

AN EXTENDED CONCEPT OF POINTS OF VIEW CONTAINING FRAMES¹

*UN CONCEPTO EXTENDIDO DE PUNTOS DE VISTA
CONTENIENDO MARCOS*

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ABSTRACT

Points of view are often considered to be synonymous with perspectives. But when we study the structure of points of view in detail, we will find that perspective can be seen as a part of points of view. In this article, first, I consider my previous concept of points of view consisting of three elements: subject, object and aspect. Then I define frames in terms of cognitive science. After that, I will introduce an extended concept of points of view containing frames. In this new conception, perspectives are the ontological side of points of view.

KEYWORDS: aspect; frame; perspective; points of view.

RESUMEN

A menudo los puntos de vista son considerados como sinónimos de perspectivas. Pero cuando estudiamos la estructura de los puntos de vista en detalle, nos encontramos con que una perspectiva puede verse como parte de los puntos de vista. En este artículo, en primer lugar, considero mi anterior concepto de puntos de vista, el cual consta de tres elementos: sujeto, objeto y aspecto. Seguidamente defino los marcos en términos de las ciencias cognitivas. A continuación, introduciré un concepto extendido de puntos de vista que contienen marcos. En esta nueva concepción, las perspectivas son el lado ontológico de los puntos de vista.

PALABRAS CLAVE: aspecto; marco; perspectiva; puntos de vista

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of points of view is used frequently in philosophical as well as in ordinary discussion. In philosophy the concept of perspective means, roughly, the same than points of view. Points of view are taken in ordinary discussion in metaphorical sense: to see things in a certain light. This is not a satisfactory conception for philosophical analysis. Points of view have a special structure, and they have a special function in cognition and practical action. In this article I define the structure of points of view such that it includes perspectives.

First of all, we have to define the concept of point of view. There are several concepts for that (Hautamäki, 2020; Lehtonen, 2021; Liz & Vázquez, 2015; Moore, 1997). For example, Manuel Liz and Margarita Vázquez make a distinction between points of view as related to propositional attitudes and related to notions of location and access. In the definition of points of view as propositional attitude by Vázquez and Liz, there are a bearer B of a point of view, a set of relations of B to conceptual or non-conceptual contents and a set of possession conditions for having the point of view (Vázquez & Liz, 2015: 21). Intuitively, a point of view is a relational system connecting a bearer to contents in various ways. “[P]oints of view can be understood as structured sets of propositional attitudes” (id, 17).

What is characteristic for points of view it that they choose features or sides of an object to represent it (Hautamäki, 2020). These features are called *aspects* of object. By aspects points of view provide a particular way to consider objects. Say, one considers human beings as animals whereas another considers them as cultural creatures. The schema “X qua Y” characterizes well the role of aspect: point of view represents object X as being Y: seeing or taking X to be Y. For example, taking sex to represent person.

In my book *Viewpoint Relativism* (2020: 43) I define a *point of view* to be a three elements system $\langle S, O, A \rangle$, where S is the subject and O is the object of point of view whereas A is an aspect of O representing O to S. In short, in a point of view, an aspect represents the object for the subject. To use metaphorical expression, in a point of view an aspect opens a “window” to the world: looking at the object in the light of aspect.

So far we have discussed about the concept of points of view. The theory of points of view must answer also to question what is the role of points of view in cognition and communication. The following theses provide, at lest, partial answers to this question.

1. There is no viewpoint-neutral way to approach reality.
2. Points of view are subjective, but they can be objectified.
3. Each object can be considered from several different points of view.
4. There are no absolute, privileged or universal points of view.
5. Points of view are suited to be improved and changed.
6. Different kinds of criteria can be used to compare points of view.

Thesis 1 denies that there could be completely neutral ways to approach reality. We can never escape our points of view. Thesis 2 brings forth the subjectivity of points of view while allowing them the possibility of being objectified. Thesis 3 highlights the feature of points of view that they are always limited and that several different points of view are possible. Thesis 4 denies that there could be an absolute and unconditional point of view, such as that of God, that would tell the “real” truth. Also according to this thesis, there is no privileged point of view superior to other points of view, such as that of physics. Furthermore, no point of view can be universal, relevant for all objects. Points of view are not static and eternal according to thesis 5, but can be developed, deepened, changed and even exchanged - adopting a new point of view. Thesis 6 brings forth the comparability of points of view on the basis of different criteria, such as relevance and usefulness. This thesis is philosophically important, because it denies that all points of view are equally good, which is a principle of extreme relativism (Baghrarian & Coliva, 2019).

FRAMES

In this article I enlarge the concept of points of view to include frames. In general, frames are mental models or conceptual systems representing the world. The concepts in a frame are representations of reality. The frame contains a set of relations between concepts. These relations do not fix completely the content of concepts. Frame is a general structure that can be applied to several objects by specifying values of content variables (Gärdenfors, 2000).

The concept of frame is used frequently in artificial intelligence, cognitive science, linguistics and psychology (see Collins & Smith, 1988; Cukier *et al.*, 2021; Bermúdez, 2021). Marvin Minsky seems to launch the very concept of frame in his article “A Framework for Representing Knowledge” (Minsky, 1989; see also Fillmore, 1989). In cognitive science, many other concepts about mental models beside frames, like *scripts* (Schank and Abelson, 1988) and *schemata* (Rumelhart *et al.*, 1989), are used. When we say that frames are mental models, we mean that

frames are operating in our mind and brains, i.e. they are mental, but that they are also models of the world or situations. Frames categorise the world, representing the structure of reality.

According to Minsky:

[a] frame is a data-structure for representing a stereotypical situation, like being in certain kind of living room, or going to a child's birthday party. Attached to each frame are several kinds of information. Some of this information is about how to use the frame. Some are about what one can expect to happen next. Some is about what to do if these expectations are not confirmed. (Minsky, 1989: 156)

Formally, we can think that a frame is a network of nodes and relations between them. Some of these (structural elements) are fixed and represent things that are always true about supposed situation. Some (contextual elements) are slots to be filled by specific features of an actual situation. So frames are used to give a structure to different situations. But the actual content of a frame is fixed by contextual elements.

The relationship of frames and the world is not one-to-one representation of objects. Frames as conceptual models are only approximating the world. They are “fitting” the world, where fitting means that there is only partial correspondence between concepts and objects. In cognitive neuroscience, mental models are seen as a kind of caricature picture of reality (Hari, 2017) or controlled hallucinations (Seth, 2021). These two concepts express a fundamental thesis of the theory of points of view: There is no viewpoint-neutral way to approach reality. The “view from nowhere” is not possible.

EXTENDED CONCEPT OF POINTS OF VIEW

I said earlier that a point of view opens a window to the world. But the window does not tell how the world is. For that we need frames. Points of view and frames go always hand in hand. It is reasonable to extend the concept of points of view by adding frames to points of view. Let F denotes a frame. I define now a point of view to be a four elements system $\langle S, F, O, A \rangle$, where *the subject S uses the frame F to categorize the object O as represented by the aspect A .*

I said in the beginning that points of view and perspectives are seen often as synonyms. In our extended concept of points of view, we can define perspectives to be parts of points of view. In this four elements system, the couple $\langle O, A \rangle$ represents *ontic side* and the couple $\langle S, F \rangle$ *cognitive side* of points of view. With a certain reservation, we can think that cognitive side is subjective and ontic side

is objective part of points of view. In fact, it is impossible to draw a sharp line between subjective and objective elements in cognition.

I propose to call the couple $\langle O, A \rangle$ a *perspective*. This is motivated, because perspectives are not directly dependent on subjects. We can think that perspectives are constituents of the world in the sense that the world is just the configuration of all perspectives. It is subject's activity to select an aspect of the object and to use a frame to categorise the object as seen from that aspect. In a point of view the subject has an access to perspectives. Following the proposal of Cukier et al (2021), the subject is a *framer* of the object.

The structure of points of view can be depicted by the following Figure 1.

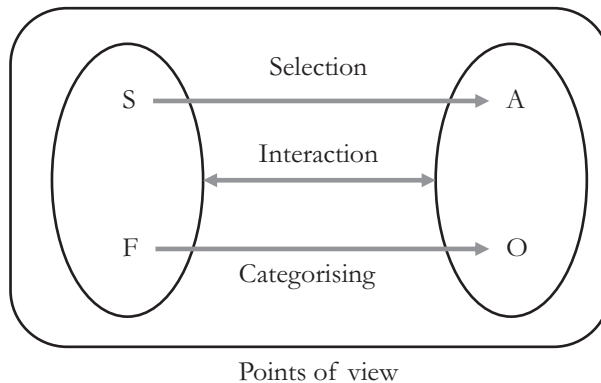


Figure 1. The structure of points of view

In the Figure the selection of an aspect A is the function of subject S (the arrow from S to A). The subject uses the frame F to categorise the object as represented by A (the arrow from F to O). As a whole the structure of points of view is based on the interaction of cognitive side $\langle S, F \rangle$ and ontic side $\langle A, S \rangle$.

This interaction of subject and object is essential in cognition. Interaction is taking place in subject's real action with object. Dreyfus and Taylor (2015) speak about "contact theory", where contact is a direct, primordial interaction between subject and object. Primordially refers to preconceptual grasping of reality. Preconceptuality is an important feature of cognition, because not all mental activities are conscious (Gärdenfors, 2000). Our brains are forming *priors*, which are unconscious hypothesis of the relevant aspects of objects. Our mind is always testing these hypotheses by new perceptions and by acting with objects (Hari, 2017; Seth, 2021). This means that our frames are not static; they are constantly evaluated and reframed.

CONCLUSIONS

This extended concept of points of view combines together the concepts of frame and perspective. In this concept perspective is an element of points of view but it is also a constitutive part of reality. The world is “multiperspectival”, consisting of endless amount of perspectives. Each perspective can be approach by selecting a relevant aspect. Frames of points of view express what the world looks like from a perspective. Frames are conceptual models of reality and as such they are fitting the world only partially.

It is important that the relation between subjects and objects of points of view is interactive, based on our perception reality but also real contact with objects in action. Both perception and action contribute to the constant reframing of situations we live in. Reframing expresses an important principle of meliorism: We can always find new, better points of view.

This extended concept of points of view will be very useful in studying such fundamental philosophical issues as relativism, realism, pluralism, consciousness and artificial intelligence. It provides also a bridge between epistemology and ontology thanks of the interaction of cognitive and ontic elements of points of view.

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