

## ***Thinking* as Evidence for the Probability of the Existence of a God: An Argument from Unnaturalness for Necessity**

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The objective of this article is to show that it is justified to assert that the existence of God is plausible, considering the fact that *thinking* itself is an immediate outcome (effect) of a thinker (cause). This idea may seem evident, but it is in fact challenged by certain claims of cognitive philosophers who aver that our knowledge of *necessity* and *causation* is, in the final analysis, bounded by our naturalness. That is to say, what we understand of necessity and causation is originally based on root-experiences we have had from the early moments of our birth onward or even before our birth.

This article tries to display that giving a model for a kind of necessity which is not essentially built upon the naturalness of human experiences can negate the universality of believing in the naturalness of human understanding. With this, one can prove the probability of the existence of a *Necessary Being*, whose necessity is different from the so-called embodied necessity. However, the Necessary Being is not equal to all conceptions of God, but it is equal to some of them. The article concludes that the probability of the existence of God (of a particular kind) is an inevitable outcome, even with the presupposition of cognitive philosophers.

**Keywords:** cognitive philosophy, causation, necessity, thinking, Necessary Being, God.

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## **Introduction**

The title indicates that one is justified in saying that the existence of God is plausible, considering the fact that one's "thinking" is one's immediate effect. The article intends to shed light on a particular necessity, which, to my knowledge, is not addressed by cognitive philosophers, such as Mark Johnson, who try to prove that our knowledge of the concepts of necessity and causation is, in its final analysis, issued from our naturalness. According to this explanation, what we understand of necessity and causation is originally based on bodily experiences we have had from an early moment when our perception was activated.

However, there can be an example that opposes the universality of this kind of theoretical description of necessity, which is not essentially built upon the naturalness of human experiences, and can break the domination of believing in naturalness of human understanding. With this, one can prove the probability of the existence of a particular *Necessary Being*, which is different from the one mentioned by cognitivism. It is true that the Necessary Being is not equal to all conceptions of God, but since it is equal to one of them, it can be concluded that the plausibility of the existence of a specific conception of God is an inevitable outcome even based on the principles of cognitive philosophy.

Before analyzing the two competing perspectives toward causation and necessity, the related literature on the theoretical principles of cognitive philosophy is reviewed hereunder.

## **Embodied Cognition**

Embodied Cognition Theory states that the only equipment we have for interacting with the external world is sensational perception. The theory implies that man's conceptual structure is embodied (Evans, Bergen, and Zinken 2006). Along with this idea, it can be alleged that perception and cognition are not fundamentally distinct.

According to the hypothesis of *embodiment*, man's conceptual system functions in a way in which our bodies and brains are the main players. The hypothesis demonstrates that we have an embodied mind, by which we can understand abstract concepts in terms of less abstract concepts by means of metaphorical processes. We cannot consciously monitor all of these processes; instead, the cognitive system performs many metaphorical processes unconsciously. Interestingly, it is alleged that even our thinking is mostly unconscious (Lakoff and Johnson 1999).

Our experiences and elementary concepts are interactional, rather than being merely abstractions. For illustration, consider typical experiences of pouring water into a glass or touching something, through which one in fact interacts with these objects by pouring or touching. Embodied experiences are the ways by which one interacts with world (Turner 1996). Interactions create image-based experiences, which in turn create our image-schematic patterns (image-schemata). Understanding and knowledge come after the acquisition of these kinds of schemata in our imagination. In fact, understanding is a function of metaphorical projections and relations between image-schemas. Embodied structures are universal in the sense that they are shared by humans (Johnson 1987)

Johnson describes image schemas as "concepts" (1987); however, to me, this nomination does not mean that image schemas are totally abstract. They can be called concepts as far as they are shared by humans, but they are images, which are the most concrete concepts we can possess.

Image schemas are rudimentary concepts that derive from embodied experiences of the world, which are pre-conceptual. Embodied experiences make it possible for us to conceptualize abstract concepts by means of spatial structure (concrete concepts). In other words, our

cognitive system maps (projects) spatial structure onto abstract concepts. These schemata are pre-conceptual patterns, because they are rooted in so-called sensory-motor experiences (Johnson 1987). Cognitive scholars allege that these pre-conceptual patterns have been produced even before the acquisition of language. For instance, Mandler states, “Basic, recurrent experiences of a child make its semantic architecture, before the child begins producing language” (1992).

The relation between reality and language has been shown by an allegation that image-schematic descriptions in language are analogous ways of representation of perceptions (Evans and Green 2006).

### **Analysis of Force-Schemata**

Since image schemas are products of our direct experience of the world that surrounds us, they are common and familiar to us. For example, it is quite common to understand the meanings and instances of schemas such as motion along a path, bounded interior, containment, symmetry, and force-dynamic (Johnson 1987; Turner 1996).

Let us consider, for example, the role of containment in language. When it is said that one is in love or one is coming out of coma, prepositions *out* and *in* are significations for linguistic application of *container* schema (Evans and Green 2006; Lakoff 2006; Lakoff 1990). There are many things that we experience in terms of *containers*. Different kinds of dishes for cooking or serving food and drink are *containers* with three main elements: an exterior, an interior, and a boundary. Along with the aforementioned examples, our bodies are also good candidates for *containers* (Turner 1996).

Another schema is *motion along a path*; it is used to conceptualize some more abstract concepts in people’s lives, such as their love stories. When somebody says that they are in a dead-end relationship, they are describing a love relationship in terms of the *motion along a path* schema.

From what is explained, the familiarity and commonality of the mentioned schemas come from their ability to be experienced. Likewise, force-dynamic schemas are familiar, common, and pervasive. Analyzing schemas of force is necessary for our later discussion on causation and necessity.

There are a handful of schemata which represent force structures. Johnson (1987) introduces and explains the following seven most common force schemata that are at work in our experiences:

***Compulsion***: every person experiences the force of physical and environmental factors, such as gases, liquids, and solids. When, for instance, one's stomach is full of food or drink, one feels the pressure caused by what one has eaten or drunk on their stomach or intestine.

***Blockage***: we are familiar with obstacles that resist our forces when we are interacting with objects around us. Some obstacles resist our forces, and some others block us from applying our forces.

***Removal of restraint*** can be understood easily when compared to the blockage schema. When an obstacle is removed, we are free to exert our forces.

***Counterforce***<sup>1</sup> is a force that is counter to another force.

***Diversion***<sup>2</sup> occurs when one force vector diverts another force vector. For instance, two moving objects can divert the direction of each other's movement when they clash.

***Enablement***: you experience the enablement schema when you feel you have (or lack) the power to do something.

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1. Counterforce is a well-known subject in physics, especially in the third Newton's physics, according to which every force has a counterforce.
  2. Diversion is a common experience in our everyday life; for example, we usually experience it when hitting a moving object, and then we see that the direction of the movement changes because of the force we applied on the object.

**Attraction** is experienced when two things attract each other. For example, gravity is a kind of attraction, which pulls down our body.

The structure of force experiences is reflected in our natural language. This reflection can be shown by considering how modal verbs (modals), as lingual representations of force schemas, function in our language. Modals are categories of verbs that reflect our relation with things in the world. This relation can be necessary, actual, or possible, represented by modal verbs “must,” “may,” and “can” respectively (Johnson 1987).

Undoubtedly, “may” and “can” and the way in which our experiences shape the notions and schemas for these two crucial modal verbs is important, but since they are not central in the construction of the notions of causation and necessity, we just need here to focus on the modal verb “must,” which indicates the necessary relation.

It is claimed that image-schematic patterns of force are responsible for the advent of “must” in human language. Sweetser (1990) differentiates the “root” (deontic) meaning of the modal “must” from its epistemic meaning. She describes the root meaning of “must” as obligations we comprehend from our real-world experiences. Similarly, the epistemic meaning of the modal “must” is a meaning that denotes obligations in the reasoning processes of our cognitive system. We use meanings from the real world to reason for something in our epistemic world, and this is a metaphorical process. She asserts that children learn root meanings of modals before learning their epistemic meanings. Sweetser also points to a third kind of meaning for “must,” which can be seen in speech-acts—in the territory of language (Sweetser 1990).

Root meaning can derive from a physical force, or a moral force affecting the human will from a universal authority. Giving reasons, arguments, and theories belonging to our epistemic capability finds its ultimate place in our experiences of the root meaning of force. An interesting example is a logical argument, in which the conclusions

derive necessarily from the premises, not by themselves but by a kind of necessity that comes from our image-schematic experiences of force (Johnson 1987).

According to the aforementioned analysis of modality, all kinds of necessity are products of our bodily experiences. Even the necessity in the epistemic territory, such as logical necessity, is understood in terms of embodied images. In the same manner, causation is also understood in terms of force dynamic image schema. When a force of a thing pushes or pulls something else or forces it to move, it is said that the first thing causes the second one. Lakoff and Johnson (1999) write that the most important central feature of causality is object manipulation. They state: “Prototypical causation is the direct application of force resulting in motion or other physical change” (p. 177).

### **An Alternative to the Conceptual Causation and Necessity**

Despite the large body of evidence in favor of conceptual analysis of necessity and causation, there should be a scrutiny of the very function of thinking and the mechanism by which it originates.

Consider, for instance, when you are thinking, and you are aware that you are thinking. In such a situation, you intuitively know that your thinking is stemming from you as a thinker (subject), even though you may not be a philosopher or may not know the terms “cause” and “effect.” In this case, one cannot talk about object manipulation, because there are not two sensible things one of which manipulates the other (an object); there is just one thing (you) which originates another imperceptible thing (thinking). So, this kind of causality lacks what has been already introduced as prototypical feature. This entails that there is one kind of causality which is not embodied in a sense defined based on the Embodiment Theory.

Moreover, when I start to think, my thinking necessarily begins. I use the word “necessarily,” because it is impossible for me to start to

think but the thinking does not come through. This is quite different from physical activities in which an agent sometimes can perform an action and sometimes she cannot because of some obstacles; there are no such obstacles in thinking.<sup>1</sup> Starting to think and thinking occur simultaneously without any gap between them. This means that their succession is not embodied, because, according to the Embodied Cognition Theory, we acquire image schemas from our bodily interaction with the environment; we interact with things repeatedly, and then we acquire the corresponding image schema. Even after the acquisition of an image schema (regarded as a concrete entity), our epistemic system begins to understand abstract concepts based on concrete entities via a process called metaphor, as it is learned from the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff and Johnson 2003).

It can be concluded that not all kinds of necessity are embodied, as there is at least one kind of necessity<sup>2</sup> which is not bounded to our naturalness and bodily experiences. The reasons for this claim are as follows:

1. Unembodied necessity lacks the seven most common force structures necessary for understanding the meaning of embodied necessity, so to speak. In order to perceive, acquire, and understand these seven schemata (i.e., compulsion, blockage, removal of restraint, counterforce, diversion, enablement, and attraction), at least two things should exist: something that exerts a force and a second thing that receives that force.
2. Prototypical causation is the object manipulation that requires some sort of change or movement, which in turn requires at least two different occasions. Causation between the self and thinking, so to speak, does not require succession and movement.

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1. Here, the common sense of the word “thinking” is meant and not a particular kind of thinking.

2. This necessity can be named Unembodied Necessity



## **Conclusion**

According to the above-mentioned reasons, there must be at least one kind of necessity that is not embodied. This means that this kind of necessity is not bounded to human naturalness.

If there is unembodied necessity that is independent from our interaction with perceptible environment, it can be inferred that such necessity is not embodied; we are (or at least I am) aware of this necessity by introspection. I know intuitively that such necessity exists, because it is an indispensable outcome of me as a thinker. If such necessity ensues from thinking, then the thinker has it. Therefore, there is necessity which governs some actual realms of me and which deserves to be called necessary being. However, this necessary being may not be absolute, for if it was absolute, it would not be gone when thinking stops. Again, if there is necessity which has not been created by the external world and/or by our bodies (or an aspect of our embodiment), it should be spontaneous, even though temporary.

As a result, from the fact that there is a kind of necessity that comes to existence from unnaturalness (spontaneous necessary being), it can be inferred that the existence of an absolute Necessary Being is quite probable. The Absolute Necessary Being is a notion of God in some religions and schools of theology.

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