfection, infinity, necessity, uncausality, and omni-traits

345. A final defender of God's pure spirituality is the late Norman Geisler (1932–2019). Like Aquinas, Geisler is going to make a negative argument for pure spirituality, i.e. he assumes that by proving immateriality, pure spirituality follows – which, even according to our Commonsensist framework, would be an acceptable inference. His defense, though, is as weak as it can get. The first line of defense seems to be just a fallacy of poisoning the well. Here are a few instances (all the italics are mine): [294]

> While all *orthodox Christians* confess God's immateriality, many *cults* have denied it.
>
> Few, if any, *orthodox scholars* have *ever* challenged this
>
> *one* noted evangelical has ventured recently to break this *venerable tradition* with a *shocking* theological *innovation*

346. All these ("orthodox", "cult", "venerable tradition", "theological innovation") are buzzwords that in Christian circles have pejorative or commendatory connotations, and are, generally speaking, pointing to bad or good religious practices. These value judgments have no probatory weight, but rhetorically might affect the reader into thinking, without second thought, that God's materiality is an idea not even considerable to a "good" Christian. Hence, my accusation of the above fallacy. This being a fallacy, and consequently having no bearing as a defeater or being a challenge to the claim of God's materiality; the first line of defense can be dispensed with.

347. The second line of defense is scriptural evidence.[295] Some verses are evidence for God's extramundaness. According to Geisler, this characteristic precludes materiality: "the fact that He created the material universe implies He is not
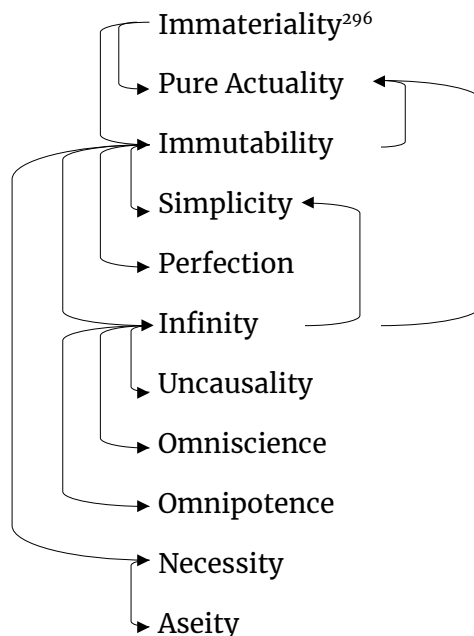
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[294] GEISLER, 2002: 553.
[295] GEISLER, 2002: 554-555.

material." Says who? How exactly being the creator of this universe is incompatible with God being material, among other properties? One response from Geisler (in heaven) could be there was no matter prior the creation of the universe, and hence, God cannot be material. But again, says who? None of these can be used as defeaters, since none of them is backed up by any scriptural or empirical evidence. Other verses are used as evidence that God forbids sensuous symbols in religious practice, i.e. idolatry. I cannot understand how this implies God's immateriality, but neither Geisler explains this claim. There are many other verses Geisler puts on the table as evidence for his claim, but none of them is exegeted.

348.   For the reader to have a sense of how unacceptable this is, this is like asking for the evidence in a court case, and the only thing provided is the code in the label of each item. The defense still needs to open the bag, show the item, and explain to the judge and jury what they are seeing. Since no effort was made on the part of Geisler to make his case, no effort can be demanded on those who object against it – if he does not exegete in favor of his argument, I do not have to exegete to block the use of the verses as evidence. The scriptural evidence can be simply dispensed with. No defeater was provided for God's materiality, and no piece of confirmatory evidence for God's strict spirituality the same thing.

349.   The third line of defense, Geisler calls a "theological basis", i.e. how prior warranted theoretical commitments preclude God's materiality. This argumentation section runs the risk of getting confused for the reader. This is the result of how Geisler argues for his claims. To avoid this as much as possible, I'm going to leave a chart of what is going to happen in the next paragraphs dedicated to refuting Geisler. By the end, all prior theological commitments will be shown to be unwarranted, and so, cannot do their precluding job over God's materiality.

Immateriality[296]
Pure Actuality
Immutability
Simplicity
Perfection
Infinity
Uncausality
Omniscience
Omnipotence
Necessity
Aseity

350.   His first incompatible statement is that God has no potentials. We have already gone through this with Aquinas, so we can just skip to the next, which is immutability.

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[296] The arrows represent the relation A is defended/supported/confirmed by B. B is at the end of the arrow.

Matter changes, God cannot change, therefore God is immaterial. This contradicts point iii in paragraph 333. Geisler provides scriptural evidence for the claim of immutability but,[297] once again, he just leaves it there with no exegesis, and so it has no probatory weight. The contrary claim is true: God changes all the time. Unless Geisler and followers have a good explanation to how Christ changing from a state of non-resurrection to resurrected, or how God changing from being silent to speaking to Moses, are not *really* changes, they have no case for immutability.

351.   Geisler's "theological" argument for immutability calls for "pure actuality", or the absence of potentiality. We already dealt with this. He also calls for simplicity. That which changes is composed of what changes; since God has no composition (He is not an assemblage of parts), He cannot change.[298]   The first premise of this argument is arguable. Recall section 4.1.1. Even if God was a pure Spirit, spirit can be localized, volitive, and interact with causal chains (also recall inspiration, regeneration, and sanctification). Hence, there is no need of parts to be able to change. Another property pointed by Geisler that supports immutability is perfection. Change implies the acquisition of something new, but God cannot acquire anything, because He cannot be any better; therefore God cannot change.

352.   Concerning the first premise, what does Geisler mean by "acquiring something new"? Does he mean a positive addition of something else? Not all change moves toward addition; there is also subtraction (loss of cells, loss of weight, loss of density, etc). Or does he mean "new" in that the actual state is new relative to the previous? If this is the intended sense, this would amount to say that for every *particular* state x succeeding any number of previous states, x is always different from all the antecedents.[299] Unfortunately, there is nothing in the text to help adjudicate in a definite way which of the senses is intended by Geisler. The second premise is argued by saying that God cannot get better. There is a tendency to generalize increment or addition of qualities as something better. I think there is even a misunderstanding in many people, that evolution is always an increasing of complexity, and that this increasing is better. If Geisler had something like this in mind when he wrote this argument, the first sense is the most probable intended sense. That aside, being the first premise false, Geisler has no argument.

353.   Next, we have infinity,[300] which was mentioned in point vi of paragraph 333. This is another divine attribute of traditional Theism − the God of the philosophers. However, there is no evidence for this. Geisler provides verses, but, as in other instances, there is no exegesis. He, however, infers from God's extramundaness His infinity. But how does that work? What is there in extramundaness − i.e. being outside of the finite world (as we know it) − that makes God infinite? It seems Geisler, and many others (I suppose), confuse the mental operation of negation with the reality of something being outside of the other. Yes, not-finite is infinite; but there is no evidence for the claim that outside this world, there can only be an infinite God. There

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[297] GEISLER, 2002: 505.

[298] GEISLER, 2002: 506.

[299] It is important to qualify it as a particular. Without it the reader might interpret "state" as a concept (or a type), and, in this sense, many states are not new. E.g. a person can be seated many times. Though all the seating is the same as a type, it is different as a particular. Every time the person seats down it is in a different moment of his life, i.e. a seating in T_1 is different *particularly* of a seating in T_2.

[300] GEISLER, 2002: 545.

is simply no way to know this. And infinite in what sense? What can infinity be outside being a subsequent property of spatial size, or duration, or amounts of knowledge or power? No answers.

354.   To support this claim of infinity Geisler calls for pure actuality, which was already addressed. Then he mentions uncausality. He claims that "Whatever is uncaused is unlimited". Before I object to this claim, Geisler's wording needs to be corrected. There is a difference between unlimited and limitless. The former means that something has no limits, but that it might be possible to set limits – it is a concept that accommodates the contingency of having no limits. The latter means that something has no limits essentially, i.e. in all conceivable circumstances it cannot have limits. So, the correct word – and concept behind – is the latter. Going back to his claim, where did Geisler get this? He says that a caused thing is always limited because it has potentials, i.e. there are some aspects about the thing not yet in existence, and hence the thing is limited by something else that brings those aspects into existence. This is false given the results of our discussion concerning God's powers. With this correction at hand, according to Geisler, God is also limited. And is God limited? In some ways yes. Jesus was spatially limited, and God's decisions and actions are limited by His Self-imposing justice and benevolent sensibilities. What's more, as I said in points ii and vi of paragraph 333., God is immensely powerful and He, as Father and Spirit, might also be immense in the amount of space He covers to preserve and govern; but these facts do not imply that He is *infinitely* spacious and powerful.

355.   Next, we have simplicity, which I already mentioned but did not delve into it. According to Geisler, God having no parts, makes Him simple. He then goes on with a series of inferences. If God is simple he cannot *have* things, rather He *is* things. Hence, He does not have existence, He is existence; and whatever is existence in itself, is limitless. This is a series of semantic anomalies – which is common in much of philosophy, and especially present in medieval Scholastics (which is where Geisler is getting his metaphysics). Geisler says that God does not have powers, He is the powers; God does not have knowledge, He is knowledge, and so forth. If the verb "to be" is differentiated from the verb "to have" to express identity instead of predication of properties; then God is identical with knowledge and powers. Which makes our conceptual schemes and language a complete mess. I can say things like "I have the God to lift this weight", but of course there is no conceptual correspondent to this expression, which makes it another semantic anomaly. This is nonsense.

356.   And can anything *be* existence, i.e. motion? Again, if Thomism was a true philosophical system, this would make our minds mad. If God is pure actuality (pure motion, existence in itself), then I can say things like "This rock God", i.e. "this rock exists"; or "this car has God", i.e. "this car has motion". What about those things theologians say such as "God causes everything to exist; He is the first cause"? This could be said "Existence causes everything to God; He is the first cause". This is all nonsense. To finish this, Geisler then calls for omniscience and omnipotence. However, without infinity there is no omni-traits, and none of these can be proved independently from Scripture.

357.   Finally, Geisler puts forward necessity as implying immutability. He presents a very bad argument. It is bad because, first, Geisler does not use correctly the

technolect borrowed from Thomism; and second, because, even after corrected and cleaned of linguistic noise, it is still fallacious. Let us analyze his statements:

1. "a necessary Being cannot change in its being"

2. "The being that [the Being] has, it has necessarily"

3. "If [the Being] did not have being necessarily, then it would not be a necessary Being"

4. Therefore, "a necessary Being cannot change"

358.   Recall that God *is* existence, He does not *have* existence. "Being" and "existence" are synonymous in this philosophical technolect. So, in God's case, He is not merely an existent (a thing that exists), but existence. So "Being" (capital B) is existence. It does not make sense, in this technolect, to say "*a* necessary Being". It has to be *the* necessary Being, since there are no more than one existence. What would be two existences? This is unintelligible. 1 then can be corrected as:

1'. "the necessary Existence cannot change in its existence"

359.   Now, "existence" is also interchangeable with "motion". We can paraphrase this as:

1''. "The necessary Motion cannot change in its motion"

360.   It doesn't matter which of the two is selected. So let's go with the latter –since it's Aquinas understanding of existence – in a shorter version:

1'''. "The necessary Motion cannot change"

361.   God/Existence/Motion cannot *have* things, He *is* things. There can be no "in its [x]", because He is x already. So why He cannot change? Geisler seems to answer this question with 2. But this sentence must also be corrected:

 2'. "The Motion is necessary"

362.   So basically, the necessary Motion cannot change because Motion is necessary. Got it. Maybe 3 can clarify this once corrected by Geisler's borrowed Thomist technolect:

3'. "If the Motion was not necessary, then it would not be the necessary Motion"

363.   This is basically A therefore A, or repetition. Nothing was cleared with this statement. From these two last statements (2 and 3) Geisler concludes 4 – which was prefaced already in 1. I think 1 is not a premise, but rather an anticipated conclusion. He then gave the premises for that conclusion, and repeated it in 4. The reconstructed argument is the following:

2'. The Motion is necessary

3'. If the Motion was not necessary, then it would not be a necessary Motion

1'''. Therefore, the necessary Motion cannot change

364.   I think I don't need to show proof for how this argument is fallacious. The correct conclusion of this argument is simply an iteration of premise 2' by way of

modus tollens. Which would make the argument a fallacy of begging the question. But, the way it is presented, the problem with it is that the premises say nothing about change, i.e. there is a term in the conclusion absent in the premises. Maybe we can steelman Geisler's position by taking a look at how he accounts and argues for necessity. Maybe we can find something there that makes necessity incompatible with materiality.

365.   Geisler clarifies "necessary Being" as impossible non-being.[301] This is no clarification, since no information was added here – □B is interchangeable with ¬◊¬B. He then adds another uninformative and wrongly expressed statement, "if a necessary Being exists, then He must exist necessarily". "Being" (capital B) *is* already existence, hence it makes no sense to say "Existence exists" or "Motion motions". It also does not make sense, as we have seen above, to use indefinite articles to refer to "Being". The correct sentence would be, "if Being is necessary, then He must be necessary" This amounts to say □B therefore □□B, which is redundant (in S5). Geisler presents another four ways to express the necessity of Being. The first, he repeats that necessary Being means impossible non-being. Then he states that, "a necessary Being is":

"(2) a Being whose existence is essential"

"(3) a Being whose essence is to exist"

"(4) a Being whose essence and existence are identical"

366.   These statements must once again be corrected:

(2)' "the Motion essentially"

367.   The revised sentences of (3) and (4) would be paraphrases of (2)'. These sentences seem not to clarify anything either. He then tries to prove God's necessity with scriptural evidence, and, once again, he does not exegete; and then goes to his theological proofs, but we already went through them above, except for God's so called "aseity". According to Geisler this is self-existence. If this is so, this adds nothing to pure actuality. If existence is motion, and God is pure Motion with (supposedly) no potentials, then, obviously, He self-moves, i.e. He self-exists. Therefore, falsifying pure actuality also falsifies "aseity", and we don't need to deal any further with it.

5.6.2. Disproving Impassibility

368.   The view that God is passible is not exactly new, even in the more restricted confines of Calvinistic theology. This is especially the case in old Princetonian theology. Hodge says:

> The schoolmen, and often the philosophical theologians, tell us that
> there is no feeling in God. This, they say, would imply passivity, or
> susceptibility of impression from without, which it is assumed is
> incompatible with the nature of God. "We must exclude," says Bruch,
> "passivity from the idea of love, as it exists in God."... Bruch admits
> that this doctrine is in real contradiction to the representations of God

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[301] GEISLER, 2002: 497.

in the Old Testament, and in apparent contradiction to those of the New Testament. ... Here again we have to choose between a mere philosophical speculation and the clear testimony of the Bible, and of our own moral and religious nature. Love of necessity involves feeling, and if there be no feeling in God, there can be no love. ... We must adhere to the truth in its Scriptural form, or we lose it altogether. We must believe that God is love in the sense in which that word comes home to every human heart.[302]

369.   And Benjamin B. Warfield (1851–1921):

> Men tell us that God is, by the very necessity of His nature, incapable of passion, incapable of being moved by inducements from without; that He dwells in holy calm and unchangeable blessedness, untouched by human sufferings or human sorrows forever... Let us bless our God that it is not true. God can feel; God does love. We have Scriptural warrant for believing, as it has been well phrased, that moral heroism has a place within the sphere of the Divine nature: we have Scriptural warrant for believing that ... But is not this gross anthropomorphism? We are careless of names: it is the truth of God. And we decline to yield up the God of the Bible and the God of our hearts to any philosophical abstraction. We have and we must have an ethical God; a God whom we can love, and in whom we can trust.[303]

370.   These however are not enough to disprove Impassibility, so let us see a more sustained argument in favor of that doctrine. A move that was taken more recently was to preserve the label of the doctrine, "Impassibility", but revise the doctrine theoretically. Impassibility now is distinguished from unemotionality. The latter is theoretically equivalent with "old school" Impassibility – the one Hodge and Warfield stand against. Impassibility now affirms that God:

> cannot be manipulated, overwhelmed, or surprised into an emotional interaction that he does not desire to have or allow to happen.[304]

371.   So, does God have emotions or not? Yes, says the contemporary Impassibilist:

> God is impassioned (i.e., perfectly vibrant in his affections), and he may be affected by his creatures, but as God, he is so in ways that accord rather than conflict with his will to be so affected by those whom, in love, he has made.[305]

372.   Today, according to these theologians, one can be both an Impassibilist and an Impassionist. This, as I see it, is an admission of defeat. The doctrine was revised to a point that, the only thing that remained was the label. To the new Impassibilist, the difference between God and His human creatures is that His emotions and desires are perfectly under willful control, something that is not the case with us. Our decisions are conditioned by our sensibilities, God's sensibilities are conditioned by His will, i.e. God has the feelings and desires He wants to have. But from where comes this position? What evidence can one adduce in favor of this psychology in reverse? From

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[302] HODGE, 1872a: 428-429.
[303] WARFIELD, 1893.
[304] LISTER, 2013: 35.
[305] LISTER, 2013: 35.

our Motivationist standpoint, this psychology of God is false. Motivationism doesn't apply merely to us – human beings – but also to God. God's will is also dependent of His sensibilities. The difference is, God is not maculated with sin and, hence, His sensibilities only condition a perfect benevolence (i.e. good-will). Said in another angle, God can only choose what His sensibilities allow, but He only has good sensibilities. It is from His sensibilities that all moral life comes from. Without it, there would be no law and no justice.

373.   Notwithstanding, let us try to answer the questions in the previous paragraph. But first, a clarification of what is at stake here. The Impassibilist claim is that *God cannot be provoked/influenced/induced into a certain sensible state*. The Impassionate claim is that *God's sensible states are an exclusive product of His will*. Impassionism is embedded in Impassibilism; the former is the "why" of the latter. So Impassibilists admitted defeat in that God is sensible, but not admitting defeat all the way, they preserved the label and revised the doctrine to include a psychology of sensibilities akin to that of Reid and Porter, as we have seen in section 3.1.1. This psychology is false for human beings, and at first sight it seems false for God too. The reason to think this is articulated by Hodge:

> Originally the words רוּחַ and πνεύμα meant the moving air, especially the breath, as in the phrase πνεύμα βιου; then any invisible power; then the human soul. In saying, therefore, that God is a Spirit, our Lord authorizes us to believe that whatever is essential to the idea of a spirit, as learned from our own consciousness, is to be referred to God as determining his nature.[306]

374.   The principle underlying this statement is that we are made at the image of God. This means we are similar to Him, and by studying ourselves, and using the Bible to prune wrong inferences (from fallen human nature to God), we can get to very plausible views about Him. This means that the only acceptable defeater for extending the theory of Motivationism to God, and the only warrantor for the psychology underlying Impassibilism, is scriptural evidence. Let us proceed, then, to the Impassibilist case.

375.   There are two big errors in Rob Lister's work – who was cited above. The first is that he developed an exegetical method that brings us back into patristic and medieval practices, viz. that of *multiple senses*. Back then theologians talked about a "forest of allegories" and hidden meanings behind the "letter". Biblical texts were seen as an *interface* God used to communicate with us. The direct meanings drawn from that linguistic interface had to be subsequently decrypted by a class of supernaturally assisted class of churchmen. In the following centuries, theologians progressively got rid of these practices and beliefs. Biblical texts were read and exegeted according to rules derived from philology[307] and literary criticism, instead of creative speculation. It seems this interface theory of biblical texts made a comeback.

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[306] HODGE, 1872b: 377.

[307] This science does not exist any longer, but it involved many topics now treated in specialized sciences such as linguistics, historical linguistics, etymology, philosophy of language, and others.

Now instead of allegory and spiritual meanings behind the letter, we have "anthropomorphic" language expressing "theomorphic" meanings.[308]

376.   The purpose of this move is exactly the same as it was in the distant past of Christian history: to open the doors to approve the most extravagant metaphysical speculations. Since many of these theories cannot be outrightly defended with scriptural evidence, creative theologians need to insert an elaborate framework that allows every intuitive reading and rule informed by linguistic and literary sciences to be left aside. This is a clear side-step from the Protestant rule of faith (section 4.3.), though it comes from self-identified protestant minds. The second error is that Lister makes a case for the stability of God's sensibilities which contrasts with human wavering sensibilities. This, even if proved to a standard of beyond reasonable doubt, is irrelevant to the rationalistic psychology he needs to undergird his doctrine of Impassibility. God's stable sensibilities can be easily accommodated in Motivationism.

377.   God's sensibilities are stable for three factors. First, and this one goes directly to Motivationism, God's sensibilities are uniformly good. There is no contamination of evil. So God cannot fall short of His character, and hence being perfectly benevolent. His law is drawn from His sensible nature, and He never wavers from His own precepts. Something we cannot do. Many times we fail to abide by our own self-imposed laws, and hence we cannot also be perfect deliverers of justice. Second, God is not blind to future events like we are. Much of our sensible wavers are caused by anxieties concerning the unknown future. People despair, get frustrated, angry, sad, and in a finger-snap, after some comforting prospects arrive, all these go away and are replaced with joy, contentment, calmness, etc. God created everything including that which is to come, so, from Scripture, it does not seem God has blind spots concerning past or future events. Third, God is not powerless like we are in many circumstances. Many of our wavers also come from inability to change our unwanted circumstances. God seems to be able to do whatever He wants, so He is not under this kind of stress.

378.   Therefore, the scriptural evidence does not suggest in the least the rationalistic psychology Impassibilism needs, and there is also no need of this psychology to explain God's stable sensibilities. But this discussion only addresses the impassionate part of Impassibilism, viz. it is false that God's sensibilities are an exclusive product of His will, rather the contrary. We still need to falsify the claim that God's sensibilities cannot be provoked or influenced by external causes. For instance, Moses says in Deuteronomy 9:8 that the Hebrews (his people) "provoked the Lord to wrath, and the Lord was so angry with [them] that He would have destroyed [them]". Unless we do some semantic gymnastics around "provoked", or "παρωξύνατε" (paroh-csee-nate) in the Septuagint translation – like Lister would like us to do – the cause of God's anger was external to Him.[309] It is our theories that must be molded by Scripture's

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[308] LISTER, 2013: 190-192.

[309] And there are many other examples of God being provoked into a certain sensible state, not only in the Old Testament, but also in the New. Jesus suffered at hands of other people, not only physical pain but acute psychic distress. He already knew what was going to happen, but that did not prevent His suffering from happening.

specific wording, not the other way around. That would be *eisegesis*, the insertion of meaning instead of the drawing out of meaning, exegesis.

5.6.3. Disproving Greco-Latin Trinitarianism (GLT)

379.   My choice of words for this section has a reason. The trinitarian theory defended by western Christianity for the last 1500 years has its roots in Greek and Latin philosophical systems. It is something drawn out from Scripture but with a titanic dose of ancient and medieval philosophical speculation injected into it. This to say, what I'm about to object and disprove is not *the* Trinity, but rather this long-standing philosophical construct. Once again, I'm going to challenge contemporary thinkers. One Calvinist theologian and one academic philosopher. We start with the theologian.

5.6.3.1. James White's case for GLT

380.   White's basic definition for the Trinity is the following:

> Within the one Being that is God, there exists eternally three coequal and coeternal persons, namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.[310]

381.   In this definition he identifies "the three foundations of the Trinity": "Monotheism: There is Only One God"; "There are Three Divine Persons"; and "The Persons Are Coequal and Coeternal".[311] This by itself is far from enough, and gladly White recognizes this, and tries to clarify it. For presentation purposes, his qualifications are listed as bullet points:

   i)   Monotheism implies a singular entity, which is *sui generis*, undivided and indivisible.[312] White couches his metaphysics in, predictably, a Greco-Latin philosophical technolect. He says the one Being is *essentially* (from ousia[gr] and essentia[lt]) divine. This addresses the *sui generis* property (or uniqueness, as White puts it). Only God is made of divine stuff.[313]
   ii) These three persons are three *subsistences*. "Persons" and "subsistences" are synonyms.[314] Both point to "personal distinctions in the divine Being" or in one word "self-distinctions". So three selves in one Being. This implies that whatever characterizes divinity can be predicated to the selves equally. If God is eternal, each person is eternal; if God is omniscient, each person is omniscient; and so forth.

382.   Let us address point i first with the claim of a third kind of stuff. This goes against our intuition of duality, which informs the axiom of dual substance (section 2.2.3.1), making White's metaphysics incompatible with ours. White could counter this fact by claiming that our Commonsensist metaphysics is manmade and that Scripture proves that God is a Being of His own kind – that only He is made of God stuff. However, like Geisler, White presents scriptural evidence without any exegetical

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[310] WHITE, 1998: 21.
[311] WHITE, 1998: 23.
[312] WHITE, 1998: 22.
[313] WHITE, 1998: 154.
[314] WHITE, 1998: 155.

explanation as to how those texts point to a divine essence. The only thing he does is to claim that holy means uniqueness.[315]

383.   Specifically, when Bible characters call God "holy" (קָדֹושׁ [ca-dosh]; ἅγιος [a-ghee-os]), White claims these people are telling their interlocutors, and us as readers, that God is ontologically unique. This is what I call *semantic towing*. You have two words from two different languages that can be translated into unique, set apart, special, sacred, and, of course, holy. Then a tow-hook is set on one of these words, and is fitted to it a trailer packed with ontologies (i.e. meanings) that have nothing to do with the ones usually associated with the towing word. In this case, White tries to tow ontological uniqueness with the word "holy". So the question remains: why would anyone interpret "holy" as ontologically unique? Is there anything in the text that suggests such a restrictive and definite use of the word? No, there is not. As we have seen in section 5.6.1.2., God is both spiritual and material. This does not make God any less holy. He is the extramundane Creator, Preserver, Governor of the world; Savior of the elect; the Lawgiver full of grace that manifests His benevolence in everything. This is a perfect instance of eisegesis. White is trying to fit his Greco-Latin philosophical influences into Scripture.

384.   By undermining this claimed unique divine essence, we also undermined the claim of indivisibility. We can sort of understand how this essence does not and cannot exist in parts. It is like time and space. We can make conceptual cuts in our minds, but there are no separations in reality. However, singularity without exclusivity of essence, opens the doors to division, in the sense of ontological differentiation. And White does not provide any scriptural evidence for this metaphysical claim of indivisibility.

385.   Concerning point ii, White is correct. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit appear in Scripture as three different person-like agents. The personhood of the Father and Son (Jesus) is not even arguable, since is blatantly, clearly, and abundantly expressed in the texts; the Spirit, however, has less prominence. But White adequately exegetes a number of instances where the Spirit's personality is clear. In Acts 13:2 the Spirit says things and addresses Himself as "me".[316] Again in Acts 10:19-20 the Spirit speaks, reports about the world, gives commands to Peter, and addresses Himself as "I". Other texts can be produced where the Spirit does things and is referred by Jesus as something other than Himself and the Father, i.e. as a Helper, somebody that is going to be sent to the apostles. It is from many of these texts that we draw our theology of regeneration and sanctification (section 5.3.). But the most definite evidence for the personality of the Spirit is His ability to know, in Greek γινώσκω (ghee-nos-ko) (1Cor. 2:11), as in first-hand acquaintance or experiential knowledge; and to love, in Greek ἀγάπη (aga-pee), as in affection for others based on our conscience, i.e. a love motivated by a sense of doing what is morally correct (2Cor. 7:11). Both require intellect and active powers.

386.   Though correct in this claim of triple personality, His claim for a triple sharing of a common essence is not. First, because there are no texts to support this claim directly; and second, because we have already seen that the claim of ontological

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[315] WHITE, 1998: 32.
[316] WHITE, 1998: 129.

exclusivity of a third type of stuff (Godness) is most probably false. Other than that, the way White phrases his theory makes God a predicate and not an entity. The essence of God, as White says, is the "stuff" of God. It is that which makes the three Persons God-like. According to White's phraseology, God is kind of an omnipresent infinite mist with three personalities sparsed equally throughout. The "mist" is the so-called essence of God. It relates to the three Persons, the same way mind/soul/spirit relates to us; i.e. it is the thing we are made of *essentially* – if our spiritual constitution is destroyed, we (as persons) also get destroyed. But this is not how people, including Bible characters, use the word God. God is not a property of the three Persons, it is referred to as an entity.

387.   Against all this White only has one defense, viz. that we – his objectors – are trying to fit God in our "creaturely categories."[317] The direct answer is that the Bible was written in "creaturely categories". If it wasn't, it would be an undecipherable series of symbols. Let us go back to inspiration (4.3.3.). God works through the sacred authors, not by possession or an ecstatic trance, but by using their own capacities. And as *human* language users and thinkers, their writings are like every other writing. In second place, White's theory of the Trinity is not couched in biblical phraseology, but rather in Greco-Latin philosophical technolect.[318] He confuses repeatedly his theory for the sacred texts, and he doesn't realize that this defense falls on his Greco-Latin theory, not on the Trinity as is presented in the Bible. White took issue specially with the challenge of clearing in which way he is using the word "God": is it a predicate or an individual constant; a property or an entity; a proper noun or a common noun?

388.   To this challenge he answered with the "creaturely categories" objection. However, he cannot avoid expressing his theory with "creaturely" language; and, as we have seen, his phraseology makes "God" a predicate word. He might respond to this saying something in the likes of "the nature of God is ineffable, and so we can expect there to be serious limitations in expressing His Triune nature adequately". To me this is an admission of defeat. If it is ineffable, then what is White talking about? What is he defending? The answer to both is nothing. There is nothing theoretic (vericonditional/propositional) being defended here. White, and others like him, are simply defending a specific phraseology to address the Trinity; and, expectably, nothing being there to be argued for or against, discussions fall into appeals to mystery, well-poisoning (like we have seen with Geisler), and virtue signaling.[319]

5.6.3.2. William Hasker's case for GLT

389.   Hasker's case for the Trinity is in outline similar to White's. They differ in that Hasker is conscious and explicit about what he is proposing; specifically, he

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[317] WHITE, 1998: 34, 147, 157. Also ALPHA & OMEGA MINISTRIES, 2021: around minutes 33, 47-58, 69.

[318] And when it is not – like White's use of "holy" – it carries the content of that technolect through semantic towing.

[319] In this case, White tries to constantly signal that he is the one that is most submissive to God and His word; that he recognizes how small he is to even dare to put his defective human ideas as constrainers of how God wants to reveal Himself. This is supposed to signal how much devotion and respect he has to God, and that his theory of the Trinity reflects those religious virtues. Though theology can only be produced by pious regenerated minds, those minds still work under "creaturely" limitations. Hence, even if White was truly of a pious frame, that would not do anything for an appeal to ineffability. If God is beyond human conceptualization, then White has nothing to argue for – there is nothing to be understood in his phraseology.

recognizes that there is no way around the numerical identity or predication question, and makes a choice – predication. They also differ in the level of precision and specificity with which they present their theories; Hasker being the analytical philosopher that he is, is much better than White in this aspect. But they are similar in understanding "God" to be a predicate, and they also agree in that each Person of the Trinity is a person in the usual sense of the word, i.e. something that feels, wills, and thinks.

390.   Hasker's defense of the GLT can be divided in three moments: defending the authority of patristic theologians, characterizing God as a predicate, and characterizing the relation of the God stuff to the Persons.

391.   The first step collides directly with the rule of faith presented in section 4.3. Says Hasker that he does

> believe that the Holy Spirit has not left the Church without guidance as it sought to comprehend the nature of the God who had revealed himself. This does not imply infallibility; it does mean, however, that we ought to treat both the historical process of the development of doctrine and the results of that process with a great deal of respect. I have indicated my conviction that the pro-Nicene theologians of the late fourth century constitute for us an invaluable, indeed indispensable resource. They may not have got everything right, but if we were to conclude that they got the doctrine of the Trinity fundamentally wrong we would have little reason to persist in our own efforts at trinitarian theorizing.[320]

392.   This amounts to maintaining much of what was produced by those theologians, by revising it with contemporary formal tools and modes of reasoning, and adapting it to the contemporary analytic philosophical technolect. Hence his theory being another version of GLT very similar to White's theory. But why would we condition our thinking about the Trinity with these ancient proposals? And what is about their thinking that cannot be fundamentally wrong? Is it the bare claim of Trinitarianism, or the metaphysical intricacies that explain the view of triunity? The second question he answers by citing the theologian Thomas McCall. McCall insists that we should pursue, as "theological desiderata", the sharing between Persons of the same God stuff, the monistic character of the Trinity (there is only one type of stuff in the Trinity), and the "strongest possible account of divine oneness or unity."[321] So, answering the question directly, Hasker wants to preserve the metaphysical intricacies of the patristic theories.

393.   Now, let us make clear the consequences of Hasker being right about this respect, deference, and dependance on previous work made by patristic theologians. If he is right, the rule of faith of 4.3 is compromised, and this opens the doors to multiple problems in everything that was presented to this point. If these men had some special aid in coming up with their theology of the Trinity, how much more of their theology was supernaturally aided? If their theology of the Trinity bears some authority to posterity, is the rest of it on this same foot? Positive answers to these questions would imply that, in making theology, the Bible is not the only source of

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[320] HASKER, 2013: 168.
[321] HASKER, 2013: 176.

knowledge; that we need to achieve some balance between what the patristic theologians wrote and what the sacred authors wrote. Let us see if Hasker is successful in bringing down the foundations laid in 4.3.

394.   To be sure, Hasker really is asking his readers to turn their attentions away from the Bible and focus on, specifically, the Nicene theologians. If we want to understand the Trinity, we must understand what these men proposed in their time:

> the best place to begin in our investigation of the doctrine of the Trinity is with the Church Fathers of the late fourth century. They are the giants on whose shoulders we need to stand, if we are to arrive at an understanding of these matters. ...we need to begin by ascertaining, as clearly as we can, what the fourth century consensus amounted to. This requires, crucially, an understanding on our part of their way of understanding both the threeness of the divine Persons, and the oneness of the divine nature that is common to the three.[322]

395.   The only argument Hasker provided to make this traditionalist[323] move was the following:

> The Nicene Creed has arguably the best claim of any Christian confession to have defined a central Christian doctrine in a way that has met with acceptance by the Church as a whole. If we credit the assertion that divine providence has been at work in guiding the Church in its understanding [the Trinity], and in preventing it from falling into destructive errors, this particular development [the Nicene formulation of the Trinity] stands out as an especially plausible example of such guidance.[324]

396.   I don't know how exactly to bring this into a premise-conclusion form. It seems to me Hasker has two big reasons to make the mentioned move, viz. the universal consent of the Church, and some special guidance provided to the Church to avoid grave errors. If one accepts these as true, inferring Nicene authority follows. But it is not clear in the least how from these two facts one infers Nicene authority, and Hasker doesn't provide anything relevant to clear how this inference is made. He doesn't expand on what kind of "guidance" he is talking about, or what is his understanding of the "Church", or what would a "universal consent" of this "Church" be.

397.   Concerning guidance, what does Hasker mean by "divine providence"? This is important to clear because it would answer in what *way* God is guiding the "Church". In the theology presented in this work, "providence" is a word to sum up God's governing and preserving activities over the world. In section 4.3.3. a distinction was presented between second causes (natural laws, natural mechanisms, etc) and special acts of the Holy Spirit. In which way did God guide the "Church"? Natural events don't seem a possible way to do this – we already talked about the limitations of natural theology. This leaves us with the Holy Spirit. We already talked about revelation,

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[322] HASKER, 2013: 10.
[323] Traditionalism is a principle of rule of faith, most known in Romanist and Rabbinic Judaism circles, which states that Scripture is to be coordinated with tradition (the history of accepted dogmas and philosophies attached to them), as reliable epistemic sources.
[324] HASKER, 2013: 9.

inspiration, illumination, regeneration, and sanctification as special acts of the Holy Spirit. All these do something for the elect in bringing them into a proper relation with God, i.e. religion. So which of these is Hasker talking about? Does he even have in mind any of these? Hasker gives no answers to these questions.

398.   Having no way to answer these questions, there is also no way to interpret the phrase "divine providence has been at work in guiding the Church in its understanding". Without a definite interpretation I cannot also understand how from this we can infer Nicene authority. From the theological point of view presented in this work, the elect – ministers and laity – have been under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Revelation and inspiration produced the writings contained in the Bible. Illumination allows the elect to assimilate the word of God doxastically and affectively. It adjusts their sensibilities into giving due importance to the realities they begin to believe from reading and meditating on Scripture. But, most probably, this is not what Hasker had in mind, if anything at all.

399.   Now, one small segway about the doxastic effects of illumination, that will have some bearing to this discussion. We will return soon to Hasker's statements. The question now is: since belief is representational, and the Trinity is fundamental to Christianity, doesn't that imply that a belief in the Trinity must include some additional metaphysical framework? No, it does not.

400.   From the Bible we can see that God manifests Himself in three ways: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These three are distinct personally, and we call these three "the Trinity" as a short word to avoid a constant enumeration of the three divine personalities. That is it. A Christian by confessing the belief that these three personalities relate to us as the force that created, governs, and preserves the world; that covenanted with us and saves us from all evil; that is tremendously powerful, immense, and wise; that never fails in justice and benevolence; that it is everywhere watching over us; doesn't need anything else to call himself a Trinitarian. This is the salvific knowledge related to the Trinity every Christian elect is blessed with.[325] If there was need for more – if it was necessary for an elect to have some metaphysical undergirding – only theologians and Christian philosophers could be part of the elect. And we know this is false, precisely because the metaphysical baggage of the Trinity only came into the scene when the patristic unified church (pre 1054 schism) felt the need to differentiate from other self-identified Christian movements (Christological and Trinitarian polemics).

401.   This simple view of the Trinity is what the Bible provides. A correct or mostly correct metaphysical account of the Trinity would have to be some subsequent revelation from God to patristic theologians. If it is *correct*, not only were they recipients of revelation, they would also have to be inspired to guarantee their teachings are communicated without error. If it is only *mostly* correct, inspiration is out of the equation, but revelation still needs to be present. This last view – that of being mostly correct – seems to be that of Hasker, and hence he must be prepared to

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[325] The Trinity was not revealed fully until the Apostolic era ended, i.e. until all the Apostles died, and with them revelations from the Spirit. The requirement of faith tracks revelation. This implies that there might be some elect, in the history of humanity, who only had something close to an unsophisticated Generic Theism; it also implies, of course, that many Jews, who had a monopersonal understanding of Monotheism, are also saved.

defend that special revelation extends beyond Scripture. This claim is rejected in the present work, and Hasker doesn't argue for it. In the end, this appeal to "guidance" has no weight in suggesting Nicene authority.

402.   Back to Hasker's statements. What about the consensus of the "Church"? Hasker doesn't clarify what he means by this. In section 5.5 we addressed our theology of the Church, and made a triple distinction of Invisible and Visible Church, and local church. To determine the consensus of the Church (in any of these senses) is impossible. All judgements concerning the status of election *of a single person* are based on probabilistic thin threads of inferences, much harder would be to make generalized judgements about a group of self-proclaimed Christians. The consensus of a group of local churches, by itself, tells us nothing, since we cannot know if the regenerate constitute the majority. What is more, the problem of Hasker's statement also include the "consensus". Who counts in this consensus? Is it both clergy and laity, or only the former?

403.   By Hasker's own admission it seems not all Christians count to this consensus, since what matters to him is what the "Nicene Fathers" taught. And only these men, and other theologians and Christian philosophers, understood, for many centuries, these teachings. So it seems that in Hasker's "Church" some Christians are more Christians than others, and only those count as part of the consensus. Since his claim concerning "Church guidance" has no traction, there is no reason to think the Nicene clergy, or the various bodies of clergymen that followed in the centuries to come in Western and Oriental Christianity (who contributed to the consensus), had some kind of supernatural assistance, of a revelatory type, in discovering the realities of the Trinity.

404.   We are done with the authority of patristic theologians, it is time to address the claim of "God" being a predicate. We already went through some considerations concerning predication in White's GLT, so I'm not going to repeat myself. We are going to keep these in our pocket while going through Hasker's account of predication, and then pull them out again to see how they apply.

405.   Instead of "essence", Hasker proposes a "trope of deity".[326] According to him, a trope "is an *instance* of a property, and as such is not shareable … in the way universals are".[327] A trope of deity, then, is "a *particular instance* of the divine essence, the divine essence as *instantiated* in a divine being." And the three Persons share this "individualized case of an attribute", i.e. the *sui generis* claim – there is only *one* trope of deity and only the *three* Persons have it. Again, we go back to the "mist" with three personalities spread throughout it. The question now is: where did Hasker get this third single-instanced type of thing, this trope of deity? Supposedly from the Nicene formulations. There is no scriptural evidence to back up this claim. But other than that, it is not even internally consistent. If you make the predicate a thing – i.e. not a true property in the sense I presented in section 2.2.2.2. – then you cannot treat it as a predicate constant when thinking more accurately about it with formal tools. Trope of deity, by the way it was described, is an individual constant. But

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[326] HASKER, 2013: 50.
[327] HASKER, 2013: 52.

if it is an individual constant, the "is" verb between the names of the Persons and "God" must be of identity. This doesn't play out well for Hasker:

g: God	1. g=f
f: Father	2. g=j
j: Jesus	3. g=s
s: Holy Spirit	4. ∴ f=j
	5. ∴ f=s
	6. ∴ j=s

406.   This would be what many Christian theologians in history called the heresy of Modalism. There are no real differences between the Persons of the Trinity. They are just modes of the one same singular divine entity.

407.   Undermining these two claims (Nicene authority and "God" as predicate) is more than enough to dispense with Hasker's GLT. But I still want to go over his *constitution* relation between the three Persons and the trope of deity – which requires us to pretend the two previous claims are warranted. He says that:

> the one concrete divine nature sustains eternally the three distinct life-streams of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and that in virtue of this the nature *constitutes* each of the persons although it is not identical with the persons.[328]

408.   So, what is the relation of constitution? Hasker tries to answer this question in two ways: by providing examples and an abstracted description of it. We are going to respond to both.

409.   The first example is the following:

> In the region occupied by a bronze statue, there is a statue and there is a lump of bronze; the lump is not identical with the statue (the statue but not the lump would be destroyed if the lump were melted down and recast in the shape of a disc); but only one material object fills that region.[329]

410.   Hasker claims there is a "compelling" reason to believe the statue and the lump are not identical:

> If an item x is identical with an item y, then x and y must have all of their properties in common. But that assuredly is not the case here … The statue has the property of *being such that it would no longer exist were it to be melted down and the metal recast* in another shape, where as the lump of bronze lacks that property; it would still be the

[328] HASKER, 2013: 244.
[329] HASKER, 2013: 238.

same lump of bronze after the recasting, only now in a different shape.[330]

411.   First of all, there is no lump in this scenario. There is a bronze statue. A lump is a piece of some solid material, and it doesn't have any recognizable shape. A statue is the product of sculpting on hard materials (wood, stone, metal), and it depicts people and animals. A statue is a type of sculpture; other types would be reliefs and patterned ornamental carvings. So there is only one thing numerically the same through time. Second, "being such that it would no longer exist were it to be melted down and the metal recast" is not a property. We cannot abstract this from the statue. We can abstract shapes, colors, density, dimensions, and a few other things, and these would be properties – that which characterizes the entity. What Hasker claimed to be a property is just describing a way to destroy the statue. I can also destroy a lump of bronze by sculpting it into a statue, but this is not a property of a lump of bronze.

> Flags, for instance, are constituted by, but are not identical with, the pieces of cloth of which they are made: if the cloth were bleached and redyed in another color the piece of cloth would still exist but the flag would be no more.

412.   In this case, Hasker makes the same mistake of reifying a second entity other than the flag: the flag and the cloth. First, a flag doesn't need to be made of some textile fabric. A flag is a symbol – just like numerals and word-forms – to convey something to those that recognize it. It can be reproduced in various means: color bits in a computer screen, painted on paper, or woven with textiles. But let us imagine a textile flag. There is only the textile flag, the same way there is only the bronze statue. Of course, if one bleaches the flag, it ceases to exist – if there is no symbol represented in the woven fabric, there is no flag. When this happens we went from a flag to a rectangular shaped fabric. What we have in these two examples is a turning into b, not a&b turning into c&b. This flag-piece of cloth example is analogous to the stop sign-piece of metal example that comes next. The red octagon with white lettering saying "STOP" is also a symbol that can be reproduced in various means. There is no metal stop sign plus a piece of metal, there is only the metal stop sign. If one scratches the red and white paint from it, it is no longer a stop sign but an octagonal shaped sheet of metal. But the latter did not exist simultaneously with the stop sign.

413.   There are other examples, but these suffice to make a point. Hasker is confused about what to do with the materials the mentioned objects are made of. The statue is made of bronze; the flag is made of woven fabrics, thread, and color pigments; the stop sign is made of some metal alloy and paint. These materials, when put together in a specific configuration do not exist separately from the object – *they are the object*. If one ruins that specific configuration, the object ceases to exist and gives place to other objects. In the Commonsensist framework there is no confusion. By our mereological powers we understand all these objects to be concrete wholes made of parts. Some parts are ontologically autonomous – such as the materials –, other parts are, strictly speaking, properties – such as anthropomorph(icity) in the statue, rectangular(ness) in the flag, or octagonal(ity) in the stop sign. All of them,

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[330] HASKER, 2013: 239.

independently of their ontological status, define the object as intensional marks; not as concepts, but as *singular concrete* notions.[331]

414.   From these erroneous examples (because an additional entity is reified), Hasker abstracted a formulation for the relation of constitution:

> (i) x and y are spatially coincident at t;
>
> (ii) x is in "G-favorable circumstances" at t;
>
> (iii) necessarily, if an object of primary kind F is in G-favorable circumstances at t, there is an object of primary kind G that is spatially coincident with that object at t; and
>
> (iv) it is possible for x to exist at t but for there to be no object of primary kind G that is spatially coincident with x at t.[332]

415.   Hasker did not bother to do a direct application of this formula to his previous examples; but we are going to do it here with the statue example:

(i) The lump of bronze and the statue are spatially coincident in t
(ii) The lump of bronze is in favorable circumstances to the primary kind of STATUE-ness at t
(iii) Necessarily, if an object of primary kind LUMP-OF-BRONZE-ness is in favorable circumstances to the primary kind STATUE-ness at t, there is an object of primary kind STATUE-ness that is spatially coincident with that object at t; and
(iv) it is possible for the lump of bronze to exist at t but for there to be no object of primary kind STATUE-ness that is spatially coincident with the lump at t.

416.   The objections raised in the example apply to this formula. (i) is false, there can be no different objects occupying exactly the same spatiotemporal coordinates. (ii) is false, STATUE-ness does not exist. "Statue" is a countable common noun, i.e. it points to a class of entities with shared parts. We can use STATUE as a predicate constant in predicate logic, but while doing it we cannot forget its ontological status – it is a class, not a property. Being a class, it exists the way proposed in line iv of the axiom of relational realism (2.2.5.1). Also, again, there is no *lump* of bronze, there is simply bronze; and this bronze is not an entity different from the statue. It is an ontological autonomous part of the statue. As in the case of "statue", "bronze" is a common noun though of the massive non-countable type. The advice here is the same: we can think of it as a predicate constant, but we cannot forget that it is a class of portioned instances of a single material. This would make the bronze statue a member both of the class of statues and of bronze objects. But this does not multiply the number of entities.

417.   Given what was just said, (iii) is also false. There is no property of LUMP-OF-BRONZE-ness. Lump(ness) is a property, i.e. it does not exist apart from the oddly shaped solid entity, but bronze is not, as we have seen. These cannot be attached and thought of as a property. Hasker's "favorable circumstances" seem to be what I referred as a specific configuration of parts that make up the concrete object. In this sense, yes, the bronze is in a specific configuration together with other things so as to

[331] MCCOSH, 1884: 30
[332] HASKER, 2013: 241.

make up a particular statue. But this is the only thing salvageable from Hasker's formula. The rest of it depends on the truth of (i) and (ii).

418.   Out of curiosity, how would it look when applied to the Trinity? This time Hasker gives a straight answer:

(i) God and Father–Son–Holy Spirit are spatially coincident at t
(ii) God is in favorable conditions to the primary kind of DIVINE–TRINITARIAN–PERSON–ness at t
(iii) necessarily, if an object of primary kind GOD–ness (recall the trope of deity) is in favorable conditions to the property of DIVINE–TRINITARIAN–PERSON–ness at t, there is an object of primary kind DIVINE–TRINITARIAN–PERSON–ness that is spatially coincident with that object at t; and
(iv) it is possible for God to exist but for there to be no object of primary kind DIVINE–TRINITARIAN–PERSON–ness that is spatially coincident with God[333]

419.   Even if assumed everything else to be meaningful and true, it would be impossible for Father–Son–Holy Spirit to exist apart from God in clause (iv). Hasker tries to save this move by distinguishing metaphysical possibility from conceptual possibility, but this does nothing for him.[334] It is irrelevant to a correct description of the Trinity, us being capable of imagining the divine "mist" without the Persons. He then, like White, pulls the card of ineffability; but, again, the problem is not on the Trinity as is presented in the Bible, but on the theories. It is the theoreticians that put themselves in abstruse abstractions, and then claim the Trinity to be too complicated to fit accurately into theoretical constructions and put into words.

5.6.4. A new theory of the Trinity: collective entity

420.   This new theory is very easy to understand and doesn't fall into conceptual and linguistic obscurities. It is in line with special revelation and humanity's common sense.

421.   The only thing the reader needs to understand this theory is to think of *collective proper nouns*. Here are a few examples: "Real Madrid", "AC/DC", (WWI Royal Navy's) "1st Battle Squadron", "Lakers", and many others. All these nouns point to *collective entities*. These entities exist, no doubt. They are made of a certain number of other singular entities in special *organizational* relations with each other. By "organizational" I mean relations that tend to and facilitate the accomplishment of shared goals. These relations and goals might be very different from collective entity to collective entity, but all of them have these. Without them, they would not be entities at all, but simply mental aggregations of people. And this is the greatest problem with these entities. To keep them "alive", it is necessary to keep its members in those relations. The question now is, how can we depict the Trinity based on these entities using our contemporary formal tools?

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[333] HASKER, 2013: 243.
[334] HASKER, 2013: 243-244.

t: Trinity	$t = OR = \{O_1, O_2, O_3, \dots O_n\}$
f: Father	$O_1 = \{<f,j>\}$
j: Jesus	$O_2 = \{<j,f>\}$
h: Holy Spirit	$O_3 = \{<s,f>, <s,j>\}$
OR: Organizational relations	…
$O_\#$: Specific organizational relation	

422.   Let us see what all this means. By thinking of the Trinity as t, this makes the Trinity an entity to be used in other formalized reasonings as an individual constant. This is, in my view, how Christians usually talk of the Trinity. It also makes it one, and in this way satisfies the requirement of Monotheism evidenced throughout Scripture. This entity, then, needs to be described formally, or in one word, modelled. Let us think of it as a set, OR, containing all the organizational relations between the three Persons. These organizational relations are thought as ordered pairs, <x,y>, that are contained in subsets, $O_\#$, that specify the organization relation. As examples, O_1 is the relation of Father guaranteeing the Son that He will bring to Him a select group of people to be saved. O_2 is the relation of the Son guaranteeing the Father satisfaction for the penalties of humanity in return of salvation. O_3 is the Holy Spirit guaranteeing the Father and Son that He will make special interventions on the elect. O_n means that there are more relations to list in OR. I do not want to be exhaustive, but simply show how this model of the Trinity could be so.

423.   In Christian sociolects, "God" can denote t, f, j, and s. When the believer thinks of the Trinity, or of a Person individually, both are recipients of love, devotion, fear (in the sense of knee dropping amazement), and joy. Both the Trinity and the individual Persons possess supernatural properties and powers that make the elect recognize their majesty and glory. In a theological technolect, though, "God" should stand for t only. This means that it is t that created, governs, and preserves the world; that covenanted with us and saves us from all evil; that is tremendously powerful, immense, and wise; that never fails in justice and benevolence; and that it is everywhere watching over us, not f, j, or s individually.

424.   To help understand this think of a rock band. People might have individual preferences for members of the band. Some have a special liking for the singer, others of a more instrumental mind prefer the virtuoso lead guitarist, others like the bassist's slaps, etc. However, none of these musicians, by themselves, could ever fill arenas, break sales records, or make people think about their music 24/7. It is their cooperation and special chemistry that produces the output that makes them great. Though the singer is amazing, he is in virtue of the band, and so forth with the other members and qualities.

425.   Does this mean that f, j, and s are not divine? No. "Divine" as a predicate should point to membership in OR. Is x anywhere in the ordered pairs of OR? If yes, then x is divine. Does this mean that f, j, and s are Gods? No. According to this model, and the theological technolect, "Gods" points to a plurality of Trinities, which would

be Polytheism, and false. Does this mean that f is not God, and j is not God, and s is not God? It depends on how one is using "God". Again, if "God" is being used as some sort of title (like King of Prussia) for amazing supernatural powers and properties deserving worship, then yes, f, j, and s are God individually; but if "God" is being used in a technical strict sense, viz. the one who, as was said before, "created, governs, and preserves the world..." etc, then f, j, and s are not God individually, but glorious supernatural beings that assemble themselves in relations, such that they become the collective entity t. Does this mean that f, j, and s can exist separately while the Trinity does not? No, f, j, and s are always in OR relations, and hence the Trinity cannot cease to exist. This provisional model is silent about modality, but we can revise it to accommodate the necessity of the relations:

D: Dioramas

d: diorama

$$\forall d \in D, [t]^d = 1$$

426.   This means that in every imaginable diorama, d, member of the set of realistic dioramas, D, the Trinity is true, i.e. the Trinity must be there. Contrary to Hasker, in this model, it doesn't matter what is imaginable or not absent reality. What matters is reality, and how that reality constrains our thinking about it.

427.   And is there any scriptural evidence for this model? Yes. Right in the beginning, God is presented as a collective. אֱלֹהִים (Elohim) is a plural noun, and in the process of forming the world it was said "Let *Us* make mankind in *Our* image, according to *Our* likeness" (Gen. 1:26); again, after the Fall it was said "man has become like one of *Us*, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:22). Also, these supernatural beings appear in different ways in separate instances. Jesus is a man, and therefore cannot be immense and ubiquitous. He clearly appears in the Gospels and in Acts (to Paul), but I think He also walks in the garden of Eden, wrestles with Jacob, appears to Abraham accompanied by angels, and shows the most glorious anthropomorphic nature to Daniel (chapter 10) and Ezekiel (chapter 8). The Father and Spirit seem not to be anthropomorphic but pure spirits, who may manifest as elements, such as fire, light, or wind; or as animals, such as the Spirit who appears as a dove (in the four Gospels). These material manifestations, however, are merely momentary and for a specific purpose; Jesus however, made of mortal flesh or other unknown materials, seems to be material essentially, i.e. He always exists with a body of some sort.

428.   This scriptural evidence can be used in other theories of the Trinity. As I said, The Bible is not clear in the least about the metaphysics behind the Trinity. This to say, Scriptural evidence, regarding the Trinity, has a problem of *undetermination*: the available evidence is not enough or clear enough to decide for a specific theory. However, the collective entity account has an advantage, viz. it does not demand mental and linguistic gymnastics in trying to make all notions compatible, and it does not lead to obscurities, claims of ineffability, or strange wording. It also accommodates easily fundamental differences between the Persons, e.g. Jesus is spiritual and material and He is spatially limited to His body, the other two Persons are not.

429.   And since we are talking about Scripture, does this mean that "God" is used in Scripture as was accounted here? Most probably not, at least in the large majority of it. God revealed Himself most of the time as a single personality, the beginning of Genesis being an exception. So, to most characters and the sacred authors behind the narrative voices, "God" (Adonai, Yahweh, El Olam, El Elyon, etc) was a single personal being. Jesus revealed He was God as well as His Father, making God something with two entities. The Spirit was mentioned, but His divinity was not yet that clear cut. But that went away with the epistles. Not only we have a different treatment of the Spirit – as we have seen above (§385.) – but I think the use of "God" (Theos) shifts between the Father solely and the Trinity. This would not be strange given that many times the apostles were addressing audiences recently converted from Judaism – people who would have drilled into their cognitive habits, the association between "God" and "Father".

6. CLOSING THE SPHERE

430.   To finish this work, I want to provide the reader some final remarks that might help to consolidate the understanding of my Common Sense Calvinist framework.

431.   We started the journey with our epistemic sources (2.1.) and psychological endowments (2.2.2.) needed to get to the closest truths to us. Those truths were taken as the framework's axiomatic hard core (2.2.3.-2.2.5.). Around this core was laid over moral (e.g. right and wrongness, duties), aesthetic (e.g. beauty), and transcendent truths (e.g. the supernatural, non-human person-like agency) (3.). These should be understood as a second level soft core. They are still truths close to us because they were presented by our basic mental faculties (conscience, taste, sense of divinity), though their activity comes later in life and requires some extra level of discernment to understand the presented information. From here we started expanding the framework outwardly towards Generic Theism (4.1.), then Christian Theism (4.2.), and finally Calvinism (4.3.-5.). Though these probable and plausible truths are the most distant ones, they are still fundamental, and hence part of this philosophical system. Some of them, such as the ones pertaining to the Trinity (§400., 5.6.4.) and the nature of man (5.3.) are *metaphysically* prior to the axiomatic hard core. It is God that explains the reality of Dual Substance or the reality of Self. These realities were created by Him. It is Total Depravity that explains so much confusion and blind spots in peoples' intellect, conscience, taste, and divine sense. If we tried to derive from this framework a description of reality, ordered according to metaphysical dependencies, God would come first, then some theory about Providence (§319.), and then an anthropology (which would mix parts of sections 2.-3. with parts of sections 5.1.-5.4.). But I opted for an *epistemic* route, which is more philosophical and critical.

432.   The point of making these considerations is to show the reader how the end point of this presentation connects with the beginning. Keeping the imagery above, God is the gravity around this theoretical sphere. The core is hard because there is a force keeping things compacted together and exerting weight downwards. Cut the gravity out and everything would just disintegrate and float away. This is not just metaphor and speculation. Actually, many atheistic thinkers proposed self-defeating

philosophies. McCosh, Porter, and Orr dealt, in their time, with Agnosticism – the logical consequence of materialist philosophy and skepticism. By attacking and doubting every pilar of common sense, these thinkers also destroyed the possibility of knowledge, when understood to be a firm grasp of many day-to-day and scientific truths. And today, in the 21st century, we have evolutionary thinkers, such as Dennett (already cited), Alexander Rosenberg, and Donald Hoffman, who end up exactly in the same bogs of Agnosticism, though from different philosophical paths.

433. Maybe the reader is an Atheist himself and might think this is all nonsense, that there is no need of a god like the one I presented to hold everything together, that an atheistic framework can undergird philosophical and scientific research. If that is the case, I could not see how until today (in 2022). But maybe the reader is not a Calvinist, not a Protestant, not even a Christian, but a Theist nonetheless. If that is the case, and that version of Theism really does all the undergirding needed, I would like to ask how the reader got to that god or gods. As is clear in this work, in my view, the only credible god is the Christian God – the Trinity. And without Him there can be no truth in our philosophical and scientific undertakings.

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