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STANDPOINTS: A STUDY OF A METAPHYSICAL PICTURE*

Consider the following picture:

Reality contains multiple standpoints and encompasses any fact that obtains from any such standpoint. Any fact that obtains at all, obtains relative to some standpoint. Any true representation cannot but adopt some standpoint and, because there are multiple standpoints relative to which different facts obtain, no single representation can be a truly complete representation of all the facts.

This type of picture crops up in different philosophical discussions.

One area where it crops up is the philosophy of time. There is a familiar tension between what things are like from the perspective of the present and what things are like from an atemporal perspective. McTaggart can be understood as arguing that time requires the existence of both the atemporal and temporal standpoints, but that incoherence results from putting the facts of these standpoints together. Dummett, in a defense of McTaggart's argument, entertains the conclusion that we should abandon our prejudice that "the description of what is really there, as it really is, must be independent of any point of view" and that we should therefore reject our assumption that there could be a complete description of reality.¹

The picture also seems to arise in discussions of logical paradoxes. Grim argues, for example, that several logical paradoxes, including

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¹Michael Dummett, "A Defense of McTaggart's Proof of the Unreality of Time," *The Philosophical Review*, LXIX, 4 (October 1960): 497–504, at pp. 503–04.

the Liar paradox, the Knower paradox, and Russell's paradox, all converge on the apparent result that there cannot be a total representation of the world and that the world cannot be a simple totality of facts.² "The universe itself," Grim concludes, "like any knowledge or description of it, is essentially open and incomplete."³

To give another example, the sketched picture fits Nagel's influential work in the 1970s and 1980s. Nagel identified a conflict between internal and external standpoints in our philosophical thinking about phenomenal consciousness, free will, the meaning of life, personal identity, and various ethical issues.⁴ Nagel argued that our objective conception of the world leaves out aspects of things that are only seen for what they are from an internal perspective or, in extreme cases, only exist relative to an internal (or subjective) perspective.⁵ Again, the world offers a range of more internal and more external viewpoints to adopt, and from none of these viewpoints can we offer a truly complete and thoroughly unified understanding of reality.⁶

The metaphysical picture is of general philosophical interest. It also stands in need of clarification. When is something a standpoint? How are we to understand the idea that a fact obtains relative to a standpoint and yet is a genuine fact? How are we to understand the claim that we can adopt perspectives by entertaining appropriate thoughts? The main aim of this paper is to propose answers that are mutually supporting and preserve the intended metaphysics of the sketched picture. I offer a regimentation and illustrate the resulting framework by discussing an application in the philosophy of time.

I will not be able to define everything in more familiar terms. There will be theoretical primitives, and their elucidation will only be partial but, I hope, still substantial enough for readers to engage with the framework in meaningful ways. I do not have the space to compare with related views, of which there are many.⁷

² Patrick Grim, *The Incomplete Universe: Totality, Knowledge, and Truth* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴ Thomas Nagel, *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 196–205; and Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

⁵ Nagel, *Mortal Questions*, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

⁶ Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁷ The developed view is particularly close to fragmentalism (and non-standard realism, more broadly), originally due to Kit Fine. See his "Tense and Reality," *Modality and Tense: Philosophical Papers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 261–320. Fragmentalism has recently been developed in various directions, and there now exist different fragmentalist approaches, all similarly concerned with making sense of an intrinsically perspectival world. See, among others, Roberto Loss, "Fine's McTaggart:

I. UNPACKING THE PICTURE

I understand the notion of a standpoint broadly. Potential candidates are times, subjects, (inertial) frames of reference, orientations, locations, scales, conceptual schemes, and it can also refer to *sui generis* entities such as atemporal or objective standpoints, abstract objects whose identity is solely given by what obtains relative to them. I use ‘standpoint’ interchangeably with ‘perspective’ and ‘point of view’.

What makes something a standpoint? The relevant kind of standpoint is one on which it does not necessarily involve a subject (although it may do so in specific cases). For example, when we describe a moment in time as being a standpoint, this is not meant to suggest that there is anything intrinsically subjective about this moment in time, nor that it is occupied by a subject. The relevant sense of a standpoint is just that of something relative to which certain genuine facts obtain. Something is a standpoint if and only if some matter obtains relative to it (or, as I will also say: from its perspective). Subjects may indeed be standpoints in the sense that things only have certain properties relevant to subjects (such as secondary properties). How-

Reloaded,” *Manuscrito: Revista Internacional de Filosofía*, xl, 1 (January 2017): 209–39; Jonathan Simon, “Fragmenting the Wave Function,” in Karen Bennett and Dean Zimmerman, eds., *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics: Volume 11* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 123–48; and Samuele Iaquinto and Giuliano Torrenço, *Fragmenting Reality: An Essay on Passage, Causality, and Time Travel* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022). I also defended such a fragmentalist approach, for example, in “A Passage Theory of Time,” in Bennett and Zimmerman, eds., *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics: Volume 11, op. cit.*, pp. 95–122. It may be worth stressing that the view presented here diverges from the view defended in my earlier work.

There are also affinities with generalizations of tense-logical views and related non-standard approaches to metaphysical relativity. See, for example, Caspar Hare, *On Myself, and Other, Less Important Subjects* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009); Caspar Hare, “Realism about Tense and Perspective,” *Philosophy Compass*, iv, 9 (2010): 760–69; Giovanni Merlo, “Subjectivism and the Mental,” *Dialectica*, lxx, 3 (2016): 311–42; Fabrice Correia and Sven Rosenkranz, “Eternal Facts in an Ageing Universe,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, xc, 2 (2012): 307–20; Iris Einheuser, “Three Forms of Truth-Relativism,” in Manuel García-Carpintero and Max Kölbel, eds., *Relative Truth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 187–203; Carol Rovane, “How to Formulate Relativism,” in Crispin Wright and Annalisa Coliva, eds., *Mind, Meaning, and Knowledge: Themes from the Philosophy of Crispin Wright* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 238–66; Olla Solomyak, “Temporal Ontology and the Metaphysics of Perspectives,” *Erkenntnis*, lxxxv, 2 (July 2020): 431–53; and Jack Spencer, “Relativity and Degrees of Relationality,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, xcii, 2 (March 2016): 432–59.

The intended picture is one according to which reality has intrinsic perspectival structure, which is in the first instance a metaphysical claim. There are many forms of relativism that are less related for the simple reason that they are not in the first instance concerned with metaphysical claims. These include semantic forms of “relativism”, which focus on context-dependent language use, and “perspectival realism” (as it is understood in the philosophy of science), which focuses on perspectival ways of knowing something.

ever, if so, this is one specific case, and the involvement of a subject is not built into the relevant notion of relativity.

This redirects the task of elucidation to the notion of relativity. There are different senses in which something can be said to be relative to something. There is a comparative sense of relativity (Lucy is tall relative to me), an experiential sense of relativity (a cherry is, or looks, scarlet relative to Lucy), and a doxastic sense of relativity (aliens exist from the perspective of someone's views). But none of these senses of relativity, neither the comparative, experiential, nor doxastic sense, is plausibly at play in our target picture. Besides these senses of relativity, I assume that there is a further distinctively *meta-physical* type of relativity. It is the notion of something instantiating a property relative to an entity of some kind. Temporal matters are again good examples. When we say that a ball of clay is round at a moment in time, we intend to say that it has the property of being round relative to that time, or that its being round obtains relative to that time. The experiential, doxastic, and comparative senses do not apply here: it is not the case that things look like that to the moment in time, nor is it the case according to or compared to the moment in time. There is a further, metaphysical kind of relativity, and this will be the kind of relativity relevant to the view under discussion.

For a more formal regimentation, I propose that we express meta-physical relativity using operator-forming devices known from hybrid logics.⁸ Let $@_[\dots]$ be an operator-forming device (also known as a prenective) that combines with an ordinary referring term a to give a sentential operator $@a[\dots]$.⁹ We can read ' $@a[\dots]$ ' as: 'at a, \dots ' or 'relative to a, \dots ' or 'from the perspective of a, \dots ', depending

⁸ Hybrid tense logic is due to Arthur Prior, *Past, Present and Future* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 88–92, 187–97; see also Arthur Prior, "Tense Logic and the Logic of Earlier and Later," in Torben Braüner et al., eds., *Papers on Time and Tense: New Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 117–39; and Carlos Areces and Balder ten Cate, "Hybrid Logics," in Patrick Blackburn, Johan van Benthem, and Frank Wolter, eds., *Handbook of Modal Logic* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006), chapter 14.

⁹ This diverges from the standard approach taken in hybrid logics, where the hybrid operator only embeds a special type of sentence in the first position, the so-called nominals i, j, k, \dots , each of which is stipulated to be true at exactly one point in the model. Prior's project was to have a language with the expressive power to single out particular points (such as worlds or times) without being ontologically committed to them, and resorting to special sentences helps with this reductive project. See Prior, "Tense Logic and the Logic of Earlier and Later," *op. cit.*, pp. 120, 124; for discussion; see also Kit Fine, "Prior on the Construction of Possible Worlds and Instants," *Modality and Tense: Philosophical Papers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 133–75; and Patrick Blackburn, "Arthur Prior and Hybrid Logic," *Synthese*, CL, 3, (2006): 329–72. Against this, I want to say exactly of what I take to be existing things, like people and times, that they can be standpoints and hence things relative to which matters obtain. I see no need for Prior's reductive aims regarding such entities.

on what sounds most natural in given sentence constructions. So, the sentence ‘Lucy sits at t_1 ’ is formalized as ‘@ t_1 [Lucy sits]’. Similarly, the sentence ‘Lucy’s experience has phenomenal character from Lucy’s own perspective’ is formalized as ‘@*Lucy*[Lucy’s experience e has phenomenal character]’.

The claim that something is a metaphysical standpoint whenever it is something relative to which matters obtain becomes, in schematic terms (and using higher-order quantification):

a is a standpoint iff $\exists A@a[A]$.¹⁰

Standpoints are things from the perspective of which matters obtain. There is a fact of the matter about which things are standpoints and which are not. It is part of our inquiry to figure out which standpoints there are and, hence, what sort of facts admit of variance across metaphysical standpoints, and which do not. These are not easy questions. The framework itself is neutral about how these questions are settled, making no commitments from above about which things are standpoints. It is for this reason that I prefer to speak of a framework.

It is left open whether metaphysical relativity is a determinable notion. There may be different determinates of metaphysical relativity. Relatedly, although I assume that there is metaphysical relativity, I do not assume that this must be a metaphysically fundamental matter.

Besides being something relative to which matters obtain, metaphysical standpoints are taken to be things that we can adopt in our representations of the world. I take a representation to be anything which can be true or false and includes thoughts, assertions, propositions, and sentences. A representation is fittingly said to represent what things are like from a standpoint whenever the representation represents matters that obtain relative to the standpoint. When a representation describes what things are like from a standpoint, I will say more briefly that it is ‘from that standpoint’ (not to be confused with saying that the representation is produced at that standpoint). So we have in schematic terms:

A representation ‘ A ’ is from standpoint a iff @ $a[A]$.

For instance: if Lucy sits at t_1 , the sentence ‘Lucy sits’ describes what Lucy is like from the temporal standpoint of t_1 .

Besides representations that capture what things are like from standpoints, we want to say that subjects can adopt standpoints. A subject is naturally taken to adopt a standpoint when entertaining a

¹⁰ I leave relevant necessitations of key principles implicit, for readability.

representation that is from that standpoint. Given that Lucy sits at t_1 , I represent what the world is like from the standpoint of t_1 just when I represent Lucy as sitting. We need a specific way of entertaining the representation however, namely the sort of mental representation that can properly be described as immersive. Let us stipulate that, if a subject represents immersively that A , then: (1) ' A ' specifies the entire content of what is so represented, not parts thereof, and, more importantly, (2) the representation that A is insulated in the relevant way from the doxastic states that feed into deliberation, belief revision, and action. If one represents what things are like from another standpoint, one does not normally act on this or revise one's beliefs in accordance with it. Given my temporally immersive thought that Socrates walks around in Athens, I do not act on it in the way I would if this was an ordinary belief (in which case I would be buying tickets to Athens). Immersive thought does not simply feed into one's ordinary actionable beliefs about one's environment.

Given this notion of immersive representation, demarcated partly through stipulations, we have in schematic terms:

A subject s adopts standpoint a iff $\exists A(@a[A]$ and s represents immersively that A).

Subjects adopt standpoints by seeing the world through representations that describe what the world is like from those standpoints.

The notion of *adopting a standpoint* should be sharply distinguished from *occupying a context* as it is understood in the various forms of contextualist semantics. What context I occupy is fixed by various worldly relations: my context of utterance is fixed by who I am, what time it is when I speak or think, where I am when I speak or think, and so on. The proposed understanding of what it is to adopt a standpoint is not constrained by one's position in the world in this way and allows that one can shift standpoints when one changes how one represents things. We cannot take up and drop contexts in the way that we can take up and drop standpoints in thought. What standpoints one adopts by entertaining a given representation in the appropriate way is only constrained by what obtains relative to what, not by who one is, where one is, or any other feature of the context of utterance.

Note also that one's representation can describe matters from multiple standpoints at once. If I believe that Lucy sits, and it is the case that Lucy sits at t_1 and that Lucy sits at t_2 , then I represent what things are like from the standpoint of t_1 as well as what things are like from the standpoint of t_2 . Which standpoints a subject adopts is determined by the *entire* content of the immersive thought, and the richer this is in detail, the fewer standpoints one typically adopts.

There is an externalist aspect to the account in the sense that what standpoint one adopts is determined by external facts. One may not always know what standpoints one is adopting, and one can be mistaken about what standpoint one takes oneself to have adopted, for example, because one has mistaken beliefs about what is the case at a given time. A subject may *intend* to adopt one specific standpoint (of a specific subject, for example) and yet end up adopting an entirely different standpoint, so that the subject's *intended standpoint adoption* fails. That one adopts some standpoint is not itself evaluable for correctness or success, contrary to *intentions to adopt* some specific standpoint, which can fail or succeed.

A further key claim of the target picture is that any fact that obtains at all, obtains relative to some standpoint. It is common to understand this as endorsing that any fact implicitly involves some internal relativization (or relationality) to some standpoint. I reject this. There is an ambiguity in the notion of a relative fact. According to the common view, when it is a relative fact that *A*, this means that it is really (or more explicitly) the fact that *relative to some x*, *A*. There is, however, another equally natural notion of a relative fact, according to which, the fact that *A* is a relative fact when it is accompanied by the further (metaphysically distinct) fact that *relative to some x*, *A*. The target picture claims that any fact is a relative fact in this sense.

It is a direct consequence of the assumption that any fact is a relative fact, that any true representation is from some standpoint or other. For any true representation that *A*, it is the case that relative to some standpoint *x*, *A* and this suffices for the representation to be from the standpoint of *x* (whatever it is). There is no true representation of the world without there being *some* standpoint from which the representation represents things.

The target picture finally contains the idea that, since there are multiple standpoints relative to which different facts obtain, there is no possibility of a truly complete representation. The question is how to incorporate this commitment in such a way that it hangs together with what we already have. There are two components to this. The first component is relatively straightforward: we assume that there (can) exist two standpoints relative to which incompatible facts obtain; we assume that, for some distinct *x* and *y*, there is some *A* such that @_{*x*}[*A*] and @_{*y*}[¬*A*].

The second component to an inescapable sense of incompleteness in our conceptions is an assumption that metaphysical relativity is factive: if @_{*a*}[*A*], it follows (in some sense yet to be elucidated) that *A*.

Consider first how things work out if metaphysical relativity is not factive. Assume, for example, that @_{*t*}[Lucy sits] but it is not the case

that Lucy sits. If it is not the case that Lucy sits, then there is also no reason any complete picture of the world would have to include (in the relevant sense) the representation that Lucy sits—after all, it is false. This means in turn that failing to represent what things are like from the perspective of t_1 (thus not adopting t_1) would not imply that one fails to capture some genuine aspect of the world. That something is a metaphysical standpoint would not imply that there are facts whose representation forces one to adopt that standpoint. The assumption that metaphysical relativity is not factive runs counter to the intended metaphysics of the picture.¹¹

The assumption that metaphysical relativity is factive secures the intended picture. If $@_{t_1}$ [Lucy sits] and $@_{t_2}$ [Lucy does not sit], then the factivity of relativity implies that just representing that $@_{t_1}$ [Lucy sits] and $@_{t_2}$ [Lucy does not sit] cannot be exhaustive because it does not capture, for example, the fact that Lucy sits. If we add the representation that Lucy sits to a completeness-aspiring representation of the world, we thereby adopt the perspective of t_1 . However, in its turn, it cannot be truly complete because it does not represent that Lucy does not sit. Adding instead the representation that Lucy does not sit results in it being from the perspective of t_2 , but it cannot be truly complete because it does not represent that Lucy sits. Adding the representation that Lucy sits and does not sit only has us lapse into incoherence. So, coherent conceptions can only be incomplete. With the assumption that relative facts are facts, and that there are incompatible standpoints, we can infer that any true representation cannot but be from some standpoint and stand back from others. From there being incompatible standpoints, we can infer that no single representation can be a truly complete representation of all the facts, in accord with the target picture.

Without the assumption of factivity, the picture seems to me to unravel; with the assumption of factivity, the different elements of the picture fall into place. The assumed factivity of metaphysical relativity is thus a central and distinctive commitment, but it also shows that more must be involved in endorsing this outlook than currently meets the eye. Assume again that $@_{t_1}$ [Lucy sits] and $@_{t_2}$ [Lucy does not sit]. Given factivity, we can infer whatever obtains relative to the relevant standpoints: from the assumption that $@_{t_1}$ [Lucy sits], we can infer that Lucy sits, and from the assumption that $@_{t_2}$ [Lucy does not sit],

¹¹There is an alternative widespread picture on which there are no perspectival or relative facts (such as that Lucy sits) but only perspectival *representations* of non-perspectival facts. See, among many others, Adrian Moore, *Points of View* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). This is not the picture under discussion here.

we can infer that Lucy does not sit. But we also assumed that any true representation is from some standpoint, and there surely is no standpoint at which Lucy both sits and does not sit. That Lucy both sits and does not sit is anyway self-contradicting. To really make sense of this metaphysical picture, more needs to be said.

II. UNPACKING THE PICTURE FURTHER

In what follows, I sketch a way to enrich classical logic with a *sui generis* type of logical structure, instantiated by the facts found across standpoints. I will use models for this.

We will restrict our attention to metaphysical relativity and, for the moment, leave out the notion of the adoption of standpoints through representations. We have the standard language of predicate logic, enriched with the hybrid operator $@_{\cdot}[\dots]$, which, remember, combines with a name in the first position and a sentence in the second position.

A model is a tuple $\langle D, W, R, v \rangle$. D is a non-empty set of objects. W is a non-empty subset of the domain D , $W \subseteq D$, and represents the standpoints in the model. R is a binary accessibility relation on W , $R \subseteq W \times W$, where $w_1 R w_2$ represents the claim that, from the standpoint of w_1 , w_2 is a standpoint. We assume the following condition on R :

Reflexivity: For any w in W , $w R w$. Any standpoint in our model is a standpoint from the standpoint of itself.¹²

The valuation function v assigns extensions to names and predicates in the standard way, with a few additional constraints:

- (1) To each point w in W a subset of D , $v(w) \subseteq D$; $v(w)$ represents entities that exist from the perspective of w ; we require that if $w_1 R w_2$ then $w_2 \in v(w_1)$.
- (2) To each constant a of the language, a member $v(a) = d$ in D .¹³
- (3) To each n -place F , relative to each point w in W , a subset of $v(w)^n$, $v_w(F) \subseteq v(w)^n$; the extension of a predicate, relative to a perspective, is a subset of the perspective's domain.

¹²I should flag: this goes beyond the commitments of the target picture. It is, however, the simplest condition that ensures that for anything that obtains, there is a standpoint relative to which it obtains, and seems independently plausible to me.

¹³Standpoints are in the domain of quantification ($W \subseteq D$), and constants may refer to standpoints. Also, the model raises the ontological questions familiar from models for first-order modal logic, but I will ignore them here.

Furthermore, v assigns truth values to sentences relative to standpoints, using the classical clauses for the ordinary logical connectives and an additional clause for @:

- (4) $v_w(Fa_1 \dots a_n) = 1$ iff $\langle v(a_1), \dots, v(a_n) \rangle \in v_w(F)$
- (5) $v_w(\neg A) = 1$ iff $v_w(A) \neq 1$
- (6) $v_w(A \wedge B) = 1$ iff $v_w(A) = 1$ and $v_w(B) = 1$
- (7) $v_w(A \supset B) = 1$ iff $v_w(A) = 0$ or $v_w(B) = 1$
- (8) $v_w(\exists xA) = 1$ iff, for some $d \in D$, $v_w(A_x\{d\}) = 1$ ¹⁴
- (9) $v_w(@a[A]) = 1$ iff, for some $u \in D_w$ such that $v(a) = u$ and wRu , $v_u(A) = 1$.¹⁵

We focus on logical entailment. It seems to me that when we assume a bunch of premises, we are always also assuming that there is logical interaction between them, that they hold *together*. In a standard framework, in which the world is metaphysically unified, any premises automatically hold together if they hold at all. Standard logical validity tracks the logical consequences of premises that hold together, and in the current framework this means that it tracks consequences of premises that hold at the same standpoint.

Considering this, one natural conception of validity concerns the logical patterns *within* any given standpoint. Indeed, I propose we understand the validity of ordinary, classically valid inferences as follows:

Classical Validity: An inference from Σ to A is a classically valid inference, written $\Sigma \models A$, iff, for every model M , for all $w \in W$, if $M, w \Vdash \Sigma$ then $M, w \Vdash A$.¹⁶

I will call a classically valid inference also a *valid deduction*, and the logical structure that underwrites this *internal logical structure* (given that they are patterns in the facts that obtain relative to a given standpoint). They are inferences from premises that hold at a standpoint to a conclusion that is logically guaranteed to hold at that same standpoint. So, a valid deduction is an inference that preserves truth *and* adopted standpoints. As we make an inference that is valid in this sense, we are guaranteed that whatever standpoints we adopt in endorsing the premises are standpoints that we still adopt when endorsing the conclusion. Given this understanding of validity, it can be checked that all inferences that are valid in classical first-order

¹⁴The language is extended to ensure that every member of the domain has a name: for all $d \in D$, we add a constant to the language, $\{d\}$, such that $v(\{d\}) = d$.

¹⁵Note: only things that are in the domain of w can be perspectives from the perspective of w .

¹⁶Here " $M, w \Vdash \Sigma$ " means that *each* premise in Σ is true at point w in model M .

predicate logic are classically valid. After all, the clauses for truth-at-a-standpoint for the standard logical connectives are just the classical truth conditions.

There is, however, more logical structure in the intended metaphysics than we capture if we restrict ourselves to this sense of validity. The inference from $@_a[A]$ to A is not a classically valid inference since A is not guaranteed to hold at each standpoint where $@_a[A]$ holds. Yet, given the metaphysical picture at play, the inference is clearly logically correct in *some* sense. To capture this, I propose that we endorse a pluralism about the kinds of logical structure exemplified by the facts. Besides the structure exemplified by facts that obtain relative to any given standpoint, there is the structure exemplified by the facts found across standpoints. I distinguish *classical validity* from *external validity*. External validity is characterized as follows:

External Validity: An inference from Σ to A is externally valid, written $\Sigma \xrightarrow{\rightarrow} A$, iff, for every model M , for all $w_1 \in W$, if $M, w_1 \Vdash \Sigma$ then, for some $w_2 \in W$ such that $w_1 R w_2$, $M, w_2 \Vdash A$.

The premises are still required to hold together (at the same standpoint), but, in contrast to valid deductions, the conclusion of an externally valid inference does not need to hold at standpoints where the premises hold. Rather, they need to hold at some standpoint (relative to the standpoints of the premises). I will also call externally valid inferences *standpoint shifts*. As we make such an inference, we shift to any standpoints where the conclusion holds, and these standpoints may not include all the standpoints of the premises (although we should allow for a null shift: cases where the standpoints of the conclusion happen to coincide with those of the premises).

For our purposes, two key instances of externally valid inferences are the following:

$$\begin{array}{l} \exists x @_x [A] \xrightarrow{\rightarrow} A \\ A \xrightarrow{\rightarrow} \exists x @_x [A] \end{array}$$

These inferences are not classically valid, but they are logically permissible to make, given that they are externally valid. For example, if $@_a [A]$ is true then it must be true at some standpoint w_1 , and this means that, given the semantic clause for $@$, at this standpoint w_1 , there must be *some* standpoint w_2 (referred to by a) at which A holds and that we are thus free to adopt. Similarly, in the other direction: from A we can infer that it holds at some standpoint, and when we infer this, we adopt the standpoint relative to which this relativity-involving fact ($@_x [A]$) holds.

Note that, given the assumed reflexivity of the accessibility relation R , whenever the conclusion is logically guaranteed to hold at the same standpoint as the premises, it is also guaranteed to hold at a standpoint relative to the standpoint of the premises, and so:

$$\text{If } A, B \models C, \text{ then } A, B \xrightarrow{R} C.$$

Any inference that is classically valid is externally valid.

External validity reflects standpoint-transcending logical structure. It can serve as a basis for enriching the expressive power of our object language in several ways. Here, I will only introduce one further notion, whose usefulness we will see in the next section, namely a conditional that expresses that we can shift to a certain claim under certain conditions.

Let ' \rightarrow ' be an external conditional which states that if the conditions in the antecedent hold, we can shift to some standpoint from which the consequent holds. We can add this to our language and add the following clause for the enriched language:

$$(10) \quad v_w(A \rightarrow B) = 1 \text{ iff, if } v_w(A) = 1 \text{ then, for some } u \text{ such that } wRu, \\ v_u(B) = 1.$$

The claim that $A \rightarrow B$ implies that if A , then one can shift one's standpoint such that B .¹⁷ It can be checked that we obtain an externally valid modus ponens:

$$A, A \rightarrow B \xrightarrow{R} B$$

The claim that $A \rightarrow B$ precisely tells us that we can shift such that B under the condition that A , and hence, if it holds together with A , we can validly shift to the conclusion that B .

Whenever it is the case that A , we can infer that it is the case that, for some x , $@x[A]$, and vice versa. But this is not because ' A ' and for some x , ' $@x[A]$ ' express the same fact. For instance, to say *that it rains* and to say *that it rains at a time* are not only distinct claims, but, we assume, they also express distinct facts when true. For it to rain is not just for it to rain at a time. Nevertheless, when we have the former, we also have the latter. I assume necessary connections between metaphysically distinct facts (and hence endorse a so-called hyperintensional metaphysics).

¹⁷ Indeed, the external conditional can also be introduced through the definition: $A \rightarrow B =_{df} A \supset \exists x @x[B]$. But be careful: we do not just allow a valid inference from $A, A \supset \exists x @x[B]$ to $\exists x @x[B]$, a standard case of modus ponens; we allow a valid shift from $A, A \supset \exists x @x[B]$ to B .

Classical and external validity should not be collapsed into one notion of validity within our theorizing, as the result would gloss over clear joints in logical structure. There is a marked difference between the logical patterns within standpoints and logical patterns across standpoints, and between reasoning from a fixed standpoint and reasoning in which one possibly shifts standpoints, and this difference is reflected in the different formal features of deductions and standpoint shifts.

To mention one formal feature that is central to the regimentation of the target metaphysics in which we are engaged, contrary to deductions, conclusions of standpoint shifts cannot be aggregated into a single conjunction:

That $A \vec{\models} C$ and $B \vec{\models} D$ does not imply that $A, B \vec{\models} C \wedge D$.

That one can validly shift from A to C and from B to D does not mean that one can validly shift from A and B to the conjunction ‘ C and D ’. To return to the case we discussed at the end of the previous section, from the assumption that $@_{t_1}$ [Lucy sits], there is a valid shift to the conclusion that Lucy sits, and from $@_{t_2}$ [Lucy does not sit] there is a valid shift to the conclusion that Lucy does not sit; however, that does not mean that there is a valid shift from the assumption that $@_{t_1}$ [Lucy sits] and $@_{t_2}$ [Lucy does not sit] to the conclusion that Lucy sits and does not sit. There is a disunified character to the world, and our reasoning may lead us to different bubbles of facts that together form no single unified chunk of reality.

We have in outline an answer to the question left unanswered earlier: “In what sense can we infer from A that $@_x[A]$ and from $@_x[A]$ that A ?” The inference is a classically invalid inference but an externally valid standpoint shift. We cannot assume the conjunction of conclusions reached through valid shifts; hence, from the assumption that $@_{t_1}$ [Lucy sits] and $@_{t_2}$ [Lucy does not sit], it does not follow in any way (neither as a deduction nor as a shift) that Lucy sits and does not sit. There is a sense in which there is the fact that Lucy sits and the fact that Lucy does not sit, but they are not integrated in one single fact because, although each fact obtains, they do not obtain together.¹⁸

There is much more to say about the sketched logic, but this is all we need for our moderate aims here.¹⁹

¹⁸This commitment to a disunified world might be enough to count as a form of fragmentalism. It is also in the spirit of the “alternatives intuition” discussed by Rovane, “How to Formulate Relativism,” *op. cit.*, p. 241.

¹⁹Of course, the endorsed logical pluralism raises questions, but many of these are well known and have been discussed in detail; see, for example, Jc Beall and Greg Restall, *Logical Pluralism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

III. THE DIALECTICAL LANDSCAPE AND AN APPLICATION TO TIME

The general framework has radical consequences for how one positions oneself in various philosophical debates. In particular, it allows us to formulate theories that can agree wholesale with opposing parties in a philosophical debate, while opening up new distinctive views. I will illustrate the framework by sketching a theory of time, which agrees with those who defend a theory from an atemporal standpoint and with those who defend a theory from the perspective of the present moment in time.

It will be helpful to start by framing a bit of the dialectical space, to distinguish different types of possible views about relativity to times. We can do this in terms of three principles.²⁰ These principles are initially formulated using only ordinary classical connectives (so not using the external conditional).

Consider the first schematic principle:

Factuality of the Present: For some time t , if $@t[A]$, then A .

This is motivated by the thought that if something is the case at the present time, then it is the case. If you are reading this at the present moment in time, then you are reading this. There is at least one time, namely the present, which is such that what obtains at it, obtains. Call this feature—of being such that if $@x[A]$, then A —*factuality*.²¹ The claim is that at least one time is factual.

The second principle:

Neutrality about Times: If some time t is such that if $@t[A]$ then A , then any time t is such that if $@t[A]$, then A .

If any time is factual, then times are in general factual. No moment in time is metaphysically privileged regarding such a feature as factuality. The current time might be the time at which we are currently situated, at which we are currently thinking and experiencing things, and it might even be that, *relative to the current time*, it is privileged with regard to factuality. (That is, it might be that $@t_1 [t_1$ is such that if $@t_1 [A]$ then A , but no other t is such that if $@t[A]$ then A). Take note of the wide-scope relativity.) Nevertheless, it seems that if we abstract from our own position in time, there is nothing intrinsically special about any one time as opposed to others, or so one might think. Any moment

²⁰ Compare the principles that Fine uses in “Tense and Reality,” *op. cit.*, p. 271.

²¹ Note: factuality applies to standpoints. For example, times are said to be factual. The earlier notion of factivity applies to what is expressed by the operator @. Relativity is said to be factive.

in time is the only factual time *from its own perspective*, sure, but if any time is factual as such, then all are.

Finally, we consider a principle concerning the variegation or contrariety of facts over time. Let us say that A and B obtain at different times whenever there are some t_1 and t_2 such that $@_{t_1}[A]$ but not $@_{t_1}[B]$, and $@_{t_2}[B]$ but not $@_{t_2}[A]$. A principle of diachronic contrariety can then be formulated as follows:

Diachronic Contrariety: Some A and B are such that they obtain at different times, and it is impossible that A and B .

The principle states that *incompatible* matters obtain across time. One might think, for example, that some clay is a ball at one time and a cube at another time, and that nothing can be both a ball and a cube.

These three principles are inconsistent. Assume that the present time is such that what obtains relative to it, obtains. If we want to avoid that the current time is metaphysically privileged in being the only time for which this holds, then this should be the case for any time. This means that any time is such that what obtains relative to it, obtains. We would, however, say that different matters obtain at different times: at one time I sit while at another time I do not. Given that I cannot both be sitting and not be sitting, it seems that it cannot be the case that any time is such that what obtains relative to it, obtains.

In more abstract terms, the inconsistency emerges as follows. By *factuality*: some time t is such that if $@_t[A]$, then A . Then, by *neutrality*: any time t is such that if $@_t[A]$, then A . So, for any A and B that obtain at different times, A and B . By *diachronic contrariety*, there are A and B that obtain at different times and which are such that it is impossible that A and B . So, it is not the case that for any A and B that obtain at different times, A and B . Contradiction.

When we frame the dialectical landscape through these three principles, it seems that views that employ relativity to times must deny at least one of the three principles, resulting in views that take the following schematic shapes:²²

No Factuality: $@_{t_1}[A \wedge B] \wedge @_{t_2}[C \wedge D] \wedge \dots$

No Neutrality: $@_{t_1}[A \wedge B] \wedge @_{t_2}[C \wedge D] \wedge \dots \wedge A \wedge B \wedge \dots$

No Contrariety: $@_{t_1}[A \wedge B] \wedge @_{t_2}[C \wedge D] \wedge \dots \wedge A \wedge B \wedge C \wedge D \wedge \dots$

²² Strictly speaking, we can distinguish four types. The contrariety principle consists of two conjuncts: that different matters obtain at different times and that some such matters are contrary facts. One type of *no contrariety view* emerges from rejecting the second conjunct (the one discussed in the text), another type of view from rejecting the first conjunct. The difference between these two kinds of no-contrariety views does not matter for our purpose here.

A “no factuality” view describes what things are like from an atemporal point of view, rejecting that the world is in accord with what things are like from the perspective of any moment within time.²³ (The world is rather in accord with what things are like from this atemporal standpoint.) A “no contrariness” or compatibilist view also adopts an atemporal standpoint, taking all times to be on a par, but it does so in a different way: by denying the contrariness of what obtains at different times and by allowing that what obtains at any time, obtains as such.²⁴ In contrast to these two atemporal views, a “no neutrality” or presentist view describes what things are like from the standpoint of the current time, taking it to be the only factual time.²⁵

The views can be seen as describing what things are like from a certain type of standpoint as well as denying that there are other standpoints that are in accord with reality. One can wonder if such views can be correct in describing what things are like from their respective standpoints, correctly capturing certain ways in which some phenomenon manifests itself, and yet be mistaken in denying that there are other legitimate standpoints to adopt. What if time has both a dynamic and a dimensional character? What if the moments in time as well as the atemporal perspective on the whole of time are both existing and legitimate standpoints to adopt when providing metaphysical theories of the world?

Let me give an example of a view that takes both atemporal and temporal standpoints to be real (and which I take to be well motivated for reasons I cannot go into here). We assume that there is such a thing as an atemporal standpoint, which we label 0 , and we also assume that times exist and are genuine metaphysical standpoints (the temporal standpoints). From the perspective of the atemporal standpoint 0 : different matters obtain relative to different times without any time being factual. All times are on a par. From the perspective of t_1 , t_1 is factual. From the perspective of t_2 , t_2 is factual. Anything that obtains relative to any of these standpoints, obtains. Whenever you

²³ An example of a *no factuality view* would be a hidden parameter view according to which any ordinary fact involves a relation to a time; see Hugh Mellor, *Real Time* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

²⁴ An example of a *no contrariness view* would be a form of perdurantism which holds that, given an arbitrary time t and temporal part a_1 , $@t[a_1 \text{ is } F]$ iff a_1 is located at t and a_1 is F . Assuming different temporal parts are located at different times, the facts found across time are then compatible.

²⁵ Examples of *no neutrality views* are tense-logical views that deny that what was the case and will be the case, is the case. This includes not just ontological presentism, a view that restricts all existence to a single point in time, but (arguably) also includes growing block views and moving spotlight views.

represent any of the temporal (or transient) facts, you describe what things are like from a temporal standpoint and adopt that standpoint.

To illustrate, consider the following schematic picture:

$t_1:$ $p \wedge q \wedge \dots$ $@_{t_1}[p \wedge q \wedge \dots]$ $@_{t_2}[r \wedge s \wedge \dots]$ \dots	$t_2:$ $r \wedge s \wedge \dots$ $@_{t_1}[p \wedge q \wedge \dots]$ $@_{t_2}[r \wedge s \wedge \dots]$ \dots
--	--

The description of what the world is like from the atemporal standpoint takes exactly the form of theories that deny the factuality of the present. The description of what the world is like from the standpoint of one of the times (t_1 or t_2) takes exactly the form of theories that deny neutrality.²⁶ We can further fill out the schematic picture with the relevant failures of the general principles:

$t_1:$ $p \wedge q \wedge \dots$ $@_{t_1}[p \wedge q \wedge \dots]$ $@_{t_2}[r \wedge s \wedge \dots]$ \dots $\exists t(@_t[A] \supset A)$ $\neg \forall t(@_t[A] \supset A)$ \dots	$t_2:$ $r \wedge s \wedge \dots$ $@_{t_1}[p \wedge q \wedge \dots]$ $@_{t_2}[r \wedge s \wedge \dots]$ \dots $\exists t(@_t[A] \supset A)$ $\neg \forall t(@_t[A] \supset A)$ \dots
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²⁶You may have been asking yourself, from what standpoint are we offering these schematic pictures? Answer: all of them. The schematic picture just describes various matters as relative to various points (“ $t : A$ ” is a visually suggestive way of representing the claim that $@_t[A]$).

The factuality principle fails from the perspective of an atemporal standpoint. The neutrality principle fails from the perspective of a moment in time.

If we admit both an atemporal standpoint and temporal standpoints, and assume the proposed theory of metaphysical relativity, then reality comprehends the way it is from an atemporal standpoint as well as the way it is from temporal standpoints and does not allow for a truly complete yet coherent description. In describing reality, we can only wander from standpoint to standpoint, never taking it in all at once, never immersing ourselves in all standpoints at once. Let us call this the *pluralist theory of time*.

This incorporation of multiple philosophical positions may create a sense of methodological vertigo. Someone asserts that no time is factual. I can disagree and thereby adopt a temporal standpoint, or I can agree and thereby adopt the atemporal standpoint. As there is nothing that fixes my standpoint besides the way I represent things, it may feel that we lose all stable ground and render both agreement and disagreement an empty gesture. It can seem that the theory does not assist us in deciding what to say or what to think.

It is indeed a feature of the account that the proper or most truthful way to make sense of the comprehensive world involves a kind of nomadic thought, free to wander from standpoint to standpoint. It can seem directionless because the world harbors multiple standpoints from which to consider the facts. This is indeed what the picture calls for. But, just as we saw in the previous section that we cannot expect to import standard accounts of validity into the framework, we also cannot expect standard conventions concerning assertion, denial, and communication to stand unmodified. In making an assertion, my intention may just be to express a fact, but it may also be to make my interlocutor see what things are like from a given standpoint. Though nothing fixes my standpoint besides the way I immersively represent things and the facts about what obtains relative to what, my descriptive intentions can be aimed at describing things from particular standpoints (and fail in this aim). Different communicative situations come with different presuppositions about what standpoints our communication is oriented around. For instance, an ordinary everyday conversation may standardly be aimed at describing what is the case relative to the current time and one's direct surroundings, whereas, in contrast, working out the dynamic evolution of some phenomenon over time may conventionally be aimed at describing things from the atemporal standpoint.

The question is therefore what sort of communicative intentions and conventions we should abide by when engaging in philosophical

discussions with peers about what sort of facts obtain. It seems that we can in principle endorse anything that is from some standpoint the case, since such matters are genuine bits of world by our lights.²⁷ What we cannot endorse is anything that is false from all standpoints; disagreement should then only be with what is false from any standpoint. And so we have a convention not to restrict our focus in the conversations or theorizing that is normally appropriate to metaphysics:

Convention: Accept anything that obtains from some standpoint, and reject only what does not obtain from any standpoint.

The appropriate aim, given our picture, is to avoid invariant falsehoods and to be flexible and go along with the assertions of interlocutors when they are right from some genuine standpoint or other. When someone asserts that no time is factual, it would be incorrect to disagree. In contrast, note that we correctly disagree with the claim that facts that obtain relative to different standpoints are never contrary facts. This claim is not right from the atemporal standpoint, nor from the standpoint of any time, and, assuming that these are all the standpoints that exist, it is therefore invariantly false.

The pluralist theory of time is not the view that all parties are right, or that anything goes. The reason for this is that there is a fact of the matter about which standpoints exist and what things are like from these standpoints. Although the view incorporates the views of two opposing parties in the debate in some sense, it does not follow that it agrees with just any party in the debate.

Also note that, so far, we limited ourselves to the passive reactions of denial and endorsement of statements in terms of the expressive resources of the standard theories. The pluralist has more expressive resources, however, and, using these resources, she can enrich her claims and explain her responses. The principles that we used to frame the debate have close analogues if we look across standpoints, using the external conditional that we introduced above. Consider, for example, the following pair of factuality principles (in symbols this time, to make the distinctions clear):

Factuality: $\exists t(@t[A] \supset A)$.

External Factuality: $\exists t(@t[A] \rightarrow A)$.

²⁷ I say “in principle” because, of course, even philosophical discussions hardly have fixed rules. There can be other conventions at work and specific aims that impose restrictions on the rather untethered convention stated here (for example, someone may be interested in adopting certain specific standpoints). Still, *in principle*, we can work within a context in which one can agree with anything that is true relative to some standpoint and shift along with our interlocutors.

And a similarly related pair of neutrality principles:

Neutrality: $(\exists t(@t[A] \supset A)) \supset (\forall t(@t[A] \supset A))$.

External Neutrality: $(\exists t(@t[A] \rightarrow A)) \supset (\forall t(@t[A] \rightarrow A))$.

The principles that employ the external conditional state that, whenever $@t[A]$, we can adopt a legitimate standpoint such that A . Factuality implies effectively that there is some time that we can legitimately adopt as a standpoint. Neutrality states that if we can legitimately adopt the standpoint of one time, we can legitimately adopt the standpoint of any time.

Note secondly that, even from standpoints where the classical versions of these principles are false, the external versions are true:

	0 :	
	$@t_1 [p \wedge q \wedge \dots]$	
	$@t_2 [r \wedge s \wedge \dots]$	
	...	
	$\neg \exists t (@t[A] \supset A)$	
	...	
	$\exists t (@t[A] \rightarrow A)$	
	$\forall t (@t[A] \rightarrow A)$	
	...	
t_1 :		t_2 :
$p \wedge q \wedge \dots$		$r \wedge s \wedge \dots$
$@t_1 [p \wedge q \wedge \dots]$		$@t_1 [p \wedge q \wedge \dots]$
$@t_2 [r \wedge s \wedge \dots]$		$@t_2 [r \wedge s \wedge \dots]$
...		...
$\exists t (@t[A] \supset A)$		$\exists t (@t[A] \supset A)$
$\neg \forall t (@t[A] \supset A)$		$\neg \forall t (@t[A] \supset A)$
...		...
$\exists t (@t[A] \rightarrow A)$		$\exists t (@t[A] \rightarrow A)$
$\forall t (@t[A] \rightarrow A)$		$\forall t (@t[A] \rightarrow A)$
...		...

The external versions of the factuality and neutrality principles are invariantly true (that is, at all standpoints). This means that any negation of them is invariantly false. The pluralist puts forward these principles, explains them, and correctly disagrees with anyone who denies them. Substantive philosophical disagreement with the pluralist will

have to concern, among other things, the analogous external principles in their intended interpretation—which hold invariantly across standpoints, if at all.

I hope this helps to draw out the striking but tractable dialectical consequences of the framework. These are only the beginnings of a longer story. There is much more to say. Let me conclude, however, by illustrating briefly what endorsement of the view might look like in practice, to get a sense of how to live with the view, as it were. Consider a philosophical conversation with a proponent of the framework:

- A: I'm convinced that different matters obtain at different times, but the current time is special in the sense that, what obtains at that time, obtains as such.
- Pluralist: Yes, I think that what you describe is indeed the case.
- B: I disagree with both of you. Different matters obtain at different times, but none of these matters obtains as such. All times are on a par in this way.
- Pluralist: But I don't disagree with that, I think that what you describe is the case as well.
- A: Hey, but how can you say that? You just agreed with me that the present time is privileged.
- Pluralist: I hold that there genuinely exists an atemporal standpoint but also that moments in time are genuine standpoints. Different patterns of facts obtain relative to these standpoints. You two are describing what things are genuinely like from these different standpoints, are you not? Well, given that you are, I think that you both truthfully describe genuine, self-standing facts when you do so.
- A: But you're wrong. There is only one standpoint that corresponds with reality as such. Yes, I'm describing things from the current standpoint in time, but it's the only standpoint that corresponds with reality, if you know what I mean.
- Pluralist: And what I'm saying is that you are right in your description of what the world is like from the perspective of the present time, so there is nothing I disagree with in what you say. From the perspective of the current moment in time, it is the only standpoint that corresponds with reality.
- B: So, you are someone who believes in true contradictions then? You believe that the present is privileged and not privileged. I guess you also believe that, because it rains at one time and doesn't rain at another time, it rains and doesn't rain?
- Pluralist: No, I don't quite believe any of those things.
- B: But weren't you saying earlier that when things obtain relative to a standpoint, they are all genuine self-standing facts?
- Pluralist: Yes, but a contradiction isn't a genuine fact, can't be. I do think the sort of view you describe is getting at an insight

though. But, if you ask me, you don't properly express that insight by contradicting yourself.

A: OK, but then how do you express it?

Pluralist: I'm afraid that's a long, somewhat complicated story for which I need to clarify the general background metaphysics and introduce some new concepts, including a particular type of logical structure. I should also tell you about the convention I adopt in discussions like these. The best way to ease you into the framework is by unpacking a rough metaphysical picture that crops up in different philosophical discussions. Consider the following picture: ...

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