

Victor N. Shaw

Three Worlds of
Collective Human
Experience: Individual
Life, Social Change,
and Human Evolution

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Introduction

How many worlds are out there in the human sphere? There is only one world in an absolutist sense. That is the world perceived by the humans. Suppose God who knows everything in the universe. God would tell if there are any differences between the real world and the world perceived by the humans or if there are any similarities among worlds perceived by various living species with consciousness. It is obviously a philosophical issue when the humans wonder if five human senses are truthful and reliable in transmitting and displaying the real world in the human perception.

In a relativist sense, there are many worlds in the human sphere. Each human being is distinctive with his or her particular repertoire of deeds. Each society is peculiar with its specific version of existence. Each era is unique with its identifiable image of reality. Diaries, biographies, drawings, plays, shows, and songs are created to describe, present, and record people and their experienced worlds. Anthropology, economics, geography, history, linguistics, political science, and sociology are established to study, portray, and document societies and their living realities. Indeed, it is a sociological question whether individual worlds by peoples, societies, and eras are comparable to a certain degree or incomparable at all.

This book explores three worlds shared by the humans in their collective experience. One is the world of commonsense in which people see the Sun rise and fall, the Moon wax and wane, the stars shine and dull, and the ground expand and contract in all directions. Another is the world of religion where believers strive in this life in order to move up to heaven while avoiding falling into hell after life. Still another is the world of science where scholars visualize a human species, along with a variety of inorganic objects and organic beings, living on the surface of the Earth, a planet revolving around the Sun in the solar system which further constitutes the Milky Way Galaxy in the universe.

From a relativist point of view, these worlds are three of the many worlds created and experienced in the human sphere. Individuals raised in religion may only know the world as temporarily lodging in earthliness and permanently divided between hell and heaven. On the other hand, only people trained with science can understand how the Moon, a satellite, revolving about the Earth, a planet, which further rotates

around the Sun, a star, in the solar system gives rise to the experience of days, nights, and seasons by the humans residing on the surface of the Earth. In an absolutist perspective, the three worlds, each as well as altogether, represent the one human world perceived by the humans. Individually, the world of commonsense follows every living human being regardless of his or her self, group, society, or era. Sequentially, the world of religion prevails as the leading version of reality in the Middle Ages whereas the world of science thrives as the primary paradigm of existence in the contemporary time.

The book consists of four parts. Part I presents the three worlds and their coexistence in time and across space. Part II follows individuals and their everyday life from horizontal to vertical dimensions over the three worlds. Part III surveys societies and their rise and fall with respect to the three worlds in both comparative and historical perspectives. Finally, Part IV eyes on the human species, charting its survival, destination, and guiding principles in terms of commonsense, religiosity, and science.

It is hoped that readers of this book will find critical insights as well as useful lessons about individuals and individual life, societies and social change, and the human species and human evolution across the three worlds.

Part I

Three Worlds

A world is simply a collection of peoples and things in a structural configuration across space and in a sequential order over time. Individuals enter different worlds in their life course, societies deal with various worlds through their evolving history, and the human species entertains multiple worlds over its collective existence. Common as well as critical to all three subjects and domains of activity, individuals and individual life, societies and social change, and the human species and human evolution, are three worlds. They are the world of commonsense, the world of religion, and the world of science.

Chapter 1

The Commonsensical



Abstract An individual works on a farm. A society settles in a valley. The human species wrestles with an epidemic. All these are acts, happenings, or phenomena in the world of commonsense. Indeed, the commonsensical is the most basic, original, and essential. In other words, the world of commonsense is the world of reality, survival, or actual existence for individuals, societies, and the human species. This chapter presents the general image of the commonsensical world as to what it is and how it operates. It examines elements from sky to ground, from living subjects to nonliving objects, and from human creations to nonhuman happenings. It explores stages in the process of change, including alteration, growth, and cyclical movements. It investigates connections, specifically how commonsense extends inwardly to spirituality, religion, and the supernatural realm as well as outwardly to fact, science, and truth. It even contemplates metaphysical issues such as reliability of human senses and validity of commonsensical experiences.

Keywords Commonsense · Adaptation · Survival · Living · Existence

An individual works on a farm. A society settles in a valley. The human species wrestles with an epidemic. All these are acts, happenings, or phenomena in the world of commonsense. Indeed, the commonsensical is the most basic, the most original, and the most essential. In other words, the world of commonsense is the world of reality, the world of survival, or the world of actual existence for individuals, societies, and the human species (Heschel 1967; Cronk et al. 2002; Clayton and Opotow 2003; Ffolliott and Davis 2008; Lightfoot and Parrish 2009; Brin 2012; Goudie 2013; Cox and Cohen 2014; Gooley 2014; Cox and Cohen 2015; Harari 2015; Leslie 2015; Shaw 2015; Stolorow 2015; Wulf 2015; Emerson 2016; Wahl 2016; Cox and Cohen 2017; Melich 2017; Newman 2017; Williams 2017).

1.1 Image

The world of commonsense is what individuals, societies, and the human species as a whole observe and experience here and now. There are clouds, the Moon, the Sun, and stars in the sky. Clouds gather and dissipate, bringing about rains or droughts. The Moon changes from crescent to full. The Sun rises and sets, creating night and day. Stars appear and disappear. On the ground, there are mountains, plains, rivers, and oceans. Mountains rise to the sky. Plains lay flat in all directions. Rivers flow from high to low. Oceans extend to where the ground meets the sky. There are also inorganic objects and living subjects on the ground. While inorganic objects such as sands, soils, stones, and waters scatter from place to place, living subjects live and die across different time periods including days, months, and years in parallel to changes by the Sun, the Moon, and stars in the sky.

Individuals see, hear, smell, taste, and touch things in their commonsensical world. By viewing, they observe shapes, colors, and movements. Through hearing, they experience shocks from thunders across the sky and explosions on the ground. People enjoy fragrant perfumes and avoid stinky odors because of smelling. They savor delicious foods and abhor bitter medicines due to tasting. Finally, touching make people distinguish cold from hot, hard from soft, or static from mobile. With five senses, people live their life from infancy to childhood to adolescence to adulthood to senior age. While adolescents tend to pursue a dream or challenge the status quo beyond their bodily limits, seniors may take comfort and enjoy life just within the sphere of their sensory experience. In commonsense life, people relate to one another as men versus women, parents versus children, relatives versus nonrelatives, masters versus servants, insiders versus outsiders, juniors versus seniors, or friends versus enemies. Raising children and befriending neighbors involve care, support, promise, responsibility, and hope, whereas controlling subordinates and fighting adversaries often cause conflict, confrontation, injury, loss, and destruction.

Societies settle and evolve on particular territories with specific populations. They vary by size, productive force, relation of production, level of development, or complexity of integration. Small, undeveloped, and backward societies may combine to form larger, more complex, and more advanced social entities by way of peace. They may also be taken over as parts of a bigger social system through conflict, such as annexation and unification. Physically, societies may share borders or just relate to one another through exchange, trade, and diplomacy over distance. Peoples and materials flow from society to society by land, over water, and in the air. With advanced communication and transportation available in the contemporary era, one society can instantly enter the commonsensical world of another with concern, sympathy, and support. For example, people in Country "A" no longer need to climb to the top of a mountain on the border to see fires or floods in Country "B." Instead, through the screens of televisions or mobile devices they purchase from local markets, people in different societies can immediately empathize with each other over natural disasters, epidemics, wars, and other tragedies or cheer with each other over

anniversaries, ceremonies, holidays, and other festivities, in their respective local world of commonsense.

The human species spreads across land. People who live in the mountains learn how to collect or hunt for foods in the forest. People who settle in the plains specialize in agricultural productions for a living. People who survive around waters know how to benefit from resources or how to fight catastrophes associated with lakes, rivers, and seas. Regardless of local specifics in their immediate environment, the humans generally have to deal with a wide range of living organisms and nonliving objects for self-sustenance. Some animals are domesticated as food supplies or production tools. Many crops and plants are grown and processed for nutrition, beautification, recreation, or treatment purposes. Inorganic objects, such as stones, sands, waters, coals, and minerals, are also used as materials in construction, production, or consumption. Over time, the human species continues from generation to generation. In social settings, generations of human beings alternate between conflict and peace or swing from poverty to prosperity. But overall, the humankind seems to become smarter and stronger in managing its commonsensical existence as well as chartering its evolutionary journey in contrast to other species in nature. For example, through trial and error, the humans learn how to hunt for animals, grow crops, run productions, forecast weathers, treat illnesses, and plan life events with greater effectiveness, efficiency, and rationality.

1.2 Element

Millions of events occur, and billions of things exist in the world of commonsense. In space, things come, stay, or go either in the sky or on the ground. With regard to life, there are both living subjects and nonliving objects. Revolving around the humans, human creations distinguish themselves from nonhuman happenings.

The sky is high up there. People feel it is out of reach even though they can see the lights, hear the thunders, smell the airs, taste the dews, and touch the meteorites from the sky. They sense it is mighty, powerful, and controlling as they know from their immediate experience that animals sweat in heat or shiver in coldness when the Sun changes in the sky and that crops perish under droughts or flourish with a proper combination of rainfall and sunlight when the weather performs over the sky. Indeed, whether people suffer from famines or prosper on harvests all depends upon what the sky does or how elements appear, rule, and disappear in the sky.

The ground is where people stand up or lie down, walk or run, and contemplate or act out. It gives people a sense of firmness, control, and stability although a mudslide may bury dozens of villages, an earthquake can kill hundreds of people, a volcano may burn thousands of plants, or a tsunami can eradicate millions of animals. In their commonsensical life on the ground, people build shelters with materials available in the environment. Shelters guard against the weather and strangers while providing comfort, home, and togetherness among family members, relatives, and friends. They further connect and expand to form villages, towns, and cities. People also cultivate

lands to grow crops, raise animals as tools and foods, and specialize in crafts to create various everyday life articles. Agriculture arises, industry comes into being, service arrives on the scene, and a whole production and consumption system settles to balance demand with supply for people and their livelihoods. Unlike the sky, the ground to people is not a source of fear but a base for living and survival.

Living subjects include animals and plants. Animals move from place to place while plants change one season after another. Like humans themselves, a great many animals have senses with self-consciousness to fashion their respective reactions to the environment. Unlike humans, plants sit in particular locales without an inner world of mind to strategize their specific expansions off the ground. In relation to humans and human life, animals exist as preys or predators, serve as toys or tools, sacrifice as foods or medicines, or survive as close necessities or remote irrelevancies. Similarly, plants grow as crops or weeds, function as protective shades or fire hazards, provide living materials or killing poisons, and appear or disappear with or without significance to humans and their existence across the land.

Nonliving objects lie underground or scatter throughout a territory. Underground, fertile soils nurture thriving plants. Rocks change into decorative stones or building materials. Coals provide heat and light. Mines offer materials for tools in production or weapons over the war. Across the land, water irrigates farmlands, feeds animals, carries boats, and serves people as their indispensable lifeline. Sands expand as a playground, solidify as a barrier, or join other elements in various human creations. Valleys offer permanent settlements. Plains give opportunities for large-scale farming. Mountains support forests and provide animal habitats. Although nonliving objects do not necessarily follow human wills like a loyal dog or meet human expectations like a grafted fruit tree, they may serve as messengers of some invisible yet inevitable forces. For example, stones fall off cliffs, metals contract in coldness, and hillsides change size over time. Moreover, a cave, spring, or special object can turn holy in the commonsensical world of a local collective. People worship it for protection, luck, or peace in life.

Human creations begin with simple things, such as shelters, farming plots, irrigation channels, ponds, wells, and cesspits, following geological conditions existent or using natural objects available in the environment. As time goes, people develop higher abilities, society gains more productive forces, and the human species leaves larger impacts upon nature. Shelters change into mansions, villages expand to cities, and cities gather millions of different human products. Through non-commonsensical means though, the humans can now build skyscrapers rising to the sky, aircrafts flying in the air, dams stopping raging waters, ships sailing storming oceans, and various consumer goods flowing from factories to ports to markets to individual households. The humans can also make plants grow with more harvests, animals mature over a shorter period of their natural life course, and even rains fall from the sky. Regardless of the material means by which the humans produce things, all human creations gather to become elements of people's commonsensical world, affecting how people go about their everyday life.

Nonhuman happenings dominate the world of commonsense in the early times of human existence. People wait for seasonal changes to gather or hunt for foods.

People risk life to build shelters or transport goods from place to place. Droughts kill crops and cattle, leading to famines. Floods destroy homes, resulting in dislocations and disorganizations. Now with so many human creations springing and spreading in groups and systems, people are almost shielded from nonhuman occurring and its impact over their commonsensical experience. In well-lit factories, workers labor through mass production lines in the dark of night. In air-conditioned offices, professional staffers handle business matters without any feeling of heat in the middle of a scorching day. Most important, nonhuman happenings are to some degree affected by human actions and creations. Airs become filthy with pollutants from cities. Oceans rise because of greenhouse effects. Indeed, human activities converge to form not only an altered climate in the natural environment but also a changed commonsensical world in the human experience.

1.3 Stage

In the world of commonsense, people observe the change of each and every thing, follow the development of life, and witness the evolution of all phenomenal existence. Things look like swinging back and forth between incomplete and full, positive and negative, excessive and insufficient, or peaceful and confrontational. Life seems to develop by stages. For example, human life progresses from birth to infancy to childhood to adolescence to adulthood to senior age to death. Intertwined with alternation and staged growth, there appear to be cyclical or periodic changes as well.

Alternation is common, obvious, and immediate. In the sky, the Sun rises and sets whereas the Moon waxes and wanes. On the ground, tides change from neap to spring and from low to high while time flows from dawn to dusk or from day to night. In social affairs, supply alternates between abundance and scarcity as demand swings from insufficiency to excess. Market goes up and down when the economy expands and contracts. Public sentiments fluctuate between pessimism and optimism as a society moves from poverty to prosperity, conflict to peace, or division to unity. Overall, contrasts, comparisons, or polar forces seem to draw or pull things from one another. Right contrasts with wrong. Good compares to bad. While the incomplete, immature, and imperfect strive for completion, maturity, and perfection, peace, unity, or consummation can neither hold up in a standstill nor last as a permanent state of reality.

Growth is continuous, cumulative, and inevitable. Life starts at the moment when it is conceived. Once it begins, it continues constantly. There are neither gaps nor pauses. Life grows incrementally. From moment to moment there might not be noticeable changes. But over time, there can be identifiable phases or stages with distinct features. In the process of growth, while existing conditions may sufficiently or insufficiently pave the way for future developments, new additions always have to build necessarily upon past accumulations. Another essence of life is that it is inevitable. With suitable resources and opportunities, life traverses a whole journey from birth to death. Fetuses seek birth. Infants turn into children. Children become adolescents.

Adolescents mature into adults. Adults move to senior ages where they eventually fall in death. The progression takes place with apparently unstoppable forces inherent in the organism of life. Throughout the course of life, there are moments of joy or pain and periods of expansion or decline. There are also spots of hindrance or facilitation and scenes of chaos or order. All these incidental happenings, so long as they are not deadly, can only make life colorful, dynamic, and rich. The same seems to hold true for nonhuman animals as well as plants. More interestingly, human societies, nonhuman animal groupings, and plant aggregates appear to evolve through specific steps or phases or over a general course or path similar to what their respective individual organisms experience in life.

Across a broad horizon, over a long time span, and with collective experiences, people can also observe and comprehend cyclical changes above alternation and beyond staged growth in their commonsensical world. Spatially, the Sun moves from close to distant to close besides daily or nightly alternations. Over time, life extends beyond staged growth by individuals to species-wide evolution from generation to generation. In logic and linguistics, thesis leads to antithesis by way of negation and further to synthesis through a negation of the negation. The dialectic method seems to govern human knowledge in a cyclical change from positive to negative to a synthetic combination thereof. Across social arenas, smaller groups combine through peace or conflict to form larger groups with higher complexities. Compounding appears to take human groupings over a spiral progression from integration to disintegration to integration. An essential feature in cyclical movements is this: A new cycle begins with all the deeds that have been done or all the achievements that have been made in the previous cycles. For example, a beginning thesis in a new cycle is an ending synthesis from a preceding cycle. Newer generations of a living species inherit all the traits developed, exercised, and fine-tuned by past generations. In other words, things do not just repeat themselves over time. The world of commonsense does not just recycle itself in the same place. Instead, things evolve from low to high capacities, small to large scales, and simple to complex states. The world of commonsense continuously progresses to ever new existences of greater coordination, higher integration, and better efficiency.

1.4 Connection

The world of commonsense is here and now. People sit in the shade on a hot day. They run to a shelter when it rains. During the day, people work on the field. Over the night, they rest in the bed. Among places, there are nomadic tribes, fishing hamlets, agricultural villages, and marketplaces. From season to season, people plant in the spring, labor in the summer, harvest in the autumn, and recreate in the winter.

As people struggle here and now in their everyday life, they make natural connections to there and then within and without their commonsensical world. The ground shakes, destroying homes and towns. Forests catch fires, eradicating animals and plants. Rivers overflow, sweeping crops and farmlands. Mountains erupt, burying

villages and cities. There are times when droughts cause widespread famines. There are places where epidemics lead to total destructions. Life is unpredictable, full of dangers. The world of commonsense is uncertain, filled with treacherous happenings. Living at the mercy of mighty nature, people instantly develop and constantly hold fears about various elements and forces in their natural environment. They conjecture that there must be supernatural beings staying behind or hovering above the visible existence, exercising total and ultimate controls over everything sensible in the commonsensical realm. They nonetheless guess that they can communicate with supernatural beings through certain objects and occasions in commonsense. They further speculate that dedication, loyalty, and submission may please supernatural beings for protection or forgiveness while carelessness, disrespect, and rebellion can undoubtedly infuriate godly figures to inflict pain and impose a punishment. In other words, worship may bring about peace and prosperity whereas blasphemy can only result in trouble and decline.

Besides the religious connection to a supernatural realm due to sufferings and fears, there is a link to logic, reasoning, and science because of curiosity, intelligence, imagination, and creativity. Humans are curious. They spend time exploring their environment and experimenting with ways of knowing and doing things. The Sun rises and sets. The Moon never shines like the Sun. The ground extends in all directions to the rims of the sky. What does this commonsensical phenomenon suggest? Is the ground flat as we see it while walking on the surface of it? Humans are intelligent. They extend space contrasting observations recorded on different occasions and comparing experiences collected over various periods. Stones fall off cliffs. Waters flow down the stream. Light comes to the eyes before the sound reaches the ears during a thunderstorm. What do these general happenings in everyday life imply? Humans are imaginative and creative. They take heart and care connecting, reshuffling, and making things. Water evaporates under the Sun. Food perishes in the open. Timbers roll down a hillside. Cattle become restless upon puberty. Out of different phenomenal happenings in the world of commonsense, people figure out how to create stuff and manage things to make life sustainable, affordable, and enjoyable. For example, they build containers and granaries to preserve foods, invent wheels and vehicles to transport goods, and take steps and procedures to sterilize cattle for more stable draft utilization or better food production.

1.5 Metaphysics

The humans think, act, and live in their world of commonsense. In reflection, they sometimes wonder above and beyond physics to question the reliability of their senses and the validity of their commonsensical experiences in the metaphysical realm.

People see a full moon in the sky. They doubt if there is an actual moon of the exact shape, color, and content as seen in their eyes existing up there. One smells a stinky odor from an animal den. One speculates whether there is a real odor of the same quality and quantity as sensed in one's smell coming out of there. People hear

thunders rocking across the sky. They ponder if there is indeed a sound of the like nature and intensity as heard in their ears moving through the air. One touches a stone in the field. One questions whether there is truly a stone of the precise hardness and coldness as felt in one's touch sitting on the ground. People taste fruits in different flavors and textures. They wonder if fruits grow virtually with an accurate amount of sweetness, wateriness, and tastiness as experienced in their taste maturing on trees and bushes.

Senses serve as the only connection between people and their environment. In relative terms, individuals vary with different sensing abilities, stabilities, and maturities. Over the course of life, the world differentiates in variety and complexity during adulthood whereas at infancy or senior age it usually remains limited in scale and homogenous in content. From person to person, while some can sense reality with greater sharpness or in higher consistency, others may see, hear, smell, touch, and taste things only by compromised quality or under limited quantity. Collectively, however, many different individual versions of reality tend to converge in space and crystalize over time into one common and stable sensible world for all in human society. In other words, the reliability of human senses as pertaining to the world of commonsense can be achieved across the population and maintained in history.

In an absolute sense, do human senses transmit reality truthfully? People see a dog. How can they know that it is not a stone, elephant, or fellow human being but only a dog, small or large, fat or thin, timid or fierce? Cognitively, it is problematic that the world sensed here in the human sphere deviates markedly from the world existing there in nature. It means that the humans can never really know the world, its physical outlook as well as dynamic process. Pragmatically, however, it does not matter much if the world conveyed by human senses remains truthfully identical to its origin. It works provided that a dog functions as a dog in the human experience even though in actuality it is a stone or something else. In other words, item to item mistranslation can sustain itself so long as there is consistency ensuing that "A" in its natural existence always appears as "B" in the human perception. Holistically, human senses combine to form a human presentation of the world specifically applicable and uniquely useful to the humans and their survival in nature. The human portrayal may not necessarily coincide with any version of reality by other beings or the original state of the world. Indeed, the human commonsensical world could be amplified, simplified, or totally altered from its origin. It stays because it serves practically human purposes. Or does it stand because it corresponds well to the real world in existence?

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Chapter 2

The Religious



Abstract A farmer passes away from lightning when he or she takes shelter under a tree in a thunderstorm. A village lies in ruins after a tornado touches down nearby and travels through it. Crops die in severe droughts while harvests perish upon onslaught of a freezing weather. In essence, the religious grows out of uncertainty, helplessness, and fear pervasive in commonsensical reality. Cultivating a world of religion, people wish that they are protected from harm, assured of peace, and afforded with fortune, not only here and now in this world, but also there and then after life. This chapter presents the world of religion. On “stage,” for instance, it describes how Buddhism prescribes its peculiar stages different from Christianity’s toward liberation, salvation, or consummation. It also explains why Christianity specifies its unique steps dissimilar to Islam’s for the avoidance of descending to damnation, enslavement, or suffering.

Keywords Faith · Religion · Spirituality · Supernatural · Otherworld

A farmer passes away from lightning when he takes shelter under a tree in a thunderstorm. A village lies in ruins after a tornado touches down nearby and travels through it. Crops die in severe droughts while harvests perish upon onslaught of a freezing weather. Prosperity falls upon a land where inhabitants act devoutly toward a well of hot springs. Chaos prevails across a territory when people fail to pay homage to an important site from time to time. In essence, the religious grows out of uncertainty, helplessness, and fear pervasive in commonsensical reality. Cultivating a world of religion, people wish that they are protected from harm, assured of peace, and afforded with fortune, not only here and now in this life, but also there and then after life (Blofeld 1978; Smith 1991; Novak 1994; Dosick 1995; Hagen 1997; Boyer 2001; Armstrong 2002; Bhaskarananda 2002; Borg 2003; Keller 2008; MacCulloch 2009; Walton 2009; Ligotti and Brassier 2010; McDowell and Morrow 2010; Prothero 2010; Aslan 2011; Bering 2011; Roberts and Yamane 2012; Molloy 2013; Sullivan 2013; Goldin 2014; Hanh 2015; Anderson 2016; Bierle 2016; Boyett 2016; Hopfe et al. 2016; Stewart 2016; Wahl 2016).