Understanding and Applying *Constituent Realism*: Conceptual Resources to Aid Christian Scholars Responding to Naturalism in Various Academic Disciplines

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Section One: Understanding Constituent Realism

Introduction

"Ideas Have Consequences" is the title of Richard Weaver's seminal book[1] in which he explains how Western culture lost its belief in universals (immaterial, transcendent realities—things which exist beyond the physical realm) in the late medieval period. He writes "the defeat of logical Realism in the great medieval debate [on universals] was the crucial event in the history of Western culture; from those acts which issue now in modern decadence."[2] As a result, naturalism—the view that only material things exist—became widely embraced, and as a result cultural decline began and continues.

Edmund Husserl[3], a German philosopher observing currents in his culture, saw this decline as well. In the early twentieth century Germany was one of the most

[1] Richard Weaver, Ideas Have Consequences (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), Richard Weaver (1910-63) was an English professor at the University of Chicago from 1944-63. This book has been widely read and cited since its first publication in 1948.

[2] Weaver, Ideas Have Consequences, 3.

[3] 1859-1938.

advanced societies in the history of the world. Yet it was members of this very society who committed many of the atrocities of World War II. How could this be? Husserl identified the fundamental reason and predicted the outcome that in fact came to pass in the Nazi concentration camps. He observed a shift in thinking among Germans due to some successes and advances made in the sciences, which resulted in a widespread belief that the only way to know something was through empirical verification (or "scientific" proof). Anything immaterial was therefore no longer believed to be something one can have knowledge of, for it was not something that could be proven "scientifically." Furthermore, if one can have no knowledge of anything immaterial, they reasoned nothing immaterial exists. As a result, they abandoned the idea that all persons have a shared human nature that serves as the basis of each individual's dignity and intrinsic worth. Rather, value and dignity came to be defined in virtue of national origin and ethnicity. From this it was a small step to begin treating other humans of different origin in the brutal ways they did in Nazi concentration camps.[4]

For Christians there are additional implications of the influence of naturalism.[5]

[4] This argument was presented in his famous Vienna Lecture before the Vienna Cultural Society on May 7 and May 10, 1935, with the original title "Philosophy in the Crisis of European Mankind." He later expanded it in his The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology, trans. D. Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

[5] Much has been written concerning the importance of thought and scholarship for the Christian. Some notable works include, Harry Blamires. The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think? (New York: Seabury Press, 1963), Os Guinness, Fit Bodies, Fat Minds (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), J.P. Moreland, Love Your God with All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1997), Charles Malik, The Two Tasks (Wheaton, IL: The Billy Graham Center, 2000), George M. Marsden, The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), Mark Noll, The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994) and Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), Alvin Plantinga, The Twin Pillars of Christian Scholarship. The Stob Lectures of Calvin

The great twentieth century theologian J. Gresham Machen made the following observation about the hostility of ubiquitous naturalism to Christianity:

> False ideas are the greatest obstacles to the reception of the gospel. We may preach with all the fervor of a reformer and yet succeed only in winning a straggler here and there if we permit the whole collective thought of the nation or of the world to be controlled by ideas which . . . prevent Christianity from being regarded as anything more than a harmless delusion.[6]

In addition to these results of naturalism, its influence is also seen every day in smaller yet no less direct ways. On a daily basis naturalistic thinking limits Christians and non-

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College and Seminary, 1989–90 (Grand Rapids: Calvin College, 1990), Mark R. Schwehn, Exiles from Eden: Religion and the Academic Vocation in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), Francis J. Beckwith and J. P. Moreland, "A Call to Integration and the Christian Worldview Integration Series," series Preface to Doing Philosophy as a Christian, Christian Worldview Integration Series by Garrett J. DeWeese (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 9-27, Karl Barth, "Faith as Confession" in Dogmatics in Outline, trans. G. T. Thompson (New York: Harper & Bros., 1959), James W. Sire, Discipleship of the Mind (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1990) and Habits of the Mind: Intellectual Life as a Christian Calling (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2000), A. G. Sertillanges, The Intellectual Life (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1946) and Clifford Williams, The Life of the Mind: A Christian Perspective (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002).

Related to the Christian's calling to engage in Christian scholarship see George Marsden, The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), Lesslie Newbigin, Truth To Tell: The Gospel as Public Truth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), John Henry Newman. The Idea of a University (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), C. John Sommerville, The Decline of the Secular University (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006) and Religious Ideas for Secular Universities (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., Engaging God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2002), and Charles Malik, A Christian Critique of the University (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1982). For an analysis of how nineteenth and twentieth century Germany theology failed to effectively integrate with other disciplines see Frederick Gregory, Nature Lost (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

Concerning the desired "content" of a Christian mind—developing a "Christian worldview"—much has been written as well. Notable works include Arthur Holmes, Contours of a Worldview (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) and The Making of a Christian Mind: A Christian World View and the Academic Enterprise (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1985), James W. Sire, The Universe Next Door: A Basic World View Catalogue, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997) and Naming The Elephant: Worldview as Concept (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2004), and Brian J. Walsh and J. Richard Middleton, The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian World View (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1984).

[6] Address delivered at the opening of the 101st session of Princeton Theological Seminary, September 20, 1912. Reprinted in What is Christianity? (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), 162.

Christians alike from seeing the many ways the immaterial realm invades our everyday lives at almost every turn.

These are just a few examples of the consequences of false ideas flowing from naturalism. It is not an overstatement to say that naturalism is the greatest false idea of our time in Western culture. Thus it is important for Christian scholars to respond to naturalism, as part of his or her call to integrate a Christian worldview and academic work so as to promote the common good and human flourishing, as Jeremiah 29:7 encourages us to do.[7] Thus a central theme of this essay is how a Christian scholar might live out a biblical doctrine of "calling" or "vocation" in his or her academic context.[8] This doctrine is grounded in the creation story of Genesis 1, in which God creates humans to work, and the work was a means of their flourishing (Genesis 2:15, 19-20). In fact, their work was another means of reflecting the *imago dei*, following God in activities of creating and cultivating.[9] It is not until the fall that work becomes an unwelcome toil and

[7] As such, one should eschew "methodological naturalism." For a hearty defense of the fallacies of methodological naturalism for the Christian scholar see Alvin Plantinga, "Methodological Naturalism" in Perspectives on Science and the Christian Faith 49 (September 1997): 143-154. Note he is using "science" broadly to include all scholarly investigation.

[8] There has been much published concerning the notion of calling. For example, see John Calvin, "Vocation" in Institutes of the Christian Religion III.X.VI, John Cotton, "Sermons on Calling," in The Way Of Life, or God's Way And Course, In Bringing the Soul Into, Keeping It In, And Carrying It On, In The Way Of Life And Peace (New York: A.M.S. Press, 1983), Lee Hardy, Fabric of This World: Inquiries into Calling, Career Choice, and the Design of Human Work (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), Paul Helm, The Callings: The Gospel in the World (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1988), Paul Marshall, A Kind of Life Imposed on Man: Vocation and Social Order from Tyndale to Locke (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1996), William Perkins, "A Treatise of the Vocations or Callings of Men" in Ian Breward, ed., The Work of William Perkins (Warwick, UK: The Sutton Courtenay Press, 1970), Leland Ryken, Redeeming the Time: A Christian Approach to Work and Leisure (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995) and Miroslav Volf, Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theory of Work (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1991.

[9] For more see Andy Crouch, Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008).

strain (Genesis 3:17-19). Our hope in full redemption in the new Kingdom includes work, fully redeemed. As a foretaste of this hope the Christian can and should enter into work with this attitude, best described by the work of the woman in Proverbs 31. Perhaps this is best summarized by William Perkins as "…a certain kind of life, ordained and imposed on man by God for the common good."[10] More recently Gordon Smith summarizes vocation as "responding to the call of God to be in the world and do work that reflects this call."[11]

To this end, I hope to provide a helpful understanding of how to respond to naturalism in your field by showing how immaterial realities "show up" with astonishing regularity in a wide range of academic disciplines. I grant that in this essay I will only be able to scratch the surface of a number of issues.[12] I will not cover all disciplines, but simply try to offer a range of examples in order to illustrate how this might apply to your specific field of research. Though limited, I hope what I write is adequate to provide you additional motivation and confidence to critique naturalism in your academic work.

Specifically, the issue I believe is extremely relevant to your work as a Christian scholar is understanding that underlying the particular, physical items of study in your discipline are immaterial realities that make the particular, physical things "what they

[10] William Perkins, A Treatise of the Vocations (London: John Haviland, 1631), reprinted in William C. Placher, ed., Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom and Vocation (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 262.

[11] Gordon Smith, Courage and Calling: Embracing Your God-Given Potential (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 29. For a summary of major treatises on the doctrine of calling throughout the history of the Church, see Placher, Callings.

[12] A bibliography is included at the end of this essay for further study.

are"—whether texts, persons, mathematical and scientific relations, and so on. These immaterial realities are known as "universals."

As George Bealer observes, "Universals play a fundamental constitutive role in the structure of the world."[13] It is the nature of universals, and their constitutive role in the world, that I believe will be very helpful to you in responding to naturalism in your academic disciplines. Therefore, this is an essay addressing issues in philosophy, and specifically in metaphysics. Now I know philosophy, and *especially* metaphysics, has a public relations problem these days. I find many do not understand what it is and why it is so important. Many immediately think metaphysics is associated with Eastern religions. Some forms are, but not what I want to discuss. My focus is on Western metaphysics. This is the branch of philosophy that asks, "What is real?" Questions such as "Does God exist?" "Do I have a soul?" "Are there objective moral values?" and "Is there such a thing as 'free-will'" are all questions of metaphysics. My guess is that everyone in the world at one point or another asks some variation of these or similar questions. Thus everyone engages in philosophical thinking, whether they know it or not.

Furthermore, I believe it is especially important for Christians to think about these things. John Wesley has something important to say about all of this. He rode 250,000 miles on horseback and preached the gospel to those on the frontiers of our forming nation two to three times a day over a period of 50 years, preaching over 40,000 sermons.

[13] George Bealer, "A Theory of Concepts and Concept Possession" in Philosophical Issues 9 (1998), 268. Also see J. P. Moreland, "Exemplification and Constituent Realism: A Clarification and Modest Defense," Axiomathes (online version published March 13, 2011), http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs10516-011-9148-x#page-1.

As a result of his incredible ministry he was often asked to speak to other pastors. We have the words of his message to one such gathering of pastors in 1756. In that message he laid out for the young ministers-in-training the four things that he held to be absolutely essential for effective ministry as a Christian. The first was to pray in such a way that God heard and answered your prayers. The second was to know the Bible so well that you could be asked what a verse meant and be able to explain it and go forward and backward in context. The third was to know how to share the gospel clearly and powerfully. And the fourth was to have at least a basic understanding of logic and metaphysics![14]

I suspect you were with me through number three, but didn't expect number four. Why would one of the most successful ministers of all time list metaphysics on his short list of essentials for someone to understand in order to minister effectively? Because he understood that whenever we share the gospel or discuss most other theological issues we are bumping up against issues in metaphysics. And so we need some understanding of these underlying issues related to the discussion. In fact, it is very hard to distinguish issues in metaphysics and issues in theology. Metaphysical questions are often deeply theological, and theological questions are often deeply metaphysical. Distinguishing the

[14] The exact quote is this: For what is this, if rightly understood, but the art of good sense of apprehending, things clearly, judging truly, and reasoning conclusively What is it, viewed in another light, but the art of learning and teaching; whether by convincing or persuading What is there, then, in the whole compass of science, to be desired in comparison of it. Is not some acquaintance with what has been termed the second part of logic, (metaphysics,) if not so necessary as this, yet highly expedient, (1.) In order to clear our apprehension, (without which it is impossible either to judge correctly, or to reason closely or conclusively,) by ranging our ideas under general heads And, (2.) In order to understand many useful writers, who can very hardly be understood without it." John Wesley, "An Address to the Clergy," in The Works of John Wesley, 3d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979; 1st ed., 1972), 481.

two is a pretty recent phenomenon.

Furthermore, metaphysical questions concerning the nature of what is studied arise in all disciplines. Ultimately there are ultimately only two answers to questions concerning the ultimate nature of specific entities. One answer is nominalism and the alternative is realism. Which answer you choose will determine your views on a wide range of issues in your field. Let me give you some other examples from across a range of academic fields to illustrate. Then, in the last two sections of this essay I will discuss some of these in more detail. In Theology we ask, "What does it mean to say that Jesus was truly human?" "How was Christ's death be a substitute for mine?" "Are there theological truths that are universally true?" In Literature and Biblical Studies we ask, "Is truth in the text, or in the reader?" In History we ask, "Can we have accurate knowledge of the past?" In Law we ask, "What is the basis of a societies' laws?" "Are there such a thing as 'inalienable rights'? If so, who decides what these are?" In Art and Aesthetics we ask, "What is beauty?" "What makes art beautiful?" "Is beauty really 'in the eye of the beholder'? In Musicology we ask, "Can we know what the composer had in mind?" "Does this matter to how it is performed today?" In Sociology and Political Science we ask "Is there a proper ordering to society?" "How is ultimate social identity defined?" How are rights grounded?" In Biomedical Ethics we ask "How are dilemmas in bio-medical ethics to be resolved, such as abortion, euthanasia, genetic testing and human cloning?" In Logic we ask, "Are there laws of logic, or merely cultural conventions?" "Is logic objective or subjective?" In Mathematics (and the sciences generally) we ask, "What are numbers and how are they related to one another?" "What are their relations to

the world?" "What are scientific theories and how are they 'accurate'?" In Biology we ask, "Is there an objective biological taxonomy? Were the categories of species, genus, family, order, class, etc. invented or discovered?" In Chemistry we ask, "Was the Periodic Table of Elements objective and discovered, or subjective and invented?" "What is an adequate definition of a physical object?" In Medicine we ask, "Is there such a thing as 'physical health'? If so, what is it and who defines it?" In Psychology and Counseling we ask, "Is there such a thing as 'mental health'? If so, what is it and who defines it?" "Does the 'self' really exist, or is 'it' merely a construction of language?" Finally, in Education we ask, "How do children learn best?"

Of course, this only scratches the surface. So in the first section of this essay I want to discuss the debate that has been raging for centuries over these questions between the "realists" and the "nominalists." Realists believe universals exist and nominalists deny they exist. I then want to argue that as Christians we should embrace realism, and in fact a form known as "constituent realism." In the second section I will summarize the alternative view (nominalism), survey arguments for nominalism and offer responses. Then in the third section I will draw out implications for those in the humanities, and in the fourth section for those in the sciences and professions.

Yet first I must offer one word of caution. In our pragmatic, Western culture we have been trained to always begin with the question "how is this immediately practical?" If we can't answer this right away, we automatically tune out the conversation. The problem is that sometimes the most practical things are only discovered by a process of

thinking about things that are more abstract and not immediately practical. That's what we have to do here. In fact, it is what Paul often does in his writings as well—he outlines the theory in the first (and often largest section) of a book, and then turns to application (for instance, see the book of Romans). So we are in good company!

A section from Plato's dialogue "The Sophist" captures this debate well, summarizing the two positions by analogy:

> Stranger: What we shall see is something like a Battle of Gods and Giants going on between them over their quarrel about reality.
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> Theaetetus: How so?
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> Stranger: One party is trying to drag everything down to earth out of heaven and the unseen, literally grasping rocks and trees in their hands; for they lay hold upon every stock and stone and strenuously affirm that real existence belongs only to that which can be handled and offers resistance to the touch. They define reality as the same thing as body, and as soon as one of the opposite party asserts that anything without a body is real, they are utterly contemptuous and will not listen to another word.
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> Theaetetus: The people you describe are certainly a formidable crew. I have met quite a number of them before now.
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> Stranger: Yes, and accordingly their adversaries are very wary in defending their position somewhere in the heights of the unseen, maintaining with all their force that true reality consists in certain intelligible and bodiless Forms. In the clash of argument they shatter and pulverize those bodies which their opponents wield, and what those others allege to be true reality they call, not real being, but a sort of moving process of becoming. On this issue an interminable battle is always going on between the two camps.[15]

[15] Plato, "The Sophist" trans. F. M. Cornford in Plato: The Collected Dialogues including the Letters, eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), 990. This citation is from 246a-c.

This summarizes well the debate that has been raging since the time of Plato. The question is a basically this: what makes a thing what it is? Some say a thing is what it is simply because it exists as a particular thing. This is what those "who want to pull everything down to earth" think. There are no natures, no essences, no objective groundings to the way things are. They just are. All we have are particular people and rocks and trees. We determine what things are by the names we use for them. This is the view known as nominalism (from "nomen"—Latin for "name"), and has been around since at least Protagoras, 490-420BC, who said "Man is the measure of all things: of things that are, that they are; of things that are not, that they are not."

Those who disagree, who "want to pull things toward heaven," and ground the particulars in an objective, transcendent reality, as Plato did, are realists. They believe that things are what they are by virtue of some immaterial reality that makes things what they are.

I know this debate between realism and nominalism can be abstract. So I will offer a number of examples. Consider, for example, a moral value such as the moral value that "You should love God" or that "Rape is wrong." Realists argue these values exist transcendently and thus are objectively true. Therefore the realist believes we *discover* these values, rather than create them. They have always existed as universals. They are the same everywhere, and at all times, and even multiple places at the same time. They are very real (though, of course, not material). Nominalists who are consistent in their position must say there are no universal moral values, but all values are

relative to the individual or culture. There are "truths" about what is moral or immoral merely because we choose to use the words "right" or "wrong," "moral," or "immoral" of them.

Another example is that of my two sons Ryan and Luke. Notice that they are both human. For the realist humanness is a universal that both Ryan and Luke possess (a type of universal known as a "nature"). It gives them certain capacities (physically, emotionally, intellectually, volitionally, etc.) The same is true of all other humans. It is in virtue of this one universal—humanness—that all humans are classified as human, and this classification is objectively grounded in virtue of each individual's relation to the universal "humanness." This nature is not created by us due to us calling these things "human," but rather exists objectively, regardless of our words. Furthermore, it exists in more than one 'place' at the same time: everywhere a particular human is, humanness is. But for the nominalist there is no such thing as human nature "out there" as a universal, which makes human persons essentially human. Rather there are only particular human persons, which for one reason or another we decide to classify as "human." Nominalists differ on an alternative reason to classify them as "human," but are agreed that it is not in virtue of them truly sharing the universal "humanness."

I will offer one more example. Truths such as the laws of logic (such as the Law of Transitivity: If A is greater than B, and B is greater than C, then A is greater than C) and mathematical truths (such as the Pythagorean Theorem) and theological truths (such as "God exists as a Personal Being") are another type of universal ("propositions"—

defined as "the contents expressed in declarative sentences and contained in people's minds when they are thinking. Propositions are also the things that are either true or false and that can be related to each other by means of the laws of logic…"[16] Again, for the realist these exist transcendently. We discover, rather than invent them. They were true before anyone knew them. They are the same everywhere, at all times and at all places. They are objective. For the nominalist they are subjective: ultimately they are determined by the words we choose to use or some other reason that does not appeal to a universal.

From these examples the nature of universals comes into view. They are objective. They are not the result of individual or cultural views or words, but exist as they are "out there" in and of themselves. Another way to say they exist beyond the individual is to say they are "transcendent." They are not caused by us, but exist apart from (or "beyond") us. Also, as transcendent realities they are immaterial, existing beyond (transcending) the material realm. One important aspect of being immaterial is that they can be "had by" (or "instantiated in" or "exemplified by") more than one thing at the same time. For instance, in the above example of Luke and Ryan, the same nature is "in" both Luke and Ryan at the same time. So universals are said to be "multiply exemplifiable." In fact, this is the easiest way to classify one's view as either a realist or nominalist view: does the proponent hold that the exact same thing can be exemplified by two or more objects at the same time? Realists affirm this. Nominalists deny this and

[16] J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 184. Similarly, the Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy defines a proposition as ""an abstract object said to be that to which a person is related by a belief, desire, or other psychological attitude…" The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy, gen ed. Robert Audi, 1995 s.v. "Proposition," by Steven J. Wagner.

adhere to what is called the "Axiom of Localization": No entity whatsoever can exist at different places at the same time.

So, in summary, universals are things that are objective, transcendent, immaterial and multiply exemplifiable. Realism is the view that universals exist and are "in" particular things, making the particular things what they are. Nominalism is the view that universals do not exist. They see the world composed of all and only particular things: individual values, individual humans, etc. There may be a very close similarity between these individual things, but nothing is truly shared among these particulars.

Today most in higher education reject the existence of universals. Most are nominalists. I believe this is closely tied to the cultural shift toward *naturalism*. Without going into a lot of details, it is fair to say that much of the Enlightenment was a cultural embrace of naturalism. Naturalism may be defined in general as the view that only physical things exist. In other words, the only things that exist are things that are describable by chemistry and physics. Many today take naturalism to be the starting assumption of academic research, especially in the sciences. From naturalism many came to embrace nominalism, the metaphysic most supportive of naturalism.[17] The Stanford Encyclopedia notes the attractiveness of nominalism to those who hold naturalistic views:

[17] The great Enlightenment philosopher John Locke summarized the Enlightenment's commitment to nominalism best when we wrote "… all the great business of genera and species, and their essences, amounts to no more but this, that men making abstract ideas, and settling them in their minds, with names annexed to them, do thereby enable themselves to consider things, and discourse of them, as it were in bundles, for the easier and readier improvement and communication of their knowledge, which would advance but slowly, were their words and thoughts confined only to particulars." John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Chapter III: "Of General Terms," Section 20: "Recapitulation" (multiple publications).

> . . . the nominalist sees trouble with [universals] simply because he sees trouble with non-spatiotemporal . . . objects. That this is so can be seen from the fact that nominalist theories are often motivated by empiricist or naturalist views, which find no place for non-spatiotemporal . . . objects.[18]

Thus, as naturalism has come to dominate Western academic culture, nominalism has as well.

The close relationship between naturalism and nominalism may be seen by a closer examination of naturalism, specifically the form of naturalism dominant in Western academic culture—Scientific Naturalism. John Post, emeritus professor of philosophy at Vanderbilt University, observes the central elements of Scientific Naturalism support a metanarrative that explains everything apart from universals:

> … the sciences cumulatively tell us, in effect, that everything can be accounted for in purely natural terms. The ability of the sciences to explain matters within their scope is already very great, and it is increasing all the time. The worldview this entails, according to many, is naturalism: Everything is a collection of entities of the sort the sciences are about, and all truth is determined ultimately by the truths about these basic scientific entities.[19]

Notice there are three central aspects of Scientific Naturalism: (1) *A Theory of Knowledge* ("the sciences cumulatively tell us, in effect, that everything can be accounted for in purely natural terms."), (2) *A Grand Story* ("The ability of the sciences to explain matters within their scope is already very great, and it is increasing all the time.") and (3) *A Naturalistic view of Reality* ("The worldview this entails, according to many, is

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[18] Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra, "Nominalism in Metaphysics" in The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta, ed., http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/nominalism-metaphysics/, s.v. Nominalism in Metaphysics, 2.1: Abstract Objects.

[19] John Post, Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction (New York: Paragon, 1991), 11.

naturalism: Everything is a collection of entities of the sort the sciences are about, and all truth is determined ultimately by the truths about these basic scientific entities.") Let's look briefly at these and see how they are all closely related to, and even assume nominalism.

The theory of knowledge is the starting point for most naturalists. "[T]he sciences cumulatively tell us, in effect, that everything can be accounted for in purely natural terms." Wilfred Sellars, an immanent naturalistic philosopher, summarizes: "science is the measure of all things, of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not."[20] This is known as "scientism" –the view that Science is either vastly superior, or even the only way to know anything.[21] Nicholas Rescher, Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at the University of Pittsburg, summarizes:

> The theorist who maintains that science is the be-all and end-all—that what is not in science textbooks is not worth knowing—is an ideologist with a peculiar and distorted doctrine of his own. For him, science is no longer a sector of the cognitive enterprise but an all-inclusive world-view. This is the doctrine not of science but of scientism.[22]

Again, another way to say this is that whatever is known to exist can be fully explained in the language of chemistry and physics.

Do you see the nominalism implicit in scientism? Whatever is known is only known by chemistry and physics. But by definition, chemistry and physics deal with

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[20] Wilfred Sellars, Science, Perception, and Reality (London: Rutledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), 173.

[21] Moreland and Craig, Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview, 346-50.

[22] Nicholas Rescher, The Limits of Science (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1999), 247.

entities in the physical world—with particulars. Therefore whatever is known (and by implication, whatever exists) is the physical world of particulars. You can believe in other things that aren't physical (such as souls, natures, God, or anything else immaterial) but this is merely a personal, subjective belief, not objectively true. This is just another way to state the nominalist's Axiom of Localization: to exist is to be located in space. Naturalism is fundamentally nominalistic in this way.

Secondly, Scientific Naturalism offers a Grand Story: "The ability of the sciences to explain matters within their scope is already very great, and it is increasing all the time." Scientific Naturalism offers an all-encompassing story about how everything came into being via atomic theory (the rearrangement of protons, neutrons and electrons) and naturalistic evolutionary biology. Notice how this account is all encompassing: *prior physical states and the laws of nature explain everything that exists*. But prior physical states and laws of nature cannot explain universals. They are immaterial existences not subject to physical states or such laws. Furthermore, if universals exist they cause things in a way that is not via prior physical states (say, the way a universal causes a particular thing to be red, human, virtuous, etc.). So if one assumes the naturalist's Grand Story—that *prior physical states and the laws of nature explain everything that exists*—then there is no room for universals to exist or do anything! This is nominalism.

Furthermore, in the naturalist's Grand Story the parts determine the whole. "Everything is a collection of entities of the sort the sciences are about…" The atomic particles (the "parts" of things) determine the wholes that result (the macro-objects, such

as dogs and persons). So reality is ultimately even more particular than we first thought: it is not composed of even particular people and dogs, but rather it is ultimately composed of the particular atomic particles that make up these macro-objects. This is radically particularistic, leaving no room whatsoever for universals.

From this follows the naturalists' view of reality. The words of Post, previously quoted, should be considered: "The worldview this entails, according to many, is naturalism: …all truth is determined ultimately by the truths about these basic scientific entities."[23] In other words, given this theory of knowledge and the Grand Story, naturalists believe something is "real" if and only if it can be studied scientifically, that is empirically, and thus fit into the Grand Story somewhere. But by definition universals cannot be studied empirically or fit into the Grand Story. So universals cannot exist for the naturalist. In sum, nominalism is deeply embedded and assumed in naturalism.

Let's turn our attention to postmodern thought, which has also, in the past several decades, become entrenched in some part of Western academic culture (especially in the humanities and social sciences). But turning our attention to postmodernism doesn't mean we are starting a new conversation. No, in fact I believe postmodernism is simply the view you end up with if you take naturalism, and nominalism, to their logical conclusions. More specifically, if you rigorously apply the Axiom of Localization, in a way many don't have the courage to do, you will end in postmodernism. Postmodernists are courageous, following their views to the bitter end, no matter where they lead. For

[23] Post, Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction, 11.

this I admire them.

It will be helpful to see how a number of seminal postmodern thinkers articulated this. Jean-Francois Lyotard[24] summarizes by saying "Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodernism as incredulity toward meta-narratives."[25] A narrative is a story of what is true. A meta-narrative is "the" story that transcends all others and is true for all. Ultimately, postmodernism is the outright denial that there is anything transcendent and universal. They claim we can't know any essences, and essences play no role in the world around us. This is nominalism.[26]

Allow me to offer several examples of how this assumption "plays out" in other aspects of postmodern thought. Concerning propositions (a type of universal), specifically the laws of logic. The influential French philosopher Michel Foucault approvingly quotes Friederich Nietzsche, the even more influential German philosopher, when Foucault writes "[T]he forceful appropriation of things necessary to survival and the imposition of a duration not intrinsic to them account for the origin of logic."[27] In other words, the laws of logic are not what they are because of something "intrinsic" to

[24] Lyotard wrote the short but very influential "The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge" in 1979 as a report addressing the influence of technology, commissioned by the Conseil des universities du Quebec. In it he is the first to use the word "postmodernism" to refer to a philosophical persuasion.

[25] Jean-Francois Lyotard, "The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge" in From Modernity to Postmodernity: An Anthology (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 482.

[26] For more see my "Essentials of Postmodernism" in Paul Copan, Scott Luley and Stan Wallace, eds., Philosophy: Christian Perspectives for the New Millennium (Dallas, Texas: CLM&RZIM Publishers, 2003), 75-85.

[27] Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" in From Modernity to Postmodernity, 368.

them which grounds them as objectively true. Instead, the laws of logic come from individuals simply asserting they are objective, though they really are not. Therefore they are relative, rather than objective. They are particulars, not universals. Nominalism. Nietzsche also says truth is only "in the mind of the beholder." Truth is:

> …a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthromorphisms—in short a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people.[28]

Again, truth (technically, true propositions) is not transcendent or objective, but rather "truth" is completely generated by us. Lyotard adds "[A]ny consensus on the rules defining a game [narrative] and the 'moves' playable within it must be local, in other words, agreed upon by its present players and subject to eventual cancellation."[29] Nothing about what is taken to be true is objective, fixed or transcendent. It is true simply and only because it is agreed upon by those using the term. Nietzsche says the same: "There are no facts, only interpretations."[30] One of the most influential postmodern thinkers, Jacques Derrida, expounds on this: "The absence of a transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of significations infinitely."[31] There is nothing transcendent signified by words—no propositions. There are therefore an infinite variety of things a word can

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[28] Friederich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense," in The Viking Portable Nietzsche, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin, 1954), 46-7.

[29] Jean-Francois Lyotard, "The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge" in From Modernity to Postmodernity, 504.

[30] Nietzsche, The Will to Power, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1968), 267.

[31] Jacques Derrida, Writing and Difference, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 280.

mean, leading the man on the street to say "That's just your interpretation."

I once heard a joke that illustrates this well. Three baseball umpires are enjoying a drink together after calling games all evening. They are discussing how they decide between balls and strikes. The first says, "I call it what it is." The second says, "I call it as I see it" and the third says, "It ain't nothing 'til I call it!" The third umpire takes the postmodern view—there is no truth to the matter, so whatever I say becomes truth (relatively speaking).

Foucault says something similar concerning moral values: "The domination of certain men over others leads to the differentiation of values; class domination generates the idea of liberty . . ."[32] In other words, the moral value we know as "liberty" actually results (is caused by) some people forcing their opinion on others (class domination), rather than existing objectively. There are no universal moral values, only particulars. Nominalism is again assumed.

Concerning natures, another type of universal, Foucault writes,

> Why does Nietzsche challenge the pursuit of the origin . . . ? First, because it is an attempt to capture the exact essence of things, . . . because this search assumes the existence of immobile forms that precede the eternal world of accident and succession. . . . However, . . . there is 'something altogether different' behind things: not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence.[33]

He is stating unequivocally that there are no essences to things, no universals that make

[32] Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" in From Modernism to Postmodernism, 368.

[33] Ibid., 362-3.

things what they are. From these examples it should be clear that postmodernism is essentially nominalistic. In fact, it is simply the postmodernist's attempt to be so consistently nominalistic that makes postmodernism so striking.

In sum, I've tried to show how nominalism underlies the dominant views in Western higher education today: naturalism and postmodernism. By identifying the common thread of nominalism in these two streams of thought, and their many applications, we as Christian scholars can identify places to think Christianly and offer different and fresh insights into a number of issues in our disciplines.

During the third and fourth sections of this essay I will discuss specific issues in a range of disciplines that I believe are best explained by a realist view of universals. But for the rest of this section I will offer three reasons I believe one should embrace realism, and specifically *constituent* realism. Then in the second section I will survey arguments for the alternative—nominalism—and offer critiques.

Arguments for Realism

First Argument: Predication

There are three main arguments that I believe show realism is preferable to nominalism.[34] The first argument is known as the argument from predication.[35] We often

[34] For a good discussion of reasons to hold to a Platonic formulation of properties, see Alex Oliver, "The Metaphysics of Properties," Mind 105 (1996): 1-80. For a general introduction to the topic written for evangelicals not trained in philosophy see Garrett DeWeese and J. P. Moreland, Philosophy Made Slightly Less Difficult: A Beginner's Guide to Life's Big Questions (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 29-39. A bit more detailed but still written for evangelicals who are non-specialists is Craig and Moreland's

say things like "Lori is kind," "My shirt is orange," and "Ryan is a human being." Saying things like this are claims that "a is F." Yet we have to stop and ask how is it that "a" truly is "F"? What are we really saying when we say "a" is "F"? It appears the best explanation is that "a" actually is "F"—that "a" does, in fact, actually posses "F" and therefore we can truly say "a is F." In other words, it seems the best explanation is that "a"—the particular thing, be it Lori, my shirt, or Ryan—truly has (possesses, instantiates, exemplifies) a universal—kindness, orange, humanness. Hence realism makes sense of our common-sense ideas of, and language of, predication.

Second Argument: Attribute Agreement

A second, related argument is known as the argument from attribute agreement.[36]

Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview, 204-14 A third introduction, albeit a bit more technical and not written for evangelicals, is Reinhardt Grossmann, The Existence of the World: An Introduction to Ontology (London: Routledge, 1992), 14-45. He develops these issues yet more technically in The Categorical Structure of the World (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1983). Other more technical treatments include Roderick Chisholm, A Realist Theory of Categories: An Essay on Ontology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Chris Swoyer, "How Metaphysics Might be Possible: Explanation and Inference in Ontology," in Midwest Studies in Philosophy: New Directions in Philosophy 23 (1999): 100-31, Theodore Sider, John Hawthorne and Dean W. Zimmerman, eds., Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), J.P. Moreland, Universals, Qualities, and Quality Instances: A Defense of Realism (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), updated in his Universals (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), E.J. Lowe, The Possibility of Metaphysics: Substance, Identity, and Time (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 212-13, and "The Metaphysics of Abstract Objects," The Journal of Philosophy, 92 (1995), 509-524, D. H. Mellor and A. Oliver, eds., Properties (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), Nicholas Wolterstorff, On Universals, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), Peter van Inwagen, "A Theory of Properties," in Dean Zimmerman (ed.), Oxford Studies in Metaphysics, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 137-8, Michael Loux, Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction (London: Routledge, 2006) and Gonzalo Rodriquez-Pereyra, "What is the Problem of Universals?" in Mind 109 (2000), 255-273.

[35] For instance, see Michael Loux, Substance and Attribute (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1978), 1-106 and Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction, 3rd ed. (Routledge: London, 2006), 17-83.

[36] Also known as the "one over many" argument or the argument from the problem of universals.

We not only say things like “Lori is kind,” “My shirt is orange,” and “Ryan is a human person,” but “Brooke is also kind,” “My basketball is also orange,” and “Luke is also a human person.” In other words, we often make the additional claim that “a and b are F.” We readily identify when different particular things share the same attribute (or property) in common. Said differently, there seem to be “ready-made groupings” in the world, and we naturally classify things by these groupings. For instance, no one has trouble classifying Ryan and Luke as humans and not dogs or antelope. They seem clearly to share something in common which grounds their membership in the group “human things.” Or consider when two people have the “same” thought (for instance, you now having the same thought I had in mind as I wrote this, which allows you to understand what I have written). There must be something identical in my mind and your mind—namely the proposition we both are thinking about (in this case, the proposition “two people can have the same thought, even though at different times and places”). This is another clear case of the same “F” being “had by” multiple particulars (the same thought “had by” multiple minds). The same can be said of propositions expressed in various languages, for instance “It is raining” and “Il pleut.” The very same “F” is expressed (a proposition concerning rain) in two particular instances (two distinct languages). Similar arguments can be made concerning God’s “communicable” attributes. God is loving, just and wise. He has created us to be able to share in these attributes. Hence the very same attributes of love, justice and wisdom can be exemplified by God *and* by us. The same can be said of the fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22. Thus there appear to be many cases of the same thing “had by” various particulars, whereby we accurately group them

into natural groupings. Well-known Australian philosopher D.M. Armstrong summarizes:

> …many different particulars can all have what appears to be the same nature . . . The conclusion of the argument is simply that in general this appearance cannot be explained away, but must be accepted. There is such a thing as identity of nature.[37]

What best explains these natural groupings we observe—this attribute agreement whereby many different things share the same "F"? The best explanation is that there is something shared in common among members of these natural groupings. Specifically, there must be some actual "F" that is "in" each of these particulars and truly make them what they are (human, orange, kind, etc.) Such an "F" is a universal, which is "in" the particulars and thus make the particulars what they are and ground their membership in the class. Again, Armstrong summarizes, "The problem of universals is the problem of how numerically different particulars can nevertheless be identical in nature, all be of the same 'type'."[38] Many take this to be a second strong argument in favor of realism.

Third Argument: Biblical Rationale

The Christian has a third reason to believe in realism: the biblical authors seem to assume universals exist. First, realism seems to be required by the Incarnation, which assumes the *very same* human nature we possess was also taken on by Christ. In Philippians 2:7 the Apostle Paul writes that Jesus "made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." The best understanding of what he is

[37] D. M. Armstrong, Nominalism and Realism: Universals and Scientific Realism, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), xiii. Also see Alvin Plantinga, "Modal Argument for Propositions" in Warrant and Proper Function (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 117-120.

[38] Armstrong, Nominalism and Realism: Universals and Scientific Realism, 41.

saying seems to be that Jesus took on something real in the Incarnation, namely human nature, and in virtue of this he was, indeed, truly human. In Isaiah 9:6, a central Messianic prophecy, the prophet states "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders." Again, the point is that the Messiah will be a (human) child—humanness will be a defining feature of the Messiah. One reason this is so important is because only by Jesus being truly human can he identify with us in all things, as the author of Hebrews 4:15 assures us is the case: "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin." This can only be possible by Jesus being truly human, in virtue of having the same human nature all other humans have. To deny this, as the nominalist must, seems much too close to an ancient gnostic heresy, whose proponents held Jesus only *appeared* to be human, but in fact was not. No, the biblical authors consistently maintain that he was truly and fully human. He and we all share the same human nature. This assumes realism.

In fact, beyond the Incarnation *per se* is the assumption, demonstrated throughout Scripture, that all individual humans share the same nature. For instance, in Romans 5 the Apostle Paul makes it clear that the sin nature is common to all individuals:

> For if, by *the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man*, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ! Consequently, just as *one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people*, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the *disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners*, so also through the *obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous*.

Paul says all human persons share something in common with Adam in virtue of which Adam's sin caused our depravity as well. Whatever this might be called, metaphysically it means we all share the same "nature." In fact, theologians often refer to this as the "Adamic nature." As such, it seems a biblical author here again is assuming there is a universal (humanness), which is multiply exemplified in the many particulars (the many particular humans, beginning with Adam and also exemplified by the second Adam, Jesus Christ, who was like us in all ways, "yet without sin.")[39]

Realism also appears necessary to make sense of Substitutionary Atonement. It was humans who sinned against God, and the penalty was death (Romans 5:12). Therefore an equal substitution—a death in place of our death—required another true human person. Only in this way would it be an equal sacrifice. This was the reason ancient Israel's animal sacrifices were inadequate. Yet if Jesus was not truly human in his essence—if he did not possess the very same human nature as all other humans possess—then his sacrifice would not be equal, and therefore no better than the animal sacrifices of the nation of Israel. Of course, we know from Scripture that his death *did* pay our sin penalty once for all. Again, in Romans 5:6-11 Paul assumes this common human nature when he reminds us:

> For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly….while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also

[39] Hebrews 4:15

> exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

The adequacy of Christ's death was due in part to the fact that his was an equal sacrifice—a perfect human who could die for imperfect humans. In Hebrews 2:14 the author summarizes this well: "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in *their humanity* so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death." Therefore, Jesus must have shared the very same human nature as we have, in order for his death for us to be efficacious, as it clearly was.

The nominalist is forced to choose between two much more problematic explanations for substitutionary atonement. First, he can simply posit Jesus was a substitute for us, affirming the biblical consensus, but with no further explanation of how this might be. Or he may deny the biblical assumption and assert a view other than substitution in order to avoid the metaphysics of the atonement. For example, he may endorse the "moral example" view in which Jesus' death was not a substitute, but rather simply an inspiring example of ultimate altruism for us to follow. However, given the reasons to embrace realism, there seems little reason to endorse either of these approaches to understanding the atonement. [40]

In addition to natures, biblical authors assume propositions exist as well. By definition the Scriptures contains statements of fact—descriptions of the true state of affairs. One example is the state of affairs of God so loving the world that he gave his one

[40] For treatment of related issues see "One Person, Two Natures: Two Metaphysical Models of the Incarnation" by Garrett J. DeWeese in Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective, eds. Fred Sanders & Klaus Issler (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Academic, 2007), 144-153.

and only Son. This same proposition is multiply exemplified in various minds: initially in the mind of God, then in the mind of the Apostle John when he wrote this in the original document, and then in the minds of everyone throughout history who have read or heard these biblical truths. Thus this proposition is multiply exemplified in each person's mind: the very same (identical) proposition is "had" by many minds across the world and across the centuries. Or consider Isaiah 1:18: "Come now, let us reason together." This assumes both God and Isaiah can attend to the very same proposition in both their minds at the same time. The same is true of "narrative" texts as well. For instance, in Judges 6 we read of God calling Gideon, and him being faithful to serve the Lord by destroying the alter of Baal. Contained herein are various propositions such as "The Lord choses and sends his own for his purposes" (6:14) and "The Lord is sovereign over life itself" (6:23). These propositions are in God's mind, Gideon's mind, and the minds of the readers of this narrative throughout history. In fact, realism concerning propositions seems to be assumed when we speak of "the Gospel." Clearly there are four canonical gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. However, in these four we find the same propositions regarding God's redemptive work through the obedience of Jesus. Thus there is one Gospel—one true state of affairs—which is multiply exemplified in the four gospels.[41] As a final example consider the scene around the Throne in Revelation. We read in Revelation 7:9-10 about the remarkable crowd of people John saw gathered before God's

[41] See, for example, Martin Hengel, The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Collection and Origin of the Canonical Gospels (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000) and Ronald A. Piper, "The One, the Four and the Many" in The Written Gospel, ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Donald A. Hagner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 254-73. D. A. Carson makes a different yet metaphysically related point in his Christ and Culture Revisited (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 42.

throne:

> After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and *all* tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches *were* in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

Note this multitude contains people from all "tongues" yet they all say the same thing: "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." This one proposition is multiply exemplified in these many different languages (and even more minds) at the same time.

In fact, the very existence of the Scriptures for us to read in the first place seems to assume realism. Notice there are many different biblical writings: John's original manuscript, a first century copy, modern translations in German, French and Mandarin, and so on. But notice we assume all these documents contain the very same proposition. For instance, each Sunday your pastor may say something like "Look with me at John 3:16." Notice you are not at all tempted each Sunday to jump up, run up to the podium and peer over his shoulder at his Bible. This is because you instinctively know that the *very same* verse is in your Bible that is in his Bible. So you can look at John 3:16 in your Bible, from the comfort of your pew, instead of running up to the podium and looking at his. But you have different paper, different ink, and are located in a different place. So how is yours the *very* same verse as his? It is because the verse is not the ink, paper, or location. It is ultimately the proposition contained in your ink, paper, words, etc. in your Bible, which is the same proposition in the particulars of his Bible. If this were not so,

there could be no communal reading of God's Word, and in fact there could not be multiple Bibles all equally "containing" Gods word! But there are, because propositions (universals) exist and are contained in (or multiply exemplified in) each person's Bible (in each particular). This is only possible if realism is true.

Similar arguments may be offered concerning objective moral values in Scripture, which are a type of proposition—propositions with moral content. Throughout Scripture are statements referring to moral imperatives. A paradigm case is the "Ten Commandments" contained in Exodus 20. For instance, in Exodus 20:3 we read, "You shall have no other gods before me." Clearly this is a proposition with moral content that meets all the criteria above of multiple exemplification (the same moral value can be contained in various minds and various sentences). Thus moral imperatives in Scripture seem to be another case of realism assumed. It is, quite frankly, hard to understand how the nominalist, who shares a high view of Scripture, can give a coherent explanation of these facts.

Lastly, Christians don't share the assumption used to reject realism by many in our culture and the academy—namely the assumption of naturalism. As Christians we know there are certainly some things that exist which are not physical: God, angels, souls, faith, hope and love, for instance. Therefore we don't have any reason to reject universals as a matter of principle, like the naturalist does.

In sum, there are strong reasons for anyone, and especially for Christians, to embrace realism.

Uniting Universals with Particulars

But embracing realism leads to the second important question—how are universals related to the particular things we see around us? How this relationship is understood is crucial to the integrative task of the Christian scholar. Broadly speaking, there are two answers—as "relations" or as "constituents."[42]

Relational Realism

Proponents of relational realism believe universals stand in external relationships to their particulars. They are related by some relationship "R" yet remain "outside" the particular, so to speak. In some way they are "tied to" the particular thing, but they in no way enter into the structure of the particular as a constituent. Thus, for example, my wife is "human" because the universal humanness stands in a "tied to" relation to her, making her human.

Constituent Realism

Alternatively, those who hold to constituent realism understand universals to enter into the very structure of the particulars, making them what they are in a deep sense. The universal is truly "in" the particular somehow, thereby making it what it is. For example,

[42] These views were first identified by Aristotle, as he observing properties had by a substance may be assayed as existing either "separate from the sensible things" or "present in them." Aristotle, Metaphysics 996a. Hence these views are also referred to "*ante rem*" and "*in re*" realism respectively. Nicholas Wolterstorff reintroduced this distinction in his "Bergmann's Constituent Ontology" in Nous 4 (2) (1970): 109-134. Michael Loux has also given this much attention. Michael Loux, "Aristotle's Constituent Ontology" in Dean Zimmerman, ed., Oxford Studies in Metaphysics, vol. 2, 206-250. Also see Moreland, "Exemplification and Constituent Realism."

on this view my wife Lori is human because the universal "humanness" is truly in her in some way.

I say "in some way" because some assume there is only one way for one thing to be "in" another thing, namely the universal must be spatially "in" the particular, like the way water is in a glass. The water is spatially extended to every area contained in the cylinder within the walls of the glass. Some constituent realists assume universals must be contained "in" the particulars in this way—spatially extended in the particulars. However, I think there are at least three good reasons to believe universals are in particulars in a non-spatial way. Thus, technically I am advocating for a modified constituent realism, or even a "hybrid" constituent realism, drawing from both Aristotle and Plato. Yet for simplicity sake I will continue to refer to this view as constituent realism.[43]

The first reason to modify constituent realism by taking the universal to be non-spatially "in" the particular as a constituent is that is both possible for something non-spatial to be in something spatial, and seems to occur regularly. For instance, truth is "in" the statement "Brooke is my youngest daughter" and a thought can be "in" the mind of God, such as his plans for his people (e.g. Jeremiah 29:11). Perhaps most paradigmatically, God is in the world, but is not in the world spatially (part of God is not in Skopje and another part of God in Singapore). He is fully present everywhere, yet not

[43] See Paul M. Gould, "A Defense of Platonic Theism" (Ph.D. diss., Purdue University, 2010), 52-65, 111 and Paul Gould and Stan Wallace, "On What There Is: Theism, Platonism, and Explanation" in Loving God With Your Mind: Essays in Honor of J.P. Moreland, Paul Gould and Richard Brian Davis, gen. eds. (Chicago: Moody Press 2014), 27-31.

in a spatial sense.[44] So why think if a universal is in a particular, it must be a spatial "in"? Secondly, building on this, given the fact that universals, like God, are not spatial, it is more reasonable to believe that the universals are in particulars in a non-spatial way, just as God is in the world in a non-spatial way. Lastly, if the universal "humanness" is in me in a spatial way, it follows that if I loose my legs in a car accident, I have less humanness (namely, the humanness that was spatially extended in my leg is no longer part of me). Or, if humanness is spatially spread throughout a person's body, then the bigger a person's body, the more "humanness" they have. But this is absurd. One is human no matter how large or small they are, or if they lose parts. So humanness must be "in" the individual in a non-spatial way. In fact, at this point what one believes about this issue becomes *very* practical and relevant, for this understanding of how a person's nature is related to their physical body should give anyone who loses a loved one, as I recently did, great comfort. My oldest daughter went to be with the Lord on April 11, 2013. If Bethany's humanness was somehow spatial, it could no longer exist without a body to be extended in. But I am convinced Bethany is still as fully human as when she was embodied. This can only be true if her humanness is not physical and spatial (though is indeed very real).

In sum, this version of constituent realism takes universals to enter into the very being of the particular, yet the universal is "in" the particular in a non-spatial way. Thus my wife is human due to the fact that humanness is a metaphysical constituent of her very

[44] See Charles Taliaferro, Consciousness and the Mind of God (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

being, truly "in" her, yet in her non-spatially.

Conclusion

In this section I've tried to illustrate the importance of ideas, and specifically the importance of the idea that universals exist and are exemplified in particulars, the view known as realism. To this end I have done my best to offer a definition of the key terms related to this issue and provide three arguments in favor of realism. Furthermore, I have discussed the various ways realists understand universals to be related to particulars, and given three reasons why one should embrace constituent realism. More specifically, I have advocated a form of constituent realism that takes universals to be non-spatially "in" their particular instances. It is this view that I believe provides Christian scholars many conceptual resources to respond to naturalism in their fields of study. J. P. Moreland, Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at Talbot School of Theology confidently asserts the reality of the unseen: "You must become aware that the unseen world shows up and leaves all the time, and if redness can do it, so can God."[45]

Not only does the reality of universals "showing up" in the world provide conceptual resources to directly respond to naturalism, it also helps develop a greater "plausibility

[45] Quoted in Garcia, "Platonism and the Haunted Universe" in Beyond The Control of God? Six Views on the Problem of God and Abstract Objects, ed. Paul Gould (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 47. (NB: I was doing this research before final publication of Beyond The Control of God?, so the page references are to the numbering used for the galley proofs. The pagination may be slightly different in the published manuscript.) Moreland makes this point well in his debate with atheist philosopher Kai Nielsen, in J. P. Moreland and Kai Nielsen, Does God Exist: The Debate between Theists & Atheists (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1993), 58.

structure"[46] to open "space" for other discussions of immaterial objects, such as souls and God. I will discuss this further in sections three and four. But first it is important to survey the objections raised against realism and offer responses to justify the Christian scholar employing constituent realism in response to naturalism. That will be the focus of the next section.

[46] Beckwith and Moreland define a plausibility structure as a set of ideas a person is willing to entertain as possibly true. (Frank Beckwith and J. P. Moreland, "Series Preface: A Call To Integration And The Christian Worldview Integration Series," in Garrett DeWeese, Doing Philosophy as a Christian (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 18. For more, see J. P. Moreland, Love Your God With All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 75ff.

Section Two: Objections to Constituent Realism

Introduction

In the first section I outlined the centuries-old debate between realists and nominalists, offered three arguments in favor of realism, discussed how I believe universals are related to particulars. I also suggested this has many implications as we, as Christian scholars, seek to respond to naturalism in our various fields of study. Be that as it may, many of our colleagues may not agree. They may believe nominalism makes perfectly good sense and offer arguments for nominalism and against realism. Therefore, in this section I want to survey the arguments offered against realism and for nominalism, and offer responses. The material in this section is probably the most conceptually difficult, for to argue against realism is to develop alternative views that are rather complex. To do these objections justice I will attempt to develop them in some detail.

Ockham's Razor

The fundamental argument raised against realism is the "argument from parsimony," better known as "Ockham's Razor," following the influential scholastic philosopher William of Ockham's[1] maxim to not multiply explanations beyond what is absolutely necessary.[2] Their argument goes something like this: We know much about

[1] 1287-1347.

[2] The Oxford Companion to Philosophy, gen. ed. Ted Honderich, 1995 ed., s.v. "Ockham's Razor," by Marilyn McCord Adams.

the physical world and particular things. So we are justified in believing material things exist. But universals are not directly observed. Their possible existence is more "fuzzy" and more puzzling. Therefore, if sense can be made of the world without positing the existence of universals, we should do so. And, in fact, "austere nominalism" or "moderate nominalism" adequately explain the data without appeal to universals. Therefore we should be nominalists (of one of these two varieties).

Of course, the weight of the preceding argument rests upon whether austere nominalism or moderate nominalism can successfully explain the data. I don't believe either can, and thus the argument from Ockham's Razor fails. To see why it fails, let's examine in some detail the arguments for austere and moderate nominalism in some detail.

Argument One via Ockham's Razor: Austere Nominalism

The first strategy is *austere nominalism*, arguing universals can be avoided by "linguistic reduction." Nominalists get their name from this strategy, arguing universals are actually nothing more than names we use for things. They suggest we can, in fact, make sense of every alleged universal "out there" by recognizing it is simply a name we have chosen to describe the thing. For instance, instead of there existing a universal "humanness" there is simply the word "human" which we use to describe various objects in the world. The conclusion is that words are adequate to explain what we observe, and thus there is no need for universals.

In response, it appears all attempts to reduce universals to words fail.[3] When we use the word "human" of a group of things we observe in the world, we must ask what "grounds" the referring relation of the word to those things? In other words, why is it that word truly "describes" those things? The nominalist's assertion that they are "human" because we use that word of them gets the cart before the horse. It is because they are truly "human" that our word "human" correctly refers to them, rather than the other way around. R. Scott Smith,[4] one of the most articulate defenders of realism, contents a things essence is what it is, apart from the words we choose to use:

> A given living thing is what it is, regardless of how we conceive of, or talk about, it. . . . how we conceive or talk about living things does not enter into their being. So despite all our epistemic abstractions (and how we conceive of things), or our linguistically favored ways of speaking, we will not change their underlying metaphysical reality.[5]

An equally strong response to this argument is the observation that even in reducing universals to linguistic paraphrases, the very words and sentences used are assumed to be abstract objects which are multiply exemplifiable—universals themselves. The very same word or sentence can be "in" the many copies of the book the author wrote to argue for nominalism, and can be "in" many minds as the philosopher is arguing for nominalism in a lecture to an audience or in a book read by others. Thus this argument appears to be self-defeating the moment the nominalist seeks to communicate

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[3] For a good summary see Craig and Moreland, Philosophical Foundations, 210-14.

[4] Associate Professor of Ethics and Christian Apologetics at Biola University.

[5] "William Lane Craig's Nominalism, Essence, and Implications for Our Knowledge of Reality," Philosophia Christi vol. 15, no. 2 (2014): 381.

to others her arguments for nominalism via linguistic reduction (or, for that matter, any other argument for nominalism or against realism). Simply put, to do so she must assume universals exist and are contained in the sentences or words she uses to communicate her arguments for nominalism.

The failure of reducing universals to words is seen most poignantly in the writings of postmodernists. More than anyone, postmodernists seek to live consistently with this reductionism (as opposed to modernists or other naturalists, who I believe are still living on "borrowed capital" from earlier days, often smuggling in a realist ontology). Yet even postmodernists regularly fail to apply nominalism consistently. For instance, Michel Foucault, whose writings evidence a thoroughgoing commitment to postmodernism and attempt to live consistently with the implications, said "fictions of the past help to open our eyes to the *reality* of the present."[6] He can't help but assume there is an objective reality that can be known (of the present, in this case). The eminent philosopher Thomas Nagel put it well when he observed, "Such views have a self-evident air if they are not examined too closely, which may account for their greater popularity outside philosophy than in it."[7] Some postmodern philosophers have done this close examination, and have found their view just can't be lived consistently. Postmodern thinker Jacques Derrida showed he was one such thinker when he observed

The unsurpassable, unique, and imperial grandeur of the order of reason, that which

[6] Michel Foucault, "The History of Sexuality" in Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Sopher (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 193.

[7] Thomas Nagel, The Last Word (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1997), 29.

> makes it not just another actual order or structure (a determined historical structure, one structure among other possible ones), is that one cannot speak out against it except by being for it, that one can protest it only from within it…[8]

In other words, the only way to argue that logic *is not* objective and True is to assume logic *is* objective and True (and thus universals exist which ground its objectivity and Truth) Conversely, it is impossible to live consistently with the view that logic is arbitrary, for the reality of thinking a thought or speaking a sentence or convincing a colleague of your view is evidence in and of itself that your view is unlivable, and thus should not be believed. This is that with which Derrida was struggling. Even he, and others like him—most committed to reducing universals to words—find it impossible. Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that linguistic reduction is not an adequate argument for the superiority of nominalism over realism. This attempt to reduce universals to particulars fails.

Argument Two via Ockham's Razor: Moderate Nominalism

A second strategy to explain the data without appeal to universals recognizes the

[8] Jacques Derrida, Writing and Difference, 36. Derrida attempts to avoid the implications of this admission by saying we can "give in" to these laws in different ways. However, this does not solve the problem for Derrida. First, the statement appears vacuous, and thus is no answer or argument at all. It is not clear at all how one can give in to the laws of logic in more than one way (i.e., simply using them), and if Derrida has another way to "give in" to these laws of logic, it is not argued here. Secondly, even if he does go on and offer an argument as to how one can "give in" to the laws of logic in a way other than simply assuming them to be objective and true, to advance such an argument he is reinforcing the reality and universality of these laws of logic, for he is assuming they should be assumed so that his argument will be accepted. The fundamental point is that once one walks through the door of granting the laws of logic are true/real/objective/undeniable/unavoidable/etc. (and one does so when one has a thought, makes a statement, argues a case, etc.), then there is no turning back, and it is impossible to return to a view of logic as purely arbitrary and culturally conditioned.

inadequacy of linguistic reduction. This view appeals to "abstract particulars"[9] to make sense of the world. In addition to words and particular objects, moderate nominalists argue there are also abstract particulars—particulars abstracted by the mind as individual properties. But they are not universals, for they are not immaterial, nor are they multiply exemplifiable. On this view, my wife's humanness is more than a word I use—it is a property of her—an "abstract particular." More specifically, it is a physical property of her that can be "abstracted" by the mind to be considered independently. This abstract particular makes her human. But, again, being physical, it is not multiply exemplifiable. The humanness Lori has is not the same humanness I have. We each have our own abstract particular "humanness" making each of us human (these abstract particulars are known as "tropes[10]," so often this is called "trope nominalism"). On this view, what makes Lori human is "humanness^{1}" and what makes me human is "humanness^{2}". It is these abstract particulars that exist and are "exactly similar" to one another. Therefore they are what allow us to objectively classify all humans as such. The moderate nominalist argues that this avoids the problems of reducing everything to language without having to posit universals.

Many responses have been offered to moderate nominalism.[11] Most telling, it

[9] For this view, see Keith Campbell, Abstract Particulars (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1990) and Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra, Resemblance Nominalism (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002).

[10] The word comes from the Greek, τροπος,, meaning "a turn or a way." In this case a word used in a figurative way.

[11] Most helpful is Craig and Moreland, Philosophical Foundations, 205-14. For a more substantial treatment see Moreland, Universals. Also see Moreland, "Resemblance Extreme Nominalism and Infinite Regress Arguments," The Modern Schoolman 80 (2003): 85-98, and Universals, 34-40, as well as Michael

seems to me, is that the "exact similarity" is still identity in some respect. If two things share nothing at all in common, then the most that can be said of them is they are "very, very, very similar." Only if something is truly shared can there be "exact" similarity. "Exact similarity" seems to assume identity in some feature. In the case of my wife and I, we are very different in many ways. I am 6'5", she is 5'7". She has long, beautiful hair. Me, not so much. She is a woman, I am a man. And so on. But if we are "exactly similar" in some respect, this is just another way of saying we are identical in this way. And this, in turn, is another way of saying we share something in common—namely some universal (something that is multiply exemplified in us both). So changing the words to "exact similarity" doesn't seem to get rid of the universal.

Secondly, this view only pushes the problem back one step. Identity is what needs to be explained away. By positing distinct abstract particulars "humanness^{1}" and "humanness^{2}" we now must explain how these abstract particulars are both cases of human abstract particulars without sharing anything in common (without being identical in any way). To do so the moderate nominalist must say each abstract particular has its own abstract particular— humanness$^{1}{}_{1}$ and humanness$^{2}{}_{2}$. Yet of course this raises the same question again, and a vicious infinite regress begins.

Lastly, the "exact similarity" relation itself must be explained. This cannot be the same relation that is had by other abstract particulars, for again this would be to posit a universal (the same relation "had by" multiple abstract particulars). Therefore she must

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Loux, Substance and Attribute, 54-90 and Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction, 46-83.

say these "exact similarity" relations are actually different abstract particulars ("exact similarity[1]" and "exact similarity[2]"). However, this generates a similar vicious regress. This line of defense does not seem promising.

In addition, positing abstract particulars still faces the problem that the very words and sentences used to make the case for abstract particulars are assumed to be abstract objects which are multiply exemplifiable (universals). Again, the very same word or sentence can be "in" the many copies of the book the author wrote to argue for moderate nominalism, and can be "in" many minds as the philosopher is arguing for moderate nominalism in a lecture to an audience or in a book read by others. Thus again the view seems to be self-defeating the moment the moderate nominalist seeks to communicate to others her arguments.

In sum, it appears these attempts to explain the data of universals fails. Linguistic reduction (austere nominalism) and abstract particulars (moderate nominalism) simply are not "up to the task" of making sense of the data. Realism continues to provide the best explanation of the data.

Argument Three via Ockham's Razor: Failure of Realism

A third strategy to defend nominalism is to argue against realism. If the arguments for realism can be shown to not work, then, given Ockham's Razor, one should embrace nominalism, or so the argument goes. I disagree, given what I've already said. Yet it will still be profitable to consider the nominalist's arguments against realism.

You will recall the first argument for realism I gave was the argument from predication. We often say things like "Lori is kind," "My shirt is orange" and "Ryan is a human being." Saying things like this are claims that "a is F." Yet we have to stop and ask how is it that "a" is truly "F"? What are we really saying when we say "a" is "F"? It appears the best explanation is that "a" really is "F"—that "a" does, in fact, actually posses "F" and therefore we can truly say "a is F." In other words, it seems the best explanation is that "a"—the particular thing, be it Lori, my shirt, or Ryan—truly has (possesses, instantiates, exemplifies) a universal—kindness, orange, humanness. Hence realism makes sense of our common-sense ideas of, and language of, predication.

The nominalist may object via the "Indispensability Argument", suggesting all the "heavy lifting" of "a is F" can be done without appeal to universals. For instance, this can be done by embracing "fictionalism"—the view that universals do not exist, but are merely "useful fictions" that help us in our communication.[12] It is useful to talk as if universals exist, even though they do not. A philosopher writing much recently to defend moderate nominalism is William Lane Craig[13]. He contends that

> …statements putatively involving either quantification over abstract objects or singular terms referring to such objects are false, or at least untrue. Abstract objects are merely useful fictions; that is to say, even though no such objects exist, it is useful

[12] See Bob Hale and Crispin Wright, "The Metaontology of Abstraction," in David Chalmers et al., eds., Metametaphysics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 178-212, Bob Hale, Abstract Objects (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), , Michael Dummett, Frege: Philosophy of Mathematics (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), chap. 10, Gideon Rosen and John P. Burgess, "Nominalism Reconsidered" in Stewart Shapiro, ed. The Oxford Handbook of Mathematics and Logic, Oxford Handbooks in Philosophy Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) and John P. Burgess, "Mathematics and *Bleak House*," Philosophia Mathematica 12 (2004): 30–1.

[13] Research Professor of Philosophy at Talbot School of Theology.

to talk as though they did.[14]

A number of responses may be offered. Perhaps most compelling is the argument that ultimately these are issues of metaphysics, and cannot be reduced to issues of philosophy of language. So ultimately this objection rests on a flawed methodology—seeking to answer a question of what is real by means of a discussion of how words are used.[15]

Other nominalists attempt to respond by defining the difficulty as a mere "pseudo problem." They argue that while there are no universals, there is also no need to attempt to re-define the relationship in linguistic terms. Simply put, "a" just is "F"—end of discussion.[16] However, this simply avoids the issue, rather than responding to the issue. The fact is that "a *is* F" and some explanation is required. Saying it is not really a problem is simply not a solution, for it *is* a problem if there are no universals! In Armstrong's words, the nominalist "…simply must offer a logical analysis, a reductive analysis."[17]

Therefore, in summary, while Ockham's Razor is apparently a good *prime facie*

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[14] Craig, in Gould, Beyond The Control of God?, 181.

[15] For additional arguments against this move see Moreland, Universals, Qualities, and Quality Instances and Universals, Michael Loux, Substance and Attribute, 13-43 and Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction, 21-26, Nicholas Wolterstorff, On Universals and Peter van Inwagen "A Theory of Properties," 107-138.

[16] Described as "Ostrich Nominalism" by D. M. Armstrong in Nominalism and Realism: Universals and Scientific Realism, 16, and "Against 'Ostrich Nominalism': A reply to Michael Devitt," Pacific Philosophical Quarterly 61 (1980): 440-449.

[17] D. M. Armstrong, Nominalism and Realism: Universals and Scientific Realism , 13. See also Paul Gould, "The Problem of Universals, Realism and God" in Metaphysica, 13, 2012 (2): 183-194.

reason not to immediately embrace realism, upon closer evaluation universals are in fact necessary to make sense of a number of features of reality. Nominalistic reductions just won't do.

Argument Four for Nominalism: Biblical Objections

Naturalists who do not embrace Christian theism offer all of the objections above. The majority of theists, including Christian theists, have historically embraced realism. However, there has always been a minority of theists, including Christian theists, who embrace nominalism on biblical grounds. It is important to consider their objections at this point.

The most prominent and articulate Christian Theist arguing for nominalism on biblical grounds today is William Lane Craig. [18] I deeply respect Dr. Craig's work on a number of issues, and have used his works in many contexts. But in this case I believe he is mistaken. He suggests there are three main arguments against realism that Christians should take seriously, and therefore embrace moderate nominalism. I will outline each

[18] For instance, see William Lane Craig, "Nominalism and Divine Aseity" in Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion 4., ed. Jonathan L. Kvanvig (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 44-64, "A Nominalist Perspective on God and Abstract Objects" in Philosophia Christi 13.2 (January 2012): 305-318, "Why are (some) Platonists so Insouciant?" in Philosophy 86:2 (2011): 213-229, "Anti-Platonism" in Beyond The Control of God? Six Views on the Problem of God and Abstract Objects, ed. Paul Gould (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 113-126, "Propositional Truth—Who Needs It?," Philosophia Christi vol., 15, no. 2 (2014): 355-364, and William Lane and Paul Copan, Creation Out Of Nothing: A Biblical, Philosophical and Scientific Exploration (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 29-92. For similar arguments see Bergmann, Michael and Jeffrey Brower, "A Theistic Argument against Platonism (and in Support of Truthmakers and Divine Simplicity)" in Oxford Studies in Metaphysics, vol. 2, ed. Dean Zimmerman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 357-86.

and then offer a response.[19]

First Objection: The Ultimacy Problem

First is the Ultimacy Problem. In essence, if universals exist, God is not ultimate. I will quote Craig at some length to capture the nature of his objection:

> God is … the ground of being of everything else, as even so-called "necessary" beings are contingent upon God. A … significant metaphysical implication is that there are no eternal entities apart from God, eternal either in the sense of existing atemporally [that is, outside of time] or of existing sempiternally [that is, eternally] Rather everything that exists, with the exception of God Himself, is the product of temporal becoming . . .[20]
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> A theism according to which God is not the creator of all reality apart from Himself but is just one uncreated being amidst an incomprehensible multitude of uncreated, independently existing beings is both unbiblical and far too weak to be a plausible conception of maximal greatness. . . . . God becomes just one being among many, a literally infinitesimal part of reality, most of which exists entirely independent of Him. Such a God is not maximally great. . . . Worse, if [realism's assessment] of things implies that God exists because He exemplifies certain independently existing properties, then God does not exist *a se* [in and of himself]. A robust theism therefore rules out [realism].[21]

His argument is basically that if universals exist, they are independent of God, and so God is not the ultimate and only eternal and self-existent being in the universe. In fact, since God has properties, these seem to be even more basic than God, rather than God

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[19] Craig argues specifically against the existence of properties, one type of abstract object. Yet if properties are shown not to exist, similar arguments would apply, *mutatis mutandis*, against other types of abstract objects. If properties go, then realism goes, for realism is the belief in abstract objects, such as properties, which are, furthermore, multiply exemplifiable.

[20] Craig, "Anti-Platonism," in Beyond The Control of God?, 113.

[21] Craig, "Response to Scott A. Shalkowski" in Beyond The Control of God?, 161-2.

himself being most basic. As such, this seems to be an attack on the biblical doctrine of "divine aseity"—that God alone is eternal and self-existent—that he alone does not depend on anything distinct from himself for his existing, yet the existence of everything distinct from God depends on his creative activity. Craig argues that Scripture is clear about this. He cites John 1:3: "All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being." Therefore to posit universals threatens divine aseity, for there are now other independently existing, eternal, necessary realities in the universe besides God.

Response to the Ultimacy Problem

A number of things may be said in response.[22] First, one must agree that Scripture

[22] I am here offering in response a summary of a type of Theistic Activism, or view of how God creates universals. For more, see Gould, "Modified Theistic Activism" in Beyond the Control of God? Also included in Beyond The Control of God? are a number of other alternatives, debated by various contributors. Keith Yandell promotes "Platonic Theism"—the view that at lest some abstract objects exist entirely independently of God. Divine Conceptualism is argued for by Greg Welty, understanding abstract objects as the contents of God's mind and as such uncreated yet dependent on God for their existence. Welty also defends this in "Truth as Divine Ideas: A Theistic Theory of the Property 'Truth'" in Southwestern Journal of Theology 47 (2004): 57-70 and "Theistic Conceptual Realism: The Case for Interpreting Abstract Objects as Divine Ideas" (D.Phil. diss., University of Oxford, 2006). Also included is a contribution by William Lane Craig defending his nominalism. Several other variants of the views of Gould, Yandell, Welty and Craig are offered and discussed as well. All positions are well summarized on pages 13-31.

It should be noted that the Platonic Theism advocated for by Yandell is consistent with the view taken by Nicholas Wolterstorff in his argument that properties such as *being either true or false* must exist apart from God's creative activity. See Nicholas Wolterstorff, On Universals (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). Nor does Wolterstorff endorse the view that Scripture portends that God is the creator of everything distinct from himself (see his On Universals, 293). Peter Van Inwagen goes further to argue nothing can create abstract objects, including God himself, in his "God and Other Uncreated Things," in Metaphysics and God; Essays in Honor of Eleonore Stump, ed. Kevin Timpe (London: Routledge, 2009), 3-20. Absolute Creationism is further defended in Thomas Morris and Christopher Menzel, "Absolute Creation" in American Philosophical Quarterly 23 (1986): 352-362, reprinted in Anselmian Explorations: Essays in Philosophical Theology, by Thomas Morris (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987).

is clear that God is the cause of all things distinct from himself. Yet affirming God's causal activity concerning all things (what is necessary for the doctrine of divine aseity) does not entail all creation has temporal beginning, as Craig assumes. I and other Christian realists argue in response that God has eternally created universals. Thus they are eternal, yet they also are dependent on him (and hence divine aseity is maintained). I will offer a "thought experiment"[23] to show how it is logically possible for two things to exist for the same amount of time, yet one be "causally prior" to the other. God could at any moment create out of thin air a couch with a bowling ball resting on it. In this case there would come into being at that very moment a couch, a bowling ball, and a depression in the couch where the bowling ball is resting. Note all three have the exact same temporal duration. Yet also note that the bowling ball is the cause of the depression: it is "causally prior."[24] This illustrates it is possible for two things to exist for the same length of time, yet one to be causally dependent upon the other—for one thing to cause the other. In the same way God and universals can both exist eternally, but God can still be the cause of universals. Moreland summarizes "God is not temporally prior to the existence of such objects, but he is causally or explanatorily prior to their existence."[25] Therefore, God's ultimacy is not challenged by the existence of universals, which are still

[23] A thought experiment is a way to show something is logically possible, by giving an example of something that could, in fact happen (even if it never has or will in fact). Such experiments are helpful in response to assumptions or arguments of the form "It is logically impossible for X," such as Craig's assumption that "It is logically impossible for God and universals to both be eternal and universals to also depend on God for their existence."

[24] Gould touches on this type of example in "Defense of Platonic Theism," 122, citing a summary of the argument of some medieval philosophers along these lines in William Rowe, Can God Be Free? (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 152-3.

[25] Moreland and Craig, Philosophical Foundations, 504.

ontologically (causally) dependent on God, though also existing eternally.

Second Objection: The Dependency Problem

Craig also argues that if universals exist they exist necessarily (they could not have not existed), yet depend on God for their existence, this severely limits God's freedom, because he could not have chosen not to create universals or chosen to create them differently than they are. This is known as the "Dependency Problem." Here is the argument in Craig's own words:

> If . . . we expand the meaning of creation so as to make any dependent being the object of God's creation, then we have radically subverted God's freedom with respect to creating . . . His freedom is restricted to creation of the tiny realm of concrete objects alone. The vast majority of being flows from him with an inexorable necessity independent of God's will. [This is] incompatible with the doctrine of creatio *ex nihilo*, attenuating either God's freedom or the scope of creation.[26]

Response to the Dependency Problem

In response, it can be argued that God has many limitations due to his nature. For instance, due to his holiness he cannot sin. Due to his eternality he cannot cease to exist. There is no difference in the case of his nature being such that he eternally generates certain universals—due to his nature, he eternally generates these realities. In fact, it could be argued that Craig's own view of human freedom assumes God is limited in a

[26] Craig and Copan, Creation Out of Nothing, 176. For more, see Richard Brian Davis, The Metaphysics of Theism and Modality (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 1-6.

way much more radical than the existence of universals entails. Craig believes that due to God's nature as love, he created humans with true "libertarian" freedom, such that God cannot cause a person to make a choice "against their will." This, too, is a limitation of divine freedom. So if Craig grants this, I see no reason why the eternal generation of universals should be any more problematic.[27]

Third Objection: The Incoherence Problem

A final objection Craig offers is known as the "Incoherence Objection" or the "Bootstrapping Worry."[28] The argument runs something like this: If God created all things, and properties are things, then God created all properties. However, God has properties himself.[29] Therefore, if God created all properties, he created his own properties. Yet for God to create his own properties, he must already exist. So God must

[27] Scott Shalkowski makes this point in his "God With or Without Abstract Objects" in Beyond The Control of God?, 151. Gould concurs: "Craig assumes without argument that the traditional account of divine freedom to create extends to all existent entities other than God, not just contingent entities. But, as we have already noted, it does seem to be the case that divine freedom is interestingly different than human freedom, and perhaps one of these interesting differences is that God is not free with respect to one aspect of his creation, i.e., the separately existing abstract objects. God is not free with respect to the creation of separately existing abstract objects, but as creator, he is responsible for their existence." Gould, "Defense of Platonic Theism," 132.

[28] This objection can be found in Craig and Copan, Creation out of Nothing, 167-195, as well as in Matthew Davidson, "A Demonstration against Theistic Activism," in Religious Studies 35 (1999): 277–90, Scott Davison. "Could Abstract Objects Depend Upon God?" in Religious Studies 27 (1991): 485–97, Brian Leftow, "Is God an Abstract Object?" in Noûs 24 (1990): 581-598. Perhaps the most rigorous articulation of the article is in Michael Bergmann and Jeffrey Brower, "A Theistic Argument against Platonism (and in Support of Truthmakers and Divine Simplicity)," in Oxford Studies in Metaphysics, vol. 2, ed. Dean Zimmerman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 223-257.

[29] According to Plantinga, an entities' nature just is the conjunction of the entities essential properties. See Alvin Plantinga, The Nature of Necessity (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 70-77 and Does God Have A Nature? (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980), 7.

exist in order to create his properties necessary for Him to exist. So to posit properties exist one must posit God pulling himself into existence "by his own bootstraps." Therein lies the inconsistency.

Response to the Incoherence Problem

I believe this to be the most serious of Craig's objections against realism. However, it is not a fatal objection, in my view. The objection is only fatal if one embraces "Absolute Creationism" which maintains God creates all properties.[30] One can adopt a modified form of Creationism ("Modified Creationism") to avoid this objection. In this modified form, God only creates all properties distinct from himself. God's own properties exist *a se* (that is, uncaused). Thus the objection is nullified.

In support of this modification, consider the following. First, it is clearly reasonable to assume God's properties are not and cannot be created by himself. But it is also reasonable to postulate God creates all other properties, given the doctrine of creation—that all things distinct from God are created by and dependent on him. So there seems to be good reason to believe both that God does not create his own properties, but that he does create all properties outside himself. Hence we have a Modified Creationism that avoids Craig's objection.

[30] Be careful not to confuse Absolute Creationism with views concerning the origin of the universe or of life. The view in question here has to do with the creation of universals only. In this debate Absolute Creationism is the most popular version of Divine Activism. See Thomas Morris and Christopher Menzel. "Absolute Creation," in American Philosophical Quarterly 23 (1986): 352-362. Reprinted in Anselmian Explorations: Essays in Philosophical Theology, by Thomas Morris (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987). As I will argue, I believe this view has a fatal flaw, but the flaw can be corrected by an important nuance of the view.

Now one may raise the objection that this modification is *ad hoc*, that is, it was formulated only for the purpose of refuting this third objection to realism.[31] In response I argue that the modification seems to logically follow from the two truths identified above: God cannot create his own properties, but God creates everything distinct from himself. Thus the modification is not ad hoc, but the logical entailment of two other truths. However, even if the view were *ad hoc*, such a move would be justified if there are other independent reasons to embrace a view. Such is done regularly in the practice of science, as well as philosophy. Thus, given the many good reasons to embrace the existence of universals, and given the truths assumed in this modification, the modification is warranted.

Furthermore, the alternative appears to be more problematic than this *ad hoc* modification. If there are no abstract objects, much more must be jettisoned, with severe consequences. Gould argues one such result of rejecting abstract objects, propositions in particular, is that there is no longer a way to ground truth objectively. In fact, it appears that if there are no propositions, there can be no truth, as discussed earlier.

Objections to *Constituent* Realism

Having argued, I hope persuasively, that Christians should embrace realism. I also responded to nominalistic objections. All that remains is to discuss objections to constituent realism offered by relational realists. To this we now turn.

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[31] For instance, Craig and Copan, Creation out of Nothing, 176.

Objection One: Universals can not be in Particulars

One objection is that it is not possible for a universal to be in a particular at all. This view argues that universals exist as immaterial things "in themselves" and thus cannot be parts of concrete particulars. In essence, it argues constituent realism is based on a category fallacy.[32] Universals are abstract objects, and particulars are concrete objects. No concrete object can be made of abstract objects—the parts of a concrete object must themselves be concrete.

However, it does not follow from the fact that universals are immaterial entities that they cannot also enter the constitution of particulars. This objection seems to confuse two senses of the word "parts." Yes, "parts" can mean physical constituents. In this case, a category fallacy would be made. However, the constituent realist uses "parts" to refer to ontological constituents, not physical constituents. Universals are parts, but are not physical parts. Hence there is no category fallacy.

Furthermore, as discussed already, there are other examples of non-physical realities being "in" physical entities, such as God being "in" the world. So there is no reason to think other non-physical realities, such as universals, cannot be in physical objects. So this objection fails.

[32] A category fallacy is a fallacy of reason in which an object is assigned an attribute that it cannot possess, such as "how long is the smell of a rose?" Michael Loux takes this line in his, "Aristotle's Constituent Ontology," in Oxford Studies in Metaphysics, vol. 2, ed. Dean Zimmerman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 209-12

Objection Two: We can not understand how this can be

A second common objection is that it is hard to understand how universals can be in particulars, especially non-spatially. Therefore we should not embrace the view. [33]

Yet this objection seems to confuse knowing "that" something is the case and knowing "how" something is the case. Certainly one can know *that* something is the case without knowing *how* it is the case. For instance, as we came to understand we live in a heliocentric solar system, we were more and more convinced *that* the earth revolved around the sun, yet had very little understanding of *how* this was the case. (It can be added that, though our knowledge of this has certainly increased, we still don't understand all the "hows" involved.) Many contemporary examples may be given as well. For example, scientists have known for some time *that* a field exerts a pull on particles; yet they still do not fully understand *how* this occurs. And we know *that* certain phenomena occur at the quantum level, though little is know of *how* these phenomena occur. So not understanding *how* something is the case is not a strong argument that it is not the case. Concerning constituent realism, strong arguments can be given *that* this is the case. So the fact that one cannot understand the "hows" of this relationship is not an adequate objection.

Conclusion

To draw this section to a conclusion, I've tried to show how deep and pervasive

[33] For instance, as argued by Peter van Inwagen, "Relational vs. Constituent Ontologies" Philosophical Perspectives 25 (2011): 393-6.

nominalism is in naturalism and postmodernism. I have surveyed three arguments for nominalism and against realism offered by naturalists, and tried to show these arguments fail. I have also discussed three objections to realism offered by a Christian theist, and showed how I believe these objections fail as well. From this I submit that no objections to realism are adequate, and so one should embrace realism as the stronger position.

Finally, I have discussed the objections to a constituent view offered by relational realists, and argued that these objections fail. Therefore, for the reasons given in the first section in favor of constituent realism, I maintain that one should embrace this version of realism.

The Value of Constituent Realism for the Christian Scholar

It is this form of constituent realism—taking the universal to be non-spatially "in" the particulars as metaphysical constituents—which I believe best aids the Christian scholar in responding to naturalism, providing a powerful way to critique naturalism in various academic disciplines. Christian philosopher Keith Yandell puts it this way: "If there are [universals], materialism is false. A material item either is in space in the usual straightforward sense, or can compose something that is in space in that sense. [Universals] cannot play these roles."[34]

But given constituent realism, immaterial realities "show up" everywhere in your field of study. Universals are non-spatially "in" the particulars you study, making those

[34] Keith Yandell, "Response to Graham Oppy" in Beyond the Control of God?, 281.

particulars the types of things they are (and it can even be argued making the things exist in the first place). By understanding the existence of universals and causal relationships between these immaterial realities and the material world in more detail, you have a richer conceptual framework to understand the reality and causal efficacy of the immaterial world in the material realm.

In turn, the edifice of naturalism begins to crumble, as there are now good reasons to believe there are at least some other realities beyond the physical realm, opening ontological space for consideration of other immaterial realities such as souls and God. Said differently, this can provide a greater "plausibility structure" for the existence of other immaterial realities related to your field of study.

So, in summary, the Christian Scholar is well justified in embracing constituent realism, and in doing so drawing on the conceptual resources of this view in responding to naturalism. These points of application to various fields of study will be the focus of Sections Three and Four.

Section Three: Realism in the Humanities and Social Sciences

Introduction

In the first section I summarized constituent realism and reasons one should embrace this view, even and especially Christian scholars. In the second section I raised objections against constituent realism, including objections from a Christian theist, and offered responses. My conclusion is that we, as Christian scholars, should utilize the conceptual resources of constituent realism to respond to naturalism in our academic disciplines.

In this and the next sections I want to illustrate how this might be done in a variety of disciplines—the humanities and social science in this section, and the hard sciences and professions in the fourth section.

I must say at the outset that readers know far more about specific issues in their particular disciplines than I do. Therefore I humbly submit the ideas in this and the next section simply as "food for thought." From where I sit, knowing what I do of the resources offered by constituent realism, it seems to me these are some of the touch points with other disciplines. However, I am certain my understanding of points of application is superficial at best. And certainly there are more points of connection with each discipline than I am able to identify. So these sections are designed and intended merely to suggest some possible lines of thought and areas for further investigation.

With that said, I would like to suggest touch points in ten specific fields within the

humanities and social sciences. In each, I will raise a question in the field of study, and offer both the realist and nominalist response, and through this try to illustrate the superiority of the realist view.

One word of caution: higher education is so steeped in naturalism that some of this may seem implausible on first read. I submit this may be more a result of being taught to think in naturalistic terms than the implausibility of realism. Part of the discipleship of the mind is learning to think Christianly, which in large measure is learning to replace naturalistic assumptions with supernaturalistic assumptions.

I do grant that there may be issues in a given field in which it is justified to withhold a commitment to realism on that particular issue or issues. For instance, in a relatively new field of study it may not be clear where the universals "lie." Or for one new to the field this may still need to be determined. However, it does seem to me that on most issues within a discipline a realist ontology will be preferable. I will attempt to illustrate this supposition in what follows.

Logic

I will begin with Logic. An important question is "Are there laws of logic, or is logic simply cultural convention? Is logic objective or subjective?" The realist holds the laws of logic are universals (more specifically, a type of universal known as a "proposition": the state of affairs, expressed in a sentence or a thought and believed by a

person, which is either true or false). Thus, as universals, they truly are "laws"—they are objective, transcendent and multiply exemplifiable.

Take for example the Law of Non-Contradiction (X cannot be both a and not-a) and the Law of Excluded Middle (X is either a or not-a). If universals, these laws were true before anyone thought them, and in fact would be true even if no one ever existed to think them. In other words, they don't depend on us for their existence (they are not subjective, but rather objective).

Furthermore, because as universals these laws are also multiply exemplifiable. It is the same laws of logic in each of our minds, regardless of the amount of geographical distance or time between us. Take again the Laws of Non-Contradiction and Excluded Middle. These laws have been exemplified by all persons living in all cultures throughout all times of history. I can talk with others or read others, living or dead, and understand whether they are making a good case for what they are saying (if their reasoning is "sound" and "valid."). Cultural anthropologists can study cultures and learn of their belief systems, norms and customs, by deciphering the "true meaning" of their artifacts (writings, paintings, etc.) which they have produced in order to record something of their culture. Through these artifacts they are attempting to record and communicate one thing, and not the opposite. In fact, they succeed in communicating these things to us, evidenced by our increasing understanding of other cultures through study of these artifacts. Yet this is only possible because these Laws of logic are shared by all cultures and times throughout history. The same is true of all cultures today, no matter how

different each is. For example, a Maasai in Africa and a nomadic hunter in Mongolia both reason, "If the animal I hunt didn't go down this path, and there are only two paths, then it went down the other path." They are both using the Law of Excluded Middle. Again, these Laws of logic are multiply exemplified, and thus universals.

For the nominalist the Laws of logic are not objective, absolute or multiply exemplified. Rather, they are invented and subjective. They are only "true" because we name them as true. We could have chosen to name them as false, since they are ultimately not transcendent and objective in and of themselves. It rather quickly becomes apparent the world of trouble nominalism runs into here. Most importantly, it seems to be self-defeating to *argue*, in order to persuade others, that logic is not objective, by using the Laws of logic. Yet employing the Laws of logic is unavoidable. Any argument offered for any view assumes the Laws of logic are objective, and therefore both parties should and even must apply the same Laws of logic to come to the truth of the matter. The problem is actually even more severe for the nominalist. Not only do arguments assume the objectivity of the Laws of logic, sentences do as well. For instance, for the nominalist to make the statement that the Law of Non-contradiction is not objective and transcendent, he is assuming the Law of Non-contradiction: that his statement means what he intends it to mean and not the opposite, and those who hear this statement will understand this due to applying the same Law of logic. The fact is that anytime an idea is contemplated, a sentence uttered or an argument mounted, these Laws of logic are assumed to be true, and true for all. Otherwise I can simply respond to the statement or argument by saying "your argument that logic is not objective isn't a good one, because I

use different laws of logic." But the one arguing against the objectivity of the laws of logic won't be happy with this, for he wants me to follow the same rules of logic he is using, in order to "see" that his argument against the universality of logic is valid. Again, this view is self-defeating. This has been recognized for some time. It was Aristotle's "negative proof" of the objectivity of logic in his discussion with Protagoras:

> [Protagoras] was saying, in other words, that each individual's private impression is absolutely true. But if that position is adopted, then it follows that the same thing is and is not, that it is both good and bad, and similarly for other contradictions; because, after all, a given thing will seem beautiful to one group of people and ugly to another, and by the theory in question each of the conflicting appearances will be 'the measure.'[1]

Furthermore, note how in all this it is assumed by the nominalist that the Laws of logic can be multiply exemplified in various minds. The very fact that it can be debated and argued against is evidence that "it" (the very same thing) can be in multiple minds at the same time, so that two or more people discussing the issue can together consider whether it is objective or subjective. But this already assumes realism, for only universals can be multiply exemplified.

One final point is worth considering before moving on. It has been argued that in fact the truth and objectivity of the Laws of logic seem to presuppose, and thus be a proof of, God's existence. Alvin Plantinga use this as an argument for the existence of God.[2]

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[1] Aristotle, Metaphysics $1062^{b}13$. The entire works of Aristotle can be found in The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: The Princeton University Press, Bollingen Series LXXI – 2; 2 vols., 1984).

[2] Alvin Plantinga, "Two Dozen (or So) Theistic Arguments," Appendix in Dean-Peter Baker (ed.), Alvin Plantinga (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

He argues that propositions (such as the laws of logic or mathematical propositions such as 2 + 2 = 4) are true whether any finite mind has ever thought them or not (the laws of logic were true before we were around to identify or contemplate them, and there are mathematical propositions that have never been thought--large numbers added together for instance). But if propositions exist and they are in minds, but they do not depend upon finite minds for their existence, then there must be an infinite mind that sustains them in existence. Such an infinite mind can be none other than God himself.

Aesthetics

Secondly, let's consider Aesthetics, and all the disciplines this includes (fine arts, performing arts, architecture, etc.) In these fields it is important to ask "What is beauty? What makes something beautiful? Is beauty 'in the eye of the beholder'?"

For the realist beauty is a universal (actually, a cluster of universals, including a set of relations rightly ordered to one another). Therefore beauty is in the thing, not the person (not the 'beholder'). For example, music is beautiful if and only if the relations between notes are rightly ordered. It is such right ordering that produced harmony. Of course, people differ on what beauty is, more so than they differ on, for instance, what logic is. But that does not entail concluding that beauty doesn't exist. Two people may also differ on whether an apple is red. But one may be color-blind and thus not able to see clearly what is the case. The same, so argues the realist, can be true regarding beauty—beauty is objective, but some may be "beauty-blind" and are not able to see things as they

are. In fact, this has always been one of the assumptions underlying a liberal arts education—that people need training to develop their ability to rightly perceive what is good, true and beautiful. I recall one of the most popular classes at the liberal arts university I attended was "Music Appreciation." The great works of music (defined as those most "beautiful") such as Bach, Beethoven and Schumann, were listened to and analyzed in order to help students refine their ability to better perceive and understand beauty in music. The same can be said regarding classes on art appreciation, which study, for instance, the great works of Michelangelo or Rodin.

But for the nominalist beauty is not objective or transcendent in any way—it doesn't exist "out there" but only "in the eye of the beholder." In other words, the person determines what is beautiful, and this differs from one person to the next. Ultimately the result of seeing art in nominalistic terms, such that there is no objective beauty, has resulted in a number of new movements. In various ways this has led to movements that completely reject form and order and the embracing of chaos and irrationality. For instance, the performing arts this has led to the music of John Cage. The curtain opens, there are various instruments being played on stage, the "musicians" playing whatever notes they want to play, without any unison, harmony or cohesion, beginning and ending whenever they like and it is called a "musical performance." Interestingly, the "works" of Cage are not included in art appreciation courses. In the visual arts this has led to the movement known as "anti-art" or Dadaism. For instance, "The Fountain" is a "sculpture" of a urinal placed on a pedestal, and said to be equally as beautiful as any other work of sculpture. From this has flowed pop art and surrealism, carrying these themes on in the

works of such influential artists as Andy Warhol and Salvador Dali.

Another implication of this nominalist shift to define beauty, and thus art in merely subjective terms leads to art being re-defined as nothing more than self-expression. For instance, most graphically, perhaps, is how we came to say "art" incudes such things as "Piss Christ"—a crucifix in a glass of the artist Serrano's urine, self-expressing his distaste for the Christian faith. Again, I applaud these individuals for seeking to be consistent nominalists. However, as a realist I do not believe this is art, for it does not instantiate the universals of beauty.

Musicology (and the Performing Arts[3])

Closely related is the field of musicology. Can we know what the author of a work of music had in mind? Does this matter to how it is performed today? For the realist one can know what the author had in mind, and these very same notions can be in the mind of those reading the work and attempting to perform it again. There is in fact a "truth" to the matter—the author had something in mind regarding how the piece was to be performed. It is these same ideas that can also be in the minds of readers of the music. And it matters to "get this right" to in order to accurately reflect the authorial intent of the composer. Furthermore, one can critique an interpretation as better or worse, based on what can be determined of authorial intent and how closely the performance matches that intent. For the nominalist (at least the consistent nominalist) we cannot know what the

[3] What is said here of Musicology can be said for any other performing arts—theatre, ballet, etc.

author had in mind, and so that doesn't matter to how the composition is performed today. There is no authorial intent that can be "shared" or also "had by" us today, for to assume this is to assume such multiply exemplifiable realities exist. Thus for the nominalist all interpretations and performances are equally valid. Those of us who love the works of Bach, for instance, will find this a hard pill to swallow.

Literature (including Biblical Studies)

When we speak of "authorial intent" we also move into the field of literature (including closely-related issues in biblical studies). For instance, the question is asked, "Is truth in a text, or in the reader?"

For the realist, truth is in the text, as propositions. I would like to offer a note of clarification here. The word "proposition" has come to mean many different things these days. I am using the term in the narrow, technical sense: the contents expressed in declarative sentences and contained in people's minds when they are thinking. Thus propositions are contained in all literary forms: idiom, metaphor, analogy, narrative or statement. Propositions are simply is the state of affairs referred to in what is being communicated via that literary form. For the realist propositions exist, and are "in" the particulars (the author's mind, the sentences in the book he or she wrote, the copies of the book, and the various translations). Therefore, there are better or worse interpretations, based on how closely we come to share the same propositions the author had in mind when writing the text, independent on what the reader thinks or wants it to mean. And the

means to discover the propositions in the mind of the original author (be it another human author in works of literature or God concerning the Bible) is to study the words, contexts, genres, and all other clues that help us decipher what the authorial intent truly was. (Refer back to Section One for more detail concerning how this relates to Biblical Studies).

But for the nominalist this can't be the case, for there are no propositions, a type of universal, multiply exemplifiable in various texts and minds, and therefore no truth can be in a text. It follows that a text means only whatever it means to me. Meaning and truth are only in the reader, not in the text. Again, in the words of postmodern thinker Jacques Derrida, "The absence of a transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of significations infinitely."[4] He is saying there is nothing transcendent that is signified by words—no universals (propositions). As a result, there is an infinite variety of things a word can mean. Richard Rorty, the well-know postmodern philosopher, puts it this way concerning truth: "Truth cannot be out there—cannot exist independently of the human mind, because sentences cannot exist, or be out there."[5]

Of course, this nominalistic metaphysic leads to Reader-Response Theory and all forms of Deconstructionism: there is no one superior, true, right or preferred interpretation of a text, so the reader is not to search for this, but rather must deconstruct the text based on the needs and projects of the reader or reader's community.

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[4] Derrida, Writing and Difference, 280.

[5] Richard Rorty, Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 5.

Closely related is the "hermeneutic of suspicion" advanced by Nietzsche, Leotard and Foucault, among others. Since we know there is no truth in a text, they say any such claim that there is can only be a masked attempt to impose the author's or reader's will on others. All such claims are ultimately politically or socially motivated to have power over the other. In the words of Lyotard: "Knowledge has no final legitimacy outside of serving the goals envisioned by the practical subject . . ."[6] Foucault agrees to the relativity of truth:

> Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true . . .[7]

This division leads to many of the battles going on currently in higher education. The nominalists argue that realists, who think truth is objective and transcendent and can be in texts, are asserting meta-narratives (truths true for all), which is ultimately cultural tyranny! They argue anyone making such assertions should be banished from academic discourse (or at least marginalized, for instance by withhold appointments or promotions, publishing negative reviews of their work, decreased their funding, etc.). Conversely, nominalistic scholarship is highly valued these days in the academy, because it is committed to not declaring truth, but the affirmation of all views as equally "valid" and "true." If one embrace nominalism, this follows logically and inescapably. If one rejects nominalism, these implications make little sense.

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[6] Jean-Francois Lyotard, "The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge" in From Modernity to Postmodernity, 488.

[7] Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power" in From Modernity to Postmodernity, 379.

Yet of the nominalist I believe we must ask the obvious question: If nominalism is true, why study texts at all? For the nominalist texts cannot contain (objectively) true propositions. Thus why should we spend time studying any texts in order to learn anything? Furthermore, nominalists themselves write many, many texts (for instance, the tomes that have been written to explicate, defend and apply postmodernism). These texts are written by nominalistic authors to take certain ideas (propositions) in their minds, and record these (exact) ideas into text, so that readers can understand these (exact) ideas and thereby be convinced of the truth of their thought—in this case that there are no objective truths, because there are no propositions that can be multiply exemplified in the author's mind, the text, and the minds of the readers. From this it should be clear this view is self-defeating, for on the nominalist view it is impossible for their intent as authors to be communicated through texts to readers. There is no meaning in the text, for there are no propositions multiply exemplified in the mind of the author, in the text, and in the mind of the reader. The only meaning is what the reader brings to the text. (And again, the reader can not be convinced of anything as she reads the text, for that would supposed objective laws of logic that could lead her to change her mind.) So the nominalist is hard-pressed to give a coherent reason to justify the writing and study of texts. The realist, on the other hand, has a clear and compelling reason to write and study texts: to come to know what the author had in mind (the multiply exemplifiable proposition), consider whether her arguments for the truth of the propositions are sound and valid, and if so, be convinced and thus adopt the author's view expressed in the text.

History

Similar issues arise in the study of history. Is there historical truth? If so, can we access it? Again, the realist answers with a resounding "Yes," because there are propositions that are recorded in the sentences of historical texts (true state of affairs recorded in these historical texts). Because these propositions are in these texts, we can come to understand what they are, and thus know the truth concerning historical events.

Again, for the nominalist the answer is a resounding "No," because there are no propositions concerning the past that are true, and thus no historical texts that are accurate in an objective sense. Therefore it follows, for the consistent nominalist, that every interpretation of the past is as valid as the next. This leads to "Revisionist History." Since there is no such thing as an objective historical text, history can be re-written any way one desires, in order to obtain one's goals in writing the history.

As a realist I reject this, given I believe there is good reason to believe historical truth exists and can be known via study (of original textual sources, historical artifacts, etc.). Practically speaking, only by such "facts" existing can we truly learn from the past and not repeat its errors!

A tenth field in the humanities where there are many implications is the field of theology. However, much was said of these implications in the earlier section dealing with the biblical justification to embrace realism. So I will simply point back to that section in this context.

Psychology

Turning to the social sciences, an important question in Psychology is whether the "self" really exists, or whether "it" is merely a construction of language.

For the realist the self is not arbitrary or subjective, but rather is objective, because each self is a specific exemplification of humanness, a type of universal (specifically, a nature). It is this nature that is multiply instantiated in each individual human, making each truly, fully and objectively "human."

As such, there are objective notions of well-being, grounded in this nature. By definition a nature includes a range of capacities in various areas which make a thing what it is and lead to living well. Human nature includes having certain emotional capacities, mental capacities, physical capacities, relational capacities, and in my view spiritual capacities. However, though all humans have these capacities, one is not born with them fully functioning or fully expressed (or to use the more technical terms, not fully "realized" or "actualized"). There is a natural developmental pathway to the full functioning/expression (or "realization" or "actualization") of these capacities. To be a mature human person, then, is to fully exemplify or express these capacities. Related to psychology, to be psychologically healthy is to have and express psychological states (for instance, emotions) in an age-appropriate way (in the way natural for one at that stage of development or "actualization" of those capacities), leading eventually to full psychological maturity (fully expressing these psychological capacities). It is for this reason, when someone has not developed to an age-appropriate stage of psychological

maturity, professionals are able to "diagnose" that person as being "deficient" in the expression of this capacity, and therefore needs some type of intervention. The field of psychology has developed in part in order to better define what psychological maturity is and develop means of addressing deficiencies. Yet notice this all assumes an objectivity—a way things ought to be, in order to talk of "diagnosing" a "deficiency" and "intervening" to "correct" this deficiency.

However, for the nominalist there is no such thing as a human nature, and so there is no objective notion of what an individual human person, or "self" is. Therefore the "self" can be nothing more than an individual or social construction. As a result, there can not be an objective definition of psychological well-being or maturity. Psychological health and illness can only be defined based on statistical averages. Plotting a person's psychological states on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders V (or DSM V), and comparing that with what is "average" (where most of the population scores) defines for the nominalist whether someone is "within the range" of being psychologically stable or unstable. Yet this causes concerns, as the population itself shifts over time, and so what is "healthy" seems to be a bit of a moving target. Furthermore, it is appropriate for the person with a DSM V-defined psychological condition to simply ask "Why want to be 'normal'? If it is just a statistical average, why should I want to fit into that? And why should psychologists or psychiatrists want to make me fit into their arbitrarily-defined standard of 'health'?" These seem to be legitimate questions that are hard to answer on a nominalist view. Yet on a realist view they can be answered, for mental health is objective, and obtaining it leads to and enhances human flourishing, for

in this case we are most fully "human" in the sense that we are most fully living in a way consistent with our deepest being (our humanness), which means living an authentic life. This brings satisfaction and flourishing.

Another implication of nominalism regarding the self is the extreme emphasis we now have on self-discovery and self-expression. Because there are no external and objective standards to define what a "self" is, we are free (and, in fact obligated) to define this for ourselves by our self-discovery and self-expression. However, the realist argues that this will not end well, if in fact there is an objective self and if human flourishing comes from most fully living within the boundaries of that objective reality (living "authentically"). To define reality other than it is, and then to try to live in that alternative reality, ends in an inauthentic existence with leads to frustration and stifles human flourishing.

Sociology and Political Science

Broadening from the individual to the group we encounter issues in sociology and political science. For instance, is there a proper ordering to social society? The realist responds by saying yes, there is. For instance, to take a hot-button topic today, there is an essence to marriage, the realist says. Thus individual choice, consensus or judicial decrees do not define what marriage is. For the nominalist the answer is the opposite. No, there is no such thing as a "proper" ordering to society. Therefore, on the example above, it is entirely proper, and even required that individuals, consensus or judicial decree

define such things as what a marriage is.

Related to this are questions of how social identity is to be defined. For the realist, there is a shared human nature, as just discussed. It is this human nature that is the ultimate ground of our unity. It is what grounds "human rights." These are the same rights for all humans, in virtue of their humanness (in virtue of each person instantiating this universal, regardless of any other difference). As a result, in virtue of what we all share in our humanness we have equality. This leads the society to seek and protect the "common good"—that which leads to human flourishing for all humans in the society. Conversely, other groupings that are not based on our universally-shared human nature does not entail special rights in a civil society, for to do so would privilege one group over the other and therefore not promote the "common good." For instance, for those of European descent to claim special rights based on their specific ethnic background is wrong, on the realist view, for ethnicity is not a universal grounded in our nature. Therefore claiming special rights for this group, based on a non-universal characteristic, leads to societal divisions and oppression of others, the exact opposite of promoting the common good in society. Of course, the same can be said of any other sub-groupings in a society, be it ethnic, religious, gender, sexual orientation, and so on. The only way a society can promote the common good is to ground rights (and obligations) in shared humanness, the universal we all instantiate, rather than other identities not shared by all. Only in this way can all in a society can come together and have civic, and civil, discourse, which result in just laws for all and a society that ultimately leads to human flourishing.

Yet for the nominalist there is nothing at all shared by all in a social order, for there is no objective human nature (no universal "humanness") that grounds everyone as ultimately, fully and equally human. Therefore, it follows that social identity must be based on the identity of one's chosen sub-group, be that ethnicity, religious identity, gender, sexual orientation, etc. As a result, there is no longer common ground between those of different social groups, and so it becomes increasingly difficult if not impossible for there to be civic discourse and agreement on issues, including what it even means to speak of the "common good." Rather, discourse devolves into the equivalent of name-calling and shouting matches. The political implication is that change is brought about by political force alone—one group having enough of a majority or influence to impose its will on the other. Foucault notes well this outworking of a nominalistic metaphysic:

> Rules are empty in themselves, violent and unfinalized; they are impersonal and can be bent to any purpose. The successes of history belonging to those who are capable of seizing these rules, to replace those who had used them, to disguise themselves so as to pervert them, invent their meaning, and redirect them against those who had initially imposed them; controlling this complex mechanism, they will make it function so as to overcome the rulers through their own rules.[8]

Related to this, as well as to the earlier conversation concerning the objectivity of texts, is how historical political documents are to be interpreted. In our American context, this translates into debates concerning how to interpret the Constitution of the United States. The realist maintains there are certain values (propositions) which were in the minds of the original framers (such as the right to life and liberty), are contained in the

[8] Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" in From Modernity to Postmodernity, 368.

Constitution, and these same propositions can be know by us as readers as well. So as long as we, as a society, collectively agree to continue "the American Experiment," our responsibility is to determine what values are contained in the Constitution and continue applying them in our present context. Of course, the realist agrees we could decide to reject these values, abandon the "Experiment" and institute another form of governance, containing different values. This is always the right of a society. Yet as long as we are committed to this "Experiment," and the foundational values underlying it as outlined in the Constitution, it is our responsibility to understand what these are and seek to consistently apply them today. (Of course, one must always remember that one's interpretation or means of application might be wrong, and thus not claim one's interpretation or application on a given issue is necessarily correct without good grounds for claiming so.)

However, for the nominalist there simply is no such thing, even in theory, as a "right" interpretation of the Constitution, for there are no universal values embodied in this particular document. As a result, the meaning is in the reader, not in the text. In political discourse this is what is meant by the Constitution being a "living document" which can and should be interpreted differently in light of the changing realities of our social order. Based on this fundamental difference between realists and nominalists are many of the most pressing political issues and debates of our day. And it seems that without a set of unifying values, outlined in a document such as the Constitution, it becomes harder and harder to maintain society order, equality or human flourishing. Again, it seems realism provides a firmer foundation for social order than nominalism.

Conclusion

Much more could be said of these and other issues. Yet I hope these few examples are helpful to illustrate how constituent realism might be helpful to those in the humanities and social sciences to respond to nominalism, and thus naturalism in these disciplines. The fourth and final section will do the same concerning issues in the hard sciences and professions.

Section Four: Realism in the Hard Sciences and Professions

Introduction

In this fourth and final section I will attempt to illustrate ways I believe constituent realism might provide helpful conceptual resources to those working in the sciences and professions, as you attempt to respond to naturalism in your disciplines. Of course, all of the nuances and caveats discussed in the introduction to Section Three apply here as well.

Specifically, I would like to suggest touch points in another ten specific fields within the hard sciences and professions. Again, I will raise a question in the field of study, and offer both the realist and nominalist response, and through this try to illustrate the superiority of the realist view.

Math (and thus all Sciences)

A foundational issue in all the hard sciences concerns mathematics. It may well be asked "What are numbers and what are their relations to one another and the world. Furthermore, as scientific theories utilize mathematics, what are scientific theories and how are they accurate?" In other words, are numbers real? Are mathematical truths discovered or invented? What do mathematicians study? How does this influence scientific theory formation and testing?

For the realist, numbers are real things. They are universals that exist objectively, transcendently, and are multiply exemplified in numerals (the specific markings on the page or board). Thus mathematicians study real things that exist and are discovered. Furthermore, since numbers are real, they can stand in specific, objective and eternal relations to one another. These relations are the mathematical facts that mathematicians discover and study. For instance, the Pythagorean Theorem was discovered. It existed before it was discovered, would still exist if it hadn't been discovered yet, and would still exist even if every writing of it were destroyed. Furthermore, since numbers are real, and the physical world is real, the two can stand in specific relations to one another. Therefore scientists can discover truths about the world that can be expressed mathematically, and scientific theories can be said to be objectively true.

However, the nominalist cannot affirm any of this, for on this view numbers don't exit, but rather only numerals (the specific markings on the page). It follows that numbers don't stand in an objective, eternal relations to one another. Thus there is nothing for the mathematician to discover. Mathematical theories are therefore not discovered, but are invented. Furthermore, since numbers are not real, they cannot stand in any specific, objective relations to the world they "describe." Therefore, scientific theories are not objectively true, but are "useful fictions"—helpful to predict phenomena and develop technology, but not actually describing the way the world is, at least in terms of mathematical formula.

To unpack this a bit, I will again cite William Lane Craig: "Abstract objects are

merely useful fictions; that is to say, even though no such objects exist, it is useful to talk as though they did."[1] He argues that some just take mathematical formulas to be obviously true, such as "2+2=4." But he contends we have just learned, from childhood, to think that this means something exists "out there" to which these terms refer. Yet he concludes when we think about it we realize how radical it is to assert there really is anything "out there" (any universals) to which these words refer. So it is no longer obviously true at all. He concludes that if we can get past this, we can realize these are just useful fictions we have devised for practical reasons. We should take, in Craig's words, a "make believe" approach to mathematics.[2] He cites fictionalist Kendall Walton who says, "…[M]athematicians are at liberty to craft and explore different axiomatic systems without worrying that they are misrepresenting reality in doing so."[3]

This view is very unsatisfying to the mathematician or scientist who is convinced he or she is discovering truths about reality, rather than developing "useful fictions." I once had a conversation with someone studying mathematics who assured me that God and souls can't exist, because everything that exists must be material. So I asked him what he studied. After thinking about this for some time, he said he studied mathematical objects and their relations. I asked him where the objects of mathematics and their relations were—where can I literally "get my hands on one of these things." He paused a

[1] Craig, Beyond The Control of God?, 181.

[2] Ibid., 181.

[3] Ibid., 182.

long time. He truly believed that he studied something real, but didn't want to grant that they were immaterial. Yet in the end he had no choice without being a nominalist and saying numbers really don't exist (which he didn't want to do.) So he granted I could never "get my hands on them" because they are not physical, though very real. This opened "space" in his plausibility structure for him to begin considering the real possibility of souls and God existing as well.

Beyond the nominalist response being less than attractive to most mathematicians (and scientists who believe mathematical formulas stand in real relations to the actual world), one must ask why mathematics are useful if not true? The nominalist grants they are *useful* fictions. But it is worth asking, "If they are untrue—mere fictions—why think they would be useful?" Believing what is true, not fictional, is usually what is useful in life. For instance, it is not a "useful fiction" to believe I can cross the road without looking both ways for cars, simply because it would be useful to make my appointment on time by being able to cross the street whenever and wherever I like. In fact, it will soon become evident how un-useful it is to not have a theory of road-crossing that maps to what actually is. "Useful fictions" in this case lead to death. The same can be said to be true of research. If a view seems to be "useful" (to have some explanatory power), it seems most reasonable to believe that is useful precisely because it in some way accurately "maps" to reality. Thus, using the term "useful fiction" by the nominalist related to mathematics and science seems to be an oxymoron. Perhaps it is not, but the burden of proof is on the nominalist to show it is not. I do not believe this burden of proof has yet been met.

Furthermore, it seems to be "dirty pool" for the nominalist to use all the conceptual resources and explanatory power of realism concerning numbers, yet to also say numbers are not real. It is a classic case of having one's cake and eating it to. I want the nominalist not to borrow from my realist ontology to "posit" numbers as useful, while denying their actual existence. I want him to attempt to live with the implications of his own view. By doing so I believe it will become quickly apparent that the view is unlivable *per se*, and can only be livable by borrowing conceptual resources from realism to which he has no right. This inability to "live out" this view consistently without borrowing numbers as "useful fictions" seems to me to be a glaring weakness of the nominalist view.

Therefore, in conclusion, to make sense of our intuitions that the sciences and mathematics studies and describes reality, and the efficacy of these disciplines, it is most reasonable to posit realism to ground these intuitions.

Chemistry

Moving on to specific fields within the hard sciences, I will begin with Chemistry. An important question is "Is the periodic table objective and discovered, or subjective and invented?"

The realist again answers that it is objective, and thus has been discovered. There are natures to atoms, which are fixed. In fact, some who eschew other forms of realism

are willing to grant there are natures that ground the objectivity of chemistry. For instance, Elliott Sober, the leading nominalist concerning biological species, grants as much. Using the word "kind" for "nature" and "essentialist" for "realist" he writes "Chemistry is *prima facie* a clear case in which essentialist [realist] thinking has been vindicated. The periodic table of elements is a taxonomy of chemical kinds [natures] . . . "[4] On a realist view of chemistry, the chemist is able to truly understand the nature of the physical universe, for she is discovering the objective nature of chemical elements and their relations.

For the nominalist, this understanding does not follow. Since there are no universals, it follows there can be no natures to ground chemical elements. Thus each atom is an individual thing with no nature shared with other atoms. (By the way, the same is also true of each part of the atom, all the way down.) The periodic table is thus, by definition, a "useful fiction"—a chart developed to be helpful in predicting phenomenon and developing technology, but in no way reflecting the essence of the elements portrayed.

Again, it seems realism again better grounds the intuitions chemists bring to their discipline and offers important conceptual resources for the Christian chemist.

[4] Elliott Sober, "Evolution, Population Thinking, and Essentialism" in Elliott Sober, ed., Conceptual Issues in Evolutionary Biology, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1995), 165.

Physics

In the field of physics, realism offers a range of conceptual resources beyond what has already been discussed. It can be asked, "What is an adequate scientific explanation of a physical object?" From the time of Aristotle until 1620, a scientific explanation of something was understood to be a complete description if and only if it included all four "causes": material, efficient, formal and final causes. For instance, if asked, "What is the cause of a house?" there are four answers, each correct, and only by providing all four does one fully answer the question. First, one can rightly answer the cause of the house is wood and brick (the "material cause"). Second, one can rightly answer the cause of the house is the workers who showed up and put the energy into building it (the "efficient cause"). But this is not a full description. It leaves out two causes which are equally real, yet are not material. Third, it is equally accurate to say the design in the mind of the architect, and reflected on blueprints, was the cause of the house. This is known as the "formal" cause. And fourth, an equally important cause is that someone wanted a home. This is "the reason for which" the house came to be, and is known as the "final cause". For Aristotle and the history of science until 1620, all four causes were deemed necessary if someone was to give a full and complete scientific answer to what a thing is and what caused it. However, in 1620 Francis Bacon published his New Organon in which he rejected formal and final causes, arguing these are not necessary aspects of a scientific description. He believed the material and efficient causes were enough to provide an adequate scientific definition of a thing. Others followed him in this in the Enlightenment period, and this resulted in a shift in thinking in the hard sciences from realism to

nominalism, as this view rejects the universals and their causal role, and only affirms the particulars of matter and energy as causally relevant. Again, given the fact that nominalism became all the rage in the Enlightenment, and we are truly intellectual "children of the Enlightenment," it is now assumed in current scientific practice that all which exist are material and efficient causes, or at least all one can appeal to in a scientific definition are material and efficient causes. But we can rightly ask, "Was this the right shift to make?" If natures exist and ultimately make a thing what it is (realism), then this approach truncated science severely, since it no longer is describing all, and arguably even the most important aspects of what a thing is. As an alternative, the realist can offer all four causal explanations, providing a much more robust answer to scientific questions and thereby eschewing the naturalism that has had a stranglehold on scientific disciplines since the Enlightenment.

The nominalist must continue limiting her explanation of physical reality to material and efficient causes. Unless it can be shown realism is false, or should not apply in such cases, it is hard to see why this is preferable over the much richer scientific explanation offered by realism.

Biology

Closely related to this are important issues in biology.[5] Specifically, we can ask

[5] More has been written on this implication of constituent realism in this field than in others. Specifically, see Etienne Gilson, From Aristotle to Darwin and Back Again: A Journey in Final Causality, Species, and Evolution, original English edition (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984),

"Is there an objective biological taxonomy? Were species, genus, family, order, class, and so on, invented or discovered?" The realist answers the biological taxonomy is objective, grounded in the natures of biological organisms. There is, for instance, such a thing as human nature, which is the essential defining characteristic of humans and allows us to "pick out" humans and thus objectively and accurately classify them as such. The same is true for other species as well. From this arises the biological taxonomy the reflects the true nature of each species. This also explains such phenomena as breeding limits between species, for instance.

However, for the nominalist there can be no such objective biological taxonomy grounded in objective and transcendent natures. Each individual organism is an individual thing with no nature shared with other similar things. Hence the biological taxonomy must be based on something else. From this has arisen many debates as to what the correct criteria are in order to define a species. The favored candidates are phenotypic properties (observable characteristics and traits) or genotypic properties. (genetic characteristics). I have argued in an article elsewhere[6] that all attempts to deny natures and instead ground the biological taxonomy in these other ways fail.

Thus, again realism offers a much richer conceptual framework to ground and

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Richard J. Connell, Substance and Modern Science (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988) and Stan W. Wallace, "In Defense of Biological Essentialism: A Reply to Sober et al.," Philosophia Christi 4:1 (2002): 29-43.

[6] Stan W. Wallace, "In Defense of Biological Essentialism: A Reply to Sober et al.": 29-43.

advance work in biology. By the way, St. Anselm was a realist concerning properties, including natures, and used this type of argument to explain the Trinity in what I think is the best analogy available to us. He said we can understand how God can be one nature and three persons by thinking about humans. Take any three persons (me and my two sons, for instance). We are each distinct persons—defined as distinct centers of consciousness (each having our own intellect, emotions and will). But all of us are human—we all share an identical nature, namely humanness. So here we have a clear case of three persons and one nature: Ryan, Luke and I all distinct persons sharing humanness. Anselm argued the same is true of the triune God: there co-exists three distinct Persons (three distinct centers of consciousness--intellect, emotion and will), but only one nature—the Divine Nature, which is truly "in" each, making each God.[7]

Counseling

Moving now to the professions, closely related to discussions of human persons that arose in psychology and biology are issues in counseling. One such question is "Is there such a thing as 'mental health' and if so, what is it and who defines it?"

At the sake of being redundant, I will again touch on the realist and nominalist responses, related to counseling per se. The realist answers, "Yes, there is truly a human

[7] Of course this, like all analogies to the Trinity, are just that—analogies. At some point all analogies break down. But in as far as analogies go, this seems to avoid the problem of other analogies (such as the heresy of Modalism implied in many analogies such as God being like water, ice and steam, which don't co-exist at one time as God does). The analogy of humanness seems to maintain two central aspects of the Triune nature an adequate analogy must capture: three distinct Persons co-existing, yet one Divine nature.

nature—the property 'humanness' which we all possess." Therefore mental health is living authentically in light of this—being fully "human" in how we live our lives (technically, how fully we actualize or mental, emotional and relational capacities). Again, for the realist the term mental "health" is a normative notion, which assumes a standard against which one can be measured. For the realist this standard exists, and is ground in human nature. For the Christian realist, Jesus stands as the perfect exemplar of human nature fully mature, and thus a fully mature example of mental health.

The nominalist, if consistent, must answer, "No, there is no objective definition of mental health," for there is no objective human nature which grounds such a notion. Therefore mental health is again defined statistically and descriptively, in virtue of the middle-range on a bell-curve. Yet, again this legitimately raises the question "Who gets to define what mental health is? Whose 'normal' should be adopted?" These are fair question, and ultimately unanswerable in any objective way for the counseling professional who is a (consistent) nominalist.

Furthermore, as Scott Smith has argued in his book *Naturalism*,[8] on nominalistic assumptions therapy actually turns out to be impossible. For the nominalist the counselor cannot have the very same ideas in her mind that the patient has. Therefore, there is literally no way for the therapist to accurately diagnose the patient, nor any way for her to then help the patient replace those concepts with different ones that the therapist envisions. Of course, again the realist has a ready ontology to make sense of such

[8] R. Scott Smith, Naturalism and Our Knowledge of Reality: Testing Religious Truth Claims (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Press, 2012).

interactions, given the existence and multiple instantiation of propositions and thus inter-personal communication.

Medicine

Similar questions arise for those in other medical fields. “Is there such a thing as “physical health? If so, what is it and who defines it?” Again, the realist has a ready, clear and intuitive answer: “Yes, there in such a thing as physical health, and it comes about as a result of living in accord with one’s nature.” Humans flourish when they eat certain types of things, exercise in certain ways, and avoid certain “risky” activities. This becomes apparent when these “boundaries” are not respected, which leads to things we describe by such words as “disease,” “illness,” and “deformity.” But note that all these words are normative, indicating they are not the way things “ought” to be. How are we to make sense of such normative notions? On the realist view we have an easy answer: these are not the way things ought to be, in light of what it is to be human—in light of our nature, which is objective. The (consistent) nominalist, again, does not have this option available. They can only define “physical health” in some way that doesn’t appeal to an objective nature of way things “ought” to be.

An interested related issue in medicine is “What is pain? How can it be diagnosed and treated?” For the realist pain is a property—a universal. There is a certain felt quality to pain that is multiply exemplified in all who have the *same* pain. Note this is not the same thing as a brain state. While a pain and a brain state are causally related, they are

not identical, given the law of identity, another Law of logic, which states that things are identical if and only if they share all properties in common. Yet there are properties that are true of pains that are not true of brain states. For instance, pains have a certain "felt quality" to them that brain states have. This difference is seen, for instance, when a brain surgeon performs surgery. The surgeon knows much more about the person's brain state than the person does. If pain was nothing but the brain state, it would follow the physician would know much more about the person's pain state than the person. But this is not the case. In fact, the surgeon must keep patients awake in order to regularly ask them what they are feeling—"rate the pain on a scale of 1 to 10." He needs a "first person" report of the felt quality of the pain, such as its intensity. Thus pains and brain states have different properties, and thus cannot be identical (though, again, the two are certainly causally related to one another).[9]

Therefore pain, as a universal, which can be exemplified in many different particulars—all people can feel the very same pain. Only if this is the case can the physician assume she can diagnose and treat the pain, for she can assume she knows what pain is, having experienced the instantiation of this universal at some time herself. To make this clearer, consider a robot attempting to diagnose a pain. The robot would have no understanding of what it is like to be in pain, having never had this experience (having never exemplified this universal). But the human physician *is* able to understand, and thus can have a meaningful conversation with the patient about pain. This all assumes

[9] For more on this line of argument, see Moreland and Craig, Philosophical Foundations, 234-243.

realism regarding the property of a pain.

For the nominalist pain is not a universal, but a particular (a particular pain sensation, in no way identical to pain sensations others have had, and for some nominalists a pain is fully reducible to a brain state). So there is literally no way for a physician who is a (consistent) nominalist to assume she knows what it feels like for the patient to experience pain, and thus to discuss this shared experience.

Biomedical Ethics

Realist and nominalist views lead to different answers to questions in biomedical ethics as well. Let me offer several examples. Take, for instance, the central metaphysical in abortion: "What is a fetus?" Again, for the realist, a fetus is a human person in virtue of having the property humanness. (By the way, themes will continue to repeat themselves, for once more fundamental metaphysical questions are answered, they apply to many specific issues across the disciplines). Therefore the fetus is fully human no matter what functional capacity it happens to have a given point (while developing in the womb, as an infant, toddler, etc.)

For the nominalist, a human person cannot be defined in virtue of an objective nature. Thus personhood is defined in virtue of one or a range of functions (expressed abilities). These functions may be implantation, brain functioning or a certain level of brain functioning, sentience, human form, viability, birth, etc. Thus, for the nominalist

abortion is morally acceptable if it occurs before this function occurs, for prior to this function being it is not a human person. This nominalistic assumption was evident in the 1992 Supreme Court Decision "Planned Parenthood vs. Casey" in which the Supreme Court tried to firm up the constitutional grounds for abortion. In this decision they defined liberty as the right to make "intimate and personal choices . . . central to personal dignity and autonomy . . . [It] is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life." In other words, there is nothing objective to define what human life is—there are only one's particular definitions, each as true as the next. There is no essence to a living thing that makes it what it is. We determine what it is by the words we chose to use of it. This is nominalism.

Of course, one of the horrific consequences of this nominalism in biomedical ethics is that once we grant it is acceptable to identify human persons in light of certain functional capacities, it opens the door to treat those without that capacity as non-humans. Beyond defining personhood with viability (the ability to live outside the womb), for instance, we can justify abortion. But more is at stake than this. There is no moral difference between this and defining personhood by certain intellectual or social characteristics, and thereby justifying treating children with severe mental limitations as non-human, as some cultures do. It is easy to see how this can lead to justifying infanticide or eugenics, depending on what (functional) capacity is identified as making one "human." Even in our contemporary American context some, like Peter Singer at Princeton, wish to define personhood with the functional capacities of being rational, autonomous and self-conscious. As a result, he maintains infants under two years of age

are not persons, for they do not (adequately) express these functional capabilities. Therefore they are no protected under the law and infanticide is morally and legally appropriate before a child reaches the age of two. He writes,

> [A] human being, in the sense of a member of the species Homo sapiens, is not relevant to the wrongness of killing it; it is, rather, characteristics like rationality, autonomy, and self-consciousness that make a difference. Infants lack these characteristics. Killing them, therefore, cannot be equated with killing normal human beings, or any other self-conscious beings.[10]

Most nominalists are not willing to be this horrifically consistent. Yet this is nominalism consistently applied!

Similar issues arise on the other side of life. If there is no objective human nature, and humanness is defined in terms of certain capacities, it is clear that when an elderly person's capacities reach that threshold, they are no longer to be considered human, in which case involuntary euthanasia is morally justifiable. Only on a realist view, which grounds humanness in an objective nature regardless of how fully, if at all, capacities are expressed, can these conclusions be (logically) avoided.[11]

Much the same applies to issues of genetic testing, human cloning, fetus stem cell research, etc. If we define something to be human only when it has certain capacities, then we are free to treat things without these capacities as "non-human" and thus treat

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[10] Peter Singer, Practical Ethics, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 160 (in chapter entitled "Taking Life: Humans," 175-217). Available online at http://www.utilitarianism.net/singer/by/1993----.html.

[11] See my "Aquinas vs. Locke and Descartes: On The Human Person and End-of-Life Ethics" (co-authored with J.P. Moreland), in International Philosophical Quarterly, vol. XXXV, no. 3 (1995): 319-330.

them in any way we like. Currently we place moral limits on treating some with intrinsic worth and dignity. But I believe this is living on "borrowed capital" from an earlier time of realistic assumptions. More and more we will see people live this nominalism out consistently, asking of more and more groups of people (children, elderly, etc.) "Why not treat them as ends to my pleasure or own well-being, for they are not human like me?" Again, realism not only better explains the data and our intuitions, but allows us to avoid these consistent applications of nominalism.

Law

Closely related is a range of questions concerning the legal profession. For instance, we may ask, "What is the basis of a societies laws?" Again, for the realist a society's laws are based on universals (propositions reflecting objective values) that are recorded in sentences in legal documents. These documents protect and promote these objective values, such as the right to privacy or the right to information. If legal documents contain true propositions (those reflecting objective values), the realist believes it is the role of the legal community to accurately interpret the author's intent in penning these laws to ensure they are instantiated in society. Or, if believed a written law is wrong (is not "just," that is, do not reflect objective values), the realist believes it is the responsibility of the legal community to change these laws to better reflect objective values. This is in turn related to a belief in the importance of having laws that promote the common good, per the earlier discussion regarding political science.

For the nominalist the bases of societies' laws are contingent, for they can be based on nothing but social convention at the time the law was penned. This they are always open to re-interpretation or suspension. Thus the role of legal professionals is to continually re-interpret laws in light of changing social norms and conditions. Again, other implications are discussed above in the section on political science.

Taken to its extreme, on a nominalist view one can ask, "Why should I follow any laws at all? Why should I allow another to impose their morality on me? Since there are no universal, objective moral values, why are any values, or laws, better than any others?" This is a legitimate question which arises naturally from the soil of nominalism. Unfortunately, the nominalist has no good reply. Yet fortunately, in one sense, the nominalist is not consistent in admitting he has no good reply. Rather, nominalists often implicitly assume realism by assuming there are in fact objective, universal moral values that all should abide by, and act accordingly. For instance, many nominalist in higher education will be quick to argue that everyone has the right to free speech, applaud condemnations of the genocide in Darfur, reject racism as morally repugnant, tout tolerance as a virtue that should be practiced by everyone at all times, and promote recycling efforts in order for all to fulfill their "duty" to care for the environment. As a realist I applaud all these affirmations, and ground them in objective moral values (universals). But the fact is that for the nominalist who also wants to ground them as objective and thus required of all to follow, he has no basis to do so. Again, realism seems much to be preferred.

Perhaps most important and fundamental is the question "Are there such things as 'inalienable human rights'? If so, who decides what these are?" The realist maintains there inalienable human rights, for all share the same human nature, and with that all are ultimately and fundamentally equal, regardless of how we may differ in any other way. Yet, again, the nominalist has no such ultimate grounding of human rights. Though many nominalists still talk as if there is such a thing as inalienable human rights, logically the nominalist view entails non-equality, since there is no unifying factor that makes us all equal.

This rejection of a universal human nature to ground universal human rights has led to dire consequences. For instance, slavery was (and is) based on this assumption that some are more "human" than others, and so the less "human" can be "owned" by those "more human" so as to use them as a means to an end, as one does with any other piece of property. The driving factor in the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. was the argument that those of African descent are equally persons and so should enjoy equal human rights. The same is regularly argued worldwide anywhere there are abuses of people in similar ways. This drinks deeply of realism.

However, for the nominalist who denies universal human nature, equal treatment does not follow. In fact, taken to its extreme, as Husserl observed in the quote I began Section One with, this grounding of inequality ultimately became the justification for the experimentation and extermination of Jews and others in Nazi concentration camps—they were defined as non-human, and thus did not have objective value or equal rights.

Therefore, in both our intuitions and the out workings of both realism and nominalism, it seems the realist answer to "are there inalienable human rights" is much to be preferred.

Business

Turning to another profession, of business it can be asked, "Are there objective ethical standards that every business, in every market and every region around the world, should abide by?" The realist says yes, there are. Business ethics don't depend on the specifics of place, culture, or time. It is as wrong to pollute waterways with chemicals or pay a substandard wage in Bhopal and it is in Boston, due to the objective moral values which exist and relate to these issues in all places and at all times. The corporate culture of an Enron is not appropriate, even if "everyone is doing it" in the corporation (or in the entire industry, for that matter). Child labor was as wrong in 19th century England and America as Nike sweatshops in Asia are today. Time, place and culture are irrelevant to business ethics if one is a realist.

Yet for the nominalist there are no such grounding of objective moral values, and thus ethical standards are relative to the corporate culture, the region of the world, the "times we live in," what "laws" are or are not written, and so on. For one to suggest the nominalist's business ethic of insider trading, sweatshop production facilities or untreated waste disposal is "wrong" is nothing more than someone from another time, place or corporate culture "forcing their morality on us." The nominalist ignores this, believing he

is morally justified in the business practice in question. Again, my deep intuitions seem to endorse realism in business ethics (and other ethical issues, for that matter).

Education

Finally, in the field of education we may ask, "How do children learn best?" The realist will maintain education involves, in part, helping students learn true propositions, and then learn how to learn other true propositions for a lifetime. This is the basis of classical models of education. For instance, math education is first helping students learn the multiplication table (true propositions), and then helping them learn how to learn other true propositions (such as mathematical formulas) in order to utilize mathematics for the rest of their lives, learning how to use these basic mathematical truths to solve other, more complex problems they will encounter. Of course, all this assumes realism, for it assumes there are true propositions, to be studied and learned in a given field. It assumes there are right answers in the field of mathematics, and the duty of the teacher is to help the student learn these right answers, and eventually learn how to learn for themselves. Furthermore, it assumes these propositions are "in" the mind of the teacher (or textbook), and can be transferred from the teacher's mind or the textbook to the student's mind via various means (lecture, discussion, readings, doing sample problems, etc.)

On the other hand, for the (consistent) nominalist there are no such objective or true propositions, nor can anything be communicated from the teacher to the student.

Thus it follows that education is primarily (or exclusively) helping the student determine what he or she believes on any given matter. One way this plays out in educational theory is constructivism. To quote a leading advocate of a form of educational constructivism, "Constructivism does not assume the presence of an outside objective reality that is revealed to the learner, but rather that learners actively construct their own reality, transforming it and themselves in the process."[12] Students should not be given the "right" answer, for such does not exist. Therefore "knowledge" is relative to the individual and his or her social construct, and the teacher is not authority on the subject. Rather, the "teacher" is an administrator to help the student come to or her own beliefs through reflection and group interaction. I believe this is one reason, at the university level, that fewer and fewer professors "profess"—make clear claims to knowledge that the students should also embrace (unless these are claims which have been sanctioned as acceptable by the current academic elite). Another place this is seen is in "inventive spelling" techniques promoted in elementary school. Students are told there is no "one right way to spell a word, so you should spell it like it sounds to you!" I experienced this, and the results firsthand when my daughter began attending a public elementary school in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She went from spelling five and six-letter words before kindergarten to not being able to spell basic four letter words after one semester of this! Again, I submit that realism closer matches our intuitions in the aims, ends and methods used in education. Unless one has an *a priori* commitment to nominalism, realism is the

[12] Catherine Fosnot, "Constructivism: A Psychological Theory of Learning," in Constructivism: Theory, Perspectives, and Practice, ed. C. Fosnot (New York: Teachers College Press, 1996), 8-13.

better approach to issues in education, and provides a rich conceptual framework to address other issues in this field.

Conclusion

More and more examples, in more and more fields, could be elucidated. However, I believe what I have offered is to illustrate some of the places it seems a realist view might be helpful in addressing a range of issues in the sciences and professions. If so, it is my hope and prayer that this is a help to you, as a Christian scholar, to consider ways to respond to naturalism in our academic disciplines.

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