V—The Flexibility and Stability of Perspectives

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This paper develops an account of perspectives that explains both perspectival stability and flexibility informed by research in neuroscience, cognitive psychology, and philosophy of mind. Any individual has limited processing resources, and so selects and represents only information pertinent to the situation or task at hand, filtering out information that can safely be ignored. An individual's active perspective is anchored, for example, by her self-concept currently in force. This perspectival anchor can shift from moment to moment as she navigates her environment, thus yielding a change in her active perspective. However, the extent to which an individual's active perspective can shift is restricted by her overall cognitive, perceptual, emotional and agential schemas, which constitute what we call her dormant perspective. Thus, while an individual's dormant perspective changes only slowly over time, her active perspective can change abruptly.

Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)
— Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself*

I

Introduction. One of the deepest questions in philosophy is the relation between mind and world. This question is, at its core, one of an individual's perspective on the world around her. Any individual has a perspective on her environment in so far as she occupies a position in the spacetime manifold and has a set of cognitive, emotional, perceptual and agential schemas with which she interprets information, thereby guiding how she interacts with others and navigates the world around her.

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Natural and artificial systems have limited processing resources. Consequently, they activate, represent and select only information pertinent to the situation or task at hand, filtering out information they can safely ignore. To illustrate, consider Kim. She is both an academic and a runner. Her perspective when she navigates her environment as an academic is different from the perspective she has when she does so as a runner. Her preferences in the two modes diverge, as does what evidence she pays attention to, what questions she asks, and which of her many beliefs are most relevant to her. However, there are limits to how much Kim's perspective changes. In this way, Kim's perspective manifests both flexibility and stability. More generally, we can specify the following two desiderata for an account of perspectives:

Flexibility Desideratum. An individual's active perspective can shift abruptly due to changes, for example, in context.

Stability Desideratum. The degree to which an individual's active perspective can shift is limited by her cognitive, perceptual, emotional and agential schemas.

To date, there is no account that explains the dual nature of perspectives as both flexible and stable.[1] This paper aims to rectify this state of affairs. The central thesis is that an individual's active perspective is anchored, but that this perspectival anchor can shift from moment to moment as the individual navigates her environment and interacts with others. An *active perspective* is constituted by the relevant individual's currently activated schemas and perspectival anchors. A *dormant perspective* is constituted by all her mental states, capacities, and patterns of predictions and expectations. The degree to which an individual's active perspective can shift from moment to moment is constrained by her dormant perspective. Any change in active perspectival anchor will yield a change in active perspective. Each of these terms will be unpacked in due course. To develop this view, we will need a basic understanding of the nature of perspectives (§II), in light of which we can develop an account of perspectival anchors (§III). We can then show how this account of perspectives and their anchors satisfies the flexibility (§IV) and stability desiderata (§V).

[1] Perspectives are frequently characterized both as fixed and—often in the same text—as shifting with changes in context and environment, without explanation of how both could be true (for example, Sethi and Yildiz 2016).

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II

What Is a Perspective? A perspective is the lens through which an individual processes, organizes, interprets and responds to information and thereby navigates situations and interacts with others. Less metaphorically, it is a spatiotemporally located information-processing mechanism. An individual's perspective is constituted by three key components: her schemas, her spatiotemporal location, and one or more perspectival anchors. The focus of this paper is not on developing the nature of all aspects of perspectives, but rather on the role of perspectival anchors in accounting for perspectival flexibility and stability. This will, however, require a basic understanding of the other two components of perspectives: schemas and spatiotemporal locations.

First, however, it will be helpful to make a few cautionary clarifications. One might conclude from the fact that we each experience and interpret the world around us from a perspective that everything is relative. However, taking seriously the fact that we each have a perspective does not have any such relative consequences. The world exists independently of our different ways of experiencing and interpreting it. Moreover, while we can only access the world around us through the lens of our perspective, we do access it in this way. After all, even though a photograph is always taken with a particular lens, it is still a depiction of reality. The same holds for human perception and cognition. Finally, the fact that we each have a perspective on the world around us does not imply that all perspectives are equal. There are experts. Being an expert implies that one's access to facts is, on at least one dimension, superior to that of a novice. There are a multitude of relevant dimensions. Here is just one example to highlight the difference between the expert and the novice. If your philosophy colleague says that a mole on your arm looks benign, but your dermatologist recommends a biopsy, you should trust your dermatologist.

In short, while the fact that we each have a perspective implies neither that we cannot access the world around us nor that all perspectives are equal, it does imply that we process, organize and interpret information through a lens. Taking this fact seriously calls for epistemic humility. After all, we are never able to entirely escape our perspective.

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Schemas and Spatiotemporal Locations.

One central component of a perspective is the set of schemas via which an individual accesses her environment. We can distinguish cognitive, perceptual, emotional and agential schemas.[2] These four schemas may overlap and interconnect. To illustrate, our perceptual capacities may be employed in cognition, such as when we imagine a pink elephant. Similarly, cognitive developments such as learning to read can affect the auditory perception of phonemes (Pattamadilok et al. 2010).[3]

The four schemas are constituted by three kinds of mental category: mental states, capacities, and patterns of prediction and expectation. Each one of these three categories is understood broadly. The category of mental states includes beliefs, emotions, experiences, values, intuitions, goals, preferences, questions, and background views, among others. The second category includes concepts, dispositions, skills, perceptual, emotional and agential capacities, and know-how, among others. Finally, patterns of prediction and expectation include statistical regularities that determine how we classify and categorize incoming information at a sub-personal and unconscious level, patterns of actions and evaluative responses, social conditioning, and repeating patterns of experiences. These patterns govern how information is organized at the lowest level. They generate unconscious role expectations that are applied to people, and sub-personal scripts that are applied to situations.[4]

A few clarifications are in order. Each of these elements that constitute an individual's schemas can be entirely unconscious and implicit. The elements of these three categories interact in complex ways. To illustrate, consider scripts, that is, the unconscious expectation of the sequence of events in a specific setting (Schank and Abelson 1977). Scripts are grounded in low-level unconscious patterns of prediction and expectations. However, a script can be

[2] While these four domains are the most important for present purposes, this list is not exclusive. There may be additional domains of schemas. One could argue that epistemic schemas constitute a separate domain. For present purposes, however, we can safely subsume epistemic schemas under cognitive schemas. See Schellenberg (MS) for a detailed argument in support of the account of schemas sketched here.

[3] For a discussion of how cognitive, perceptual, and emotional processes are intertwined at a neural level, see Pessoa (2022) and Pessoa, Medina and Desfilis (2022).

[4] For an analysis of how patterns of prediction and expectation at the lowest level shape our perception and cognition, see Hohwy (2013) and Clark (2023).

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affected by an individual's concepts, dispositions and skills. Further, an individual's beliefs and preferences can affect her scripts, and her scripts can in turn generate beliefs and emotions.

The second key component of an active perspective is an individual's location in the spacetime manifold. This location constitutes her spatiotemporal perspective. The point here is not whether individuals refer to themselves as spatiotemporally located objects; nor is it about what their temporal perspective is to themselves.[5] The point is simpler: any biological organism occupies a specific location in the spacetime manifold, and consequently has access to some external, mind-independent facts and not others. After all, different such facts are available at different locations.

An individual's spatiotemporal location is a purely external component of her perspective. This means that any being occupying a specific location *L* would have the same spatiotemporal perspective. After all, the same information is presented to *L* no matter what organism occupies it, if any. In short, what information is presented to a spatiotemporal location is a purely external fact about the world, independent of any individual that occupies the relevant location.

Needless to say, beings vary widely in what information they can access. To illustrate, consider Trix, who has trichromatic vision, and Mona, who has monochromatic vision. Let's assume, for the sake of argument, that it is possible for Trix and Mona to occupy the same location *L*, and that they are both occupying *L*. While they are presented with identical information, Trix will perceive features that Mona cannot perceive.

Even if two individuals at location *L* have the same sensory capacities, and so could perceive the same environmental features, they may not attend to the same features, and so perceive the environment differently. Even if they attend to the same environmental features, they may vary in how they process the information due to differences in their perceptual and cognitive capacities. To illustrate, consider the following situation: an architect and a novice are looking at the same building. While the novice sees doors, windows, and a beautiful façade, the architect sees much more. She sees structural elements, textures and compositions to which the novice is oblivious

[5] For discussions of the first point, see Evans (1982) and O'Brien (2007); for the relation between short-term and long-term temporal perspectives that an individual can have on her life, see Schechtman (2024).

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due to lacking the perceptual capacities that would allow her to discriminate such features. The differences between an expert and a novice are due at least in part to the expert having theoretical knowledge that the novice lacks. So the differences are due to differences in cognitive schemas.

There can, however, be differences in how individuals perceptually process information that are due only to differences in perceptual capacities. Say you listen to a recording of a style of music you have never heard before, and then listen to that style of music for a month without gaining any theoretical knowledge. After a month, you listen to the same recording again. For the sake of argument, let's assume that the auditory input is the same when you listen to the recording before and after you were exposed to that style of music for a month. The typical experience is that you hear more than you did a month ago. You might hear rhythmic patterns to which you were previously oblivious. You may now notice how motifs are taken up and passed on, or you may now discriminate more finely between the timbre and resonance of different instruments. Since the recording you hear is the same and you are hearing it under the same acoustic conditions, what must have changed is your ability to pick up and process the sounds to which you are perceptually exposed. One way to explain this change is that you developed perceptual capacities to discriminate and single out sounds that you lacked a month ago. Since you did not gain any theoretical knowledge, you must have developed these perceptual capacities due to perceptual exposure to that style of music.

In short, the spatiotemporal perspective of two individual's occupying the same location is the same. However, if their schemas diverge, they will differ either in what information they can access among the information available at that location or in how they process that information.

Landscape. It will be helpful to situate the proposed understanding of perspectives. In the philosophical tradition, perspectives are standardly identified with only one of the three components of perspectives distinguished above, namely, with schemas. The other two components—spatiotemporal locations and perspectival anchors—are standardly ignored.[6] Not only does philosophical orthodoxy

[6] Standpoint epistemology is a notable exception. See Wylie (2003) and Dror (2023), among others, for discussion.

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restrict perspectives to schemas, it identifies them with schemas of only one kind, namely, cognitive schemas. With almost no exception, perceptual, emotional and agential schemas have been ignored.[7] Further, philosophical orthodoxy identifies perspectives with only one aspect of cognitive schemas, namely, beliefs. This tradition is alive and well today. For example, Lasonen-Aarnio (2024) argues that a perspective is a set of propositions a subject believes.[8]

The proposed account of perspectives encompasses, and thus applies to, this restricted view. That said, there are at least four reasons to break with the tradition of equating perspectives with sets of beliefs. First, the restricted view cannot do justice to the role that perspectives play in our theoretical enterprises, let alone our lives. Even if we restrict the role of perspectives to theoretical enterprises, and equate a perspective with a theory, a theory is not simply a set of beliefs, but is constituted also by goals, assumptions, preferences, and the questions asked. Second, our cognitive schemas interact in complex ways with our perceptual, emotional and agential schemas (Pessoa 2022). Consequently, reducing perspectives to cognitive schemas fails to account for the way cognitive schemas are affected by other domains of our minds and brains. Third, the facts available now differ from those available a millennium ago; and the facts available to an eyewitness differ from those available to someone who reads about events in the news. To account for this, it is important to acknowledge that an individual's spatiotemporal location is constitutive of her perspective.[9]

Finally, and most importantly, a perspective must be distinguished from its constituents. An individual's beliefs are components of her cognitive schema, and thus of her perspectives. However, a perspective is not simply a set of beliefs. While an individual's perspective is constituted by her schemas (which include her beliefs), her spatiotemporal location, and perspectival anchor(s), the perspective itself is the product of these constituents; it is not to be identified with them. After all, a mechanism is more than the sum of its parts. It is critical how the parts are arranged.[10]

[7] For a notable exception, see Camp (2019).

[8] See also Alston (1986), Kiesewetter (2011), and Way and Whiting (2017).

[9] In philosophy of perception, the fact that an individual's spatiotemporal location is a critical part of her perspective is given the attention it deserves. For a recent discussion that centres on this aspect of perception, see Schwenkler (2012).

[10] See Craver (2007) for the role of arrangement of parts in a mechanism.

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While in philosophy, perspectives have been understood narrowly as constituted only by sets of beliefs, in psychology, sociology, and related fields, it is standard to understand perspectives so broadly that an individual's background, culture and social context are literally part of her perspective.[11] Against this approach, the view developed here argues that these elements are part of an individual's perspective only to the extent that they have shaped her schemas and perspectival anchors. The proposed view of perspectives is encompassing, but we want to avoid broadening it so far as to hollow it out. An individual's culture, history and social context will have had a significant impact on her patterns of prediction and expectation, her beliefs, goals and preferences, the questions she asks, and the cognitive, perceptual, emotional and agential capacities she has developed. In this respect, her background and culture will have sculpted her schemas. However, if an individual's background and context are posited to be a proper part of her perspective beyond tangible effects on her schemas, there would be no way to distinguish the perspective of two individuals who have the same background, culture and social context, yet who—due to differences in internal processing—do not interpret, navigate and respond to situations and others in exactly the same way.[12]

In sum, on the proposed view, an individual's background, culture and social context are part of her perspective only to the extent that they have sculpted her schemas and perspectival anchors. So, while the proposed view breaks with the philosophical tradition of equating perspectives with theories or sets of beliefs, it refrains from broadening the notion of perspectives as much as is standard in psychology, sociology, and related fields.

III

Perspectival Anchors. With this background, we can now turn our attention to perspectival anchors. For our purposes, the crucial perspectival anchors are cognitive perspectival anchors.[13] Cognitive

[11] This tradition can be traced back to Mead (1934).

[12] The proposed view of perspectives is also to be distinguished from views on which a perspective is necessarily targeted towards some issue or some aspect of the world. For such a view of perspectives, see Camp (2019).

[13] For a discussion of foundational perspectival anchors, see Schellenberg (forthcoming).

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perspectival anchors can be distinguished from more low-level, foundational perspectival anchors, such as the bearer of thought, an agent, a body, or the bearer of perceptions or emotions. A cognitive perspectival anchor can take the form of a self-concept or a self-narrative. A self-concept may specify an individual's occupation, a social role, or a central pursuit, such as being a runner or an activist.[14] It may centre around one feature such as being white or being a man. Alternatively, a self-concept may specify a complex feature, such as being a white man. While a self-concept can take the form of an identity that tracks gender, race, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic background, self-concepts can be independent from social categories or demographic groups.[15] An individual may, for example, have the self-concept of being a good friend.

What is the relation between schemas and perspectival anchors? A perspectival anchor is connected to parts of an individual's dormant cognitive, perceptual, emotional and agential schemas. Consequently, a perspectival anchor generates one of the many modes in which an individual processes, organizes, and interprets information. More specifically, an individual's perspectival anchor governs which parts of her dormant schemas are active and thereby affects how she perceives, interprets, and navigates the world. Given that each perspectival anchor is connected to some but not all parts of an individual's overall schemas, a change in which of her perspectival anchors is in force will generate a shift in her active perspective.

Critical for the present discussion is that we are multifaceted and, consequently, standardly possess multiple self-concepts (Baumeister 1999). Typically, only one or a few of our self-concepts will be activated at any given time. After all, our mental resources are in short supply; so only those self-concepts pertinent to the relevant situation or task will need to be engaged at any given time. If this is right, then the self-concepts activated can switch from moment to moment.

To illustrate, again consider Kim, who is both an academic and a runner, and who navigates the world around her differently in her two modes. If Kim activates her self-concept as a runner, the parts of her dormant schemas that will be activated will differ from those

[14] I am using the term 'self-concept' rather than 'self-model' or 'self-schema', given that it is the most general of the three. For discussion of these terms, see Markus and Kunda (1986).

[15] For an analysis of social categories, see Díaz-León (2015); for social identities, see Ritchie (2018).

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that would be if she navigated her environment in her academic mode. This explains why her two modes differ in what she pays attention to, what questions she asks, and which of her goals, desires and preferences regulate how she navigates situations and interacts with others.

To give a different example, consider Joel, who is applying for jobs and loves going to late-night parties. Assuming he is neither terrible at job interviews nor a bore at parties, his persona will differ in the two situations. Specifically, his working self-concept will switch when he goes from a job interview to a late-night party. Consequently, what he values will change, and he may make decisions and interpret situations differently.

An individual's active perspective may include not just one, but multiple cognitive perspectival anchors. Indeed, as I will discuss shortly, self-concepts can be linked, blended and merged.[16] The schemas tied to these anchors may overlap and pull in opposing directions.

On the proposed view, a self-concept is individuated by the parts of an individual's cognitive, perceptual, emotional and agential schemas anchored to that self-concept. Indeed, there may be no substance to a self-concept beyond being the anchor of specific parts of the relevant individual's overall schemas. Relatedly, while a self-concept could be luminous, it need not be. No doubt we can be aware of our self-concepts. Moreover, having a self-concept requires a certain level of intellectual sophistication, such as the capacity for reflexivity, self-reference and self-awareness.[17] However, despite such conditions on possessing a self-concept, an individual can possess a self-concept without any awareness of it and without any relevant conscious beliefs about herself. For example, Kim may have no explicit beliefs about herself as a runner or an academic. So what distinguishes her runner self-concept from her academic self-concept

[16] The phenomenon of overlapping self-concepts is researched in detail in the literature on intersectionality and centred identities. For the canonical discussion, see Crenshaw (1989). See also Zack (2005), Dotson (2016), Taylor (2016), and Bernstein (2020).

[17] For a subtle discussion of varieties of self-awareness and self-reference, see O'Brien (2007). See Newen and Vogeley (2003) and Peacocke (2014, 2016) for discussions of the relation between self-representation and self-awareness, and an analysis of different levels of complexity of the first-person perspective. For a development of the relation between perspectival anchors, self-reference, and the capacity for reflexivity, see Schellenberg (2025).

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may be only that different world-related preferences, goals, beliefs and emotional dispositions are anchored to her two self-concepts.

The fact that an individual can be entirely unaware of the self-concepts she has, and indeed of having any at all, follows from the standard views about the relation between consciousness and representations. If consciousness is understood as grounded in representations, there can be changes in the latter without changes in the former. It follows that not all aspects of the latter need to be revealed in consciousness.[18] There is no good reason to think that self-related representations would be an exception. If this is right, then activating a self-concept neither entails nor presupposes even minimal self-awareness, be it pre-reflective, ephemeral or transparent.[19] Even if an active self-concept is entirely implicit and unconscious, it can affect the relevant individual's decision-making, how she interprets and processes new information, as well as how she perceives and responds to others.

In so far as self-concepts can be entirely implicit and unconscious, they differ from cognitive perspectival anchors that take the form of self-narratives. Building on Hume ([1739] 1978), Dennett (1991) and Schechtman (1996) argue that the self is a fiction but that we create narratives that string our experiences and impressions together, generating the illusion of a self. In contrast to a self-concept, a self-narrative will always be conscious to at least some degree. We do not need to take a stance here on self-narratives and how they relate to the construction of an individual's self. For present purposes, the crucial point is that regarding anchoring our schemas, what holds for self-concepts holds equally for self-narratives: we have different modes between which we can switch seamlessly. To illustrate, consider again Joel. His self-narrative in a job interview will likely differ from that at a late-night party. Despite being different, both can be accurate. After all, in each situation, Joel will (consciously or

[18] For different arguments in support of this view, see Davies (1992), Martin (2002), Chalmers (2006), and Schellenberg (2011, 2017), among many others.

[19] The point is supported, not only by philosophical argument, but also by evidence from cognitive and computational neuroscience (for example, LeDoux 2002 and Gillihan and Farah 2005). For arguments that having a perspective requires minimal self-awareness, see Gallagher (2000), Thompson (2007), Zahavi (2008), and Newen (2018). It should be noted that the arguments about the flexibility and stability of perspectives in this paper can be accepted even if one rejects this point.

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unconsciously) choose which parts of his life to share, and will likely focus on different aspects.

IV

Perspectival Flexibility. How does the notion of a perspectival anchor allow us to get clearer on the dual nature of perspectives as both flexible and stable? As argued in the previous section, a self-concept anchors parts of an individual's overall dormant cognitive, perceptual, emotional and agential schemas. Since the active perspectival anchor shapes which parts of her dormant schemas are activated, a change in anchor will generate a shift in her active perspective. Thus, which perspectival anchor is activated affects how she perceives, interprets and navigates her environment. A shift in an individual's perspective can arise due to a change in which of her many self-concepts is engaged, or by reconfiguring her self-narrative. In short, changes in perspectival anchor trigger corresponding shifts in our perspectives as we reconfigure ourselves and reinterpret the world around us.

Having specified the notion of a perspectival anchor, we can develop the distinction between active and dormant perspectives in more detail. Recall that an individual's *active perspective* is constituted by her spatiotemporal location, her currently activated perspectival anchors, and the connected parts of her overall schemas. Her *dormant perspective* is constituted by all her beliefs, goals, preferences, and other mental states, as well as her capacities, patterns of predictions and expectations, and perspectival anchors. While the dormant perspective evolves only slowly over time, the active perspective can shift from moment to moment. At any given time, only those parts of an individual's dormant perspective are activated that are connected to the currently active perspectival anchor(s). If there is a switch in an individual's operative perspectival anchor, her active perspective shifts, not her dormant perspective. She still has all the preferences, goals and beliefs anchored to her other self-concepts, but they are not up and running.[20] An individual's dormant perspective may evolve as new experiences and knowledge are integrated into her existing schemas. Consequently, the possible active

[20] Nguyen's (2019) view of games as avenues that allow us to explore different ways of being can be understood as analogous to the ideas developed here. Similarly, Newen's (2018) notion of a short-term self-model as an integrated pattern of characteristic features can be understood as exploring analogous ideas to those developed here.

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perspectives may evolve over time. However, at any given moment, an individual's dormant perspective limits the range of her possible active perspectives.

Recognizing the distinction between dormant and active perspectives allows us to explain the dual nature of perspectives. Specifically, it allows us to explain how an individual is simultaneously constrained by her overall schemas, but can nonetheless swiftly adjust her mode, re-anchoring her active perspective, as she moves between different contexts and social roles. Such a shift in active perspective can take the form of code-switching, as she navigates the multiple cultural contexts she may inhabit.[21]

What prompts a sudden switch in perspectival anchoring? Changes in which of our many self-concepts are activated can be triggered by our environment.[22] Consider Robin. He is both an academic and a parent. If his toddler walks into his office while he is discussing a paper with his graduate student, he may switch from his academic mode to his parent mode. His toddler entering the room activates his self-concept of being a parent, which in turn engages the various schemas anchored to that self-concept. More generally, a perspectival shift of this type is a response to an environmental cue that prompts a switch in working self-concept and the schemas berthed to that anchor.

While changes in perspectival anchoring can be triggered by the environment, they can also be brought about voluntarily. When his toddler charges into his office, Robin may choose to remain in his academic mode and focus on finishing his overdue paper. Or, while in his parent mode, he could ignore the emails appearing on his phone and refrain from having his academic mode engaged.

While changes in perspective can be gradual and smooth, they can also be abrupt. To illustrate, consider Dylan, an excellent student, beloved by her peers, whose home life is plagued by chaos and conflict. To continue functioning well in her student life, Dylan has compartmentalized her home and student life to the best of her ability, and abruptly switches modes on her way to and from university.

Dylan's case raises the question of the difference between someone who switches between different self-concepts and someone with

[21] For a discussion of cultural code-switching, see Morton (2014).

[22] See Markus and Kunda (1986) and Ryan and Deci (2000) for the ways in which an individual's working self-concept depends on the immediate environmental and social context.

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dissociative identity disorder or schizophrenia. It would exceed the scope of this paper to discuss pathological cases of inhabiting different personae in detail here.[23] For present purposes, the important point is that there are two extremes, both of which are characterized by rigidity. At one end of the continuum is the person who has only one mode in which he navigates the world around him. An example of this form of rigidity is the person who talks in the same way to his toddler as he does in a high-stakes work environment. At the other end of the continuum is the person with multiple personae, each characterized by rigidity.

There are four key differences between the pathological and the non-pathological case relevant for the discussion here: appropriate responsiveness to environmental cues, voluntariness, access, and integration. In the non-pathological case, an individual *appropriately responds to environmental cues* by switching between different modes. Thus, Robin's parent mode is triggered when his toddler charges into his office. However, Robin can, to at least some degree, switch between different modes *voluntarily*. Thus, he can choose to remain in his academic mode despite the environmental cue. Similarly, Kim can continue thinking about the philosophical conversation she just had in her academic mode after she has switched to her runner mode. Third, in the non-pathological case, a person can *access* her other modes while in one mode. To illustrate, while Dylan has successfully compartmentalized her home and student life, she can choose to contemplate her home life while at university, and vice versa.

A fourth difference between pathological and non-pathological cases concerns the degree to which perspectives are *integrated*. With notable exceptions, such as extreme forms of compartmentalization, there is overlap and integration between an individual's different modes in non-pathological cases: there is no wall between the individual's different modes, and she can tap into her many possible active perspectives, at least to some degree. By contrast, the person with dissociative identity disorder does not have these capacities, or they are highly diminished.

It should be noted here that not all sudden shifts in perspective are due to changes in perspectival anchor. To illustrate, when a bilingual

[23] For a canonical analysis, see Braude (1991) and Cardeña (1994).

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person switches from one language to another, this can go hand in hand with a significant shift in perspective. After all, every language has a slightly different conceptual framework. Consequently, a language switch will go hand in hand with a change in cognitive schema. Moreover, it is standard for a bilingual person's emotional expression to differ significantly depending on which of her languages she is speaking. This can be explained as being due to a shift in the emotional schemas that are activated in conjunction with the change of cognitive schema. Now, of course, a bilingual person may change her perspectival anchor as she switches between her two languages. The critical point here is that a sudden shift in perspective can be due not to a change in perspectival anchor but to a change only in schemas.[24]

Multiple Active Perspectival Anchors.

Up to this point, we have worked with the simplifying assumption that our perspectives are centred on just one cognitive perspectival anchor at any given moment. But our self-concepts are not activated and deactivated like light bulbs. We can navigate our environment with multiple perspectival anchors in play. The schemas connected to these anchors might overlap, and may pull in opposing directions. To illustrate, consider a situation in which Kim has an animated discussion about a philosophical topic and then switches into her runner mode. As she puts on her running shoes, she continues to think about the conversation she just had. Kim's situation exemplifies that changes in active perspective need not be abrupt. We can gradually move from one to another and remain in both for extended periods.

If Kim and her colleague regularly go running to discuss their work, her runner and academic modes will be activated simultaneously for extended periods. Similarly, suppose Robin is stuck at home for a year due to a worldwide pandemic, and must teach his classes and write his papers while attending to his toddler. In that case, he will, for extended periods, either simultaneously have his

[24] A different example of abrupt shifts in perspectives due to reconfigurations only of schemas are those generated by shifts in framing devices or metaphors, such as slurs or insults. For discussion, see Camp (2017). It should be noted that on Camp's notion of perspective, a perspective is always a perspective on a part of the world, such as a person or a group. By contrast, on the notion of perspective developed here, a perspective is a spatiotemporally located information-processing mechanism that can be applied to any part of the world or none at all.

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parent and academic mode activated or rapidly flip back and forth between the two.

Such situations can generate blended perspectives. The preferences, goals, values and relevant beliefs connected to the different perspectival anchors can pull in different directions and, perhaps, be inconsistent. It is standard for one's preferences and goals in one's emotional and cognitive schemas to be in tension. Moreover, a schema anchored to only one self-concept can be internally incoherent. For example, an individual's beliefs anchored to a self-concept could be inconsistent. However, the possibilities for conflict and inconsistency rise as more parts of our overall schemas are activated. After all, given that each self-concept is linked only to some parts of an individual's overall schemas, cases in which multiple self-concepts of an individual are activated will involve having more of her cognitive, perceptual, emotional and agential schemas online. This will increase the likelihood of internal conflict. Parts of our cognitive schemas, each anchored to a self-concept radically different from the other, are likely to stand in conflict with each other. The cognitive and emotional overload that such situations generate is at least partly a consequence of having to navigate the internal conflicts arising from these contrasts and inconsistencies.

Cases of intersectionality are particularly complex. It is not possible to do justice to their intricacies here.[25] However, an example will help illustrate the connection between blended perspectives and intersectionality. Consider Angela, a black mother and computer scientist. At work, Angela is frequently asked to sit on committees to support working parents at her university. Since she is the only person of colour in her department, she is asked to sit on all hiring committees and mentor any student of colour admitted to the programme. Further, she is frequently asked to speak at events encouraging women to pursue careers in tech. While Angela brings a unique perspective to each of these committees and events, the discrimination she faces as a black woman is distinct from those faced by black men or white women. As perspectives are more than the sum of their parts, so is discrimination.[26]

[25] See Crenshaw (1989), Zack (2005), Dotson (2016), Taylor (2016), and Bernstein (2020).

[26] For a similar example, see Ásta (2018). Discussing the connection and distinction between a blended perspective and intersectionality would require a dedicated paper of its own. I will leave that project for another occasion.

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V

Perspectival Stability. So far, I have argued that an individual's active perspective is a dynamic, flexible point in intellectual, emotional, perceptual and agential space. This perspectival flexibility reflects the fluidity of our many modes as we navigate the world around us and interact with others. Despite such perspectival flexibility, there are, however, considerable constraints on the degree to which an individual's active perspective can change from moment to moment. The extent to which an individual's active perspective can change is restricted by her dormant perspective, specifically her overall cognitive, perceptual, emotional and agential schemas.

While, on the view developed, no aspect of an individual's dormant perspective must be included in her active perspective, several elements will likely be in play, no matter what the context or situation. In particular, aspects of an individual's emotional schemas, such as her temperament and her emotional dispositions, may be relatively stable aspects of her schemas. To illustrate, someone with an angry disposition may manifest that disposition whether he is talking to his colleague, his partner or his child, or when on his own trying to find a parking spot. Thus, his emotional schema may remain stable across different contexts in at least this respect.

Similarly, cognitive styles can be relatively stable: someone who is detail-oriented may manifest this disposition whether she is adding footnotes to her paper or tidying up her desk. Further, deep-seated beliefs, such as moral and religious beliefs or hinge propositions, can be relatively stable aspects of an individual's cognitive schemas. After all, someone who truly believes that killing is wrong will believe so no matter what the circumstances. The same holds true for core values. Someone who cares deeply about justice and equality may do so whether he is contemplating world politics, social justice in his home city, or pay equity at his workplace, or when he is breaking up a conflict between his two children.[27] In the perceptual realm, sensory responsiveness is an example of the relative stability of an individual's perspective across different contexts. Someone highly sensitive to sound may manifest this disposition no matter what

[27] For discussion of the stability of emotional dispositions, see Scherer and Brosch (2009); on core beliefs, see Osmo et al. (2018); on core values, see Brosch and Sander (2009).

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the circumstances. Such perceptual sensitivities can be explained, in that the relevant person has particularly fine-grained perceptual capacities.

One could argue that such stable aspects of an individual's active perspective amount to the idea of a deep or true self. The psychological notion of a deep self posits that there is an authentic level of an individual's personality that is to be contrasted with the more superficial layers of the self that are influenced by external factors such as social norms and expectations or the desire for approval. The deep self is thought to be the true essence of the individual.[28] The idea that there may be relatively stable aspects of an individual's dormant perspective that are included in any of her active perspectives differs in two critical ways from the idea of a deep self. First, it does not imply that these relatively stable aspects are deeper than other, more fluctuating aspects. Second, the relatively stable elements are just as influenced by social and environmental factors as the more flexible aspects of a perspective. Thus, these relatively stable aspects of perspectives do not align with the psychological notion of a deep self.

In addition to stable aspects of an individual's schemas, there may be perspectival anchors that unremittingly colour her active perspective. For example, an individual's self-concepts related to her race and gender may be persistently activated if she lives in a society in which those social categories are continuously made salient to her.[29]

VI

Conclusion. I set out by specifying the flexibility and stability desiderata for an account of perspectives. On the proposed view, a perspective is a spatiotemporally located information processing mechanism: the lens through which an individual processes, organizes, interprets and responds to information in the world around her, and thereby navigates and interacts with her environment, situations, and others. Not only can an individual's perspective evolve over time as she gains new experiences, knowledge and understanding, it can shift from moment to moment as she reorients herself and adapts to her

[28] For recent discussions of the notion of true self and deep self, see Nguyen (2020) and Sripada (2010).

[29] For discussion, see Witt (2011) and Ásta (2018). I am grateful to Jessica Leech for pressing me on this issue.

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surroundings. Specifically, changes in which of her many cognitive perspectival anchors are active can prompt corresponding shifts in her active perspective. Such a change in anchor can be brought about intentionally or occur as an unconscious response to environmental cues. Thus, the proposed view satisfies the flexibility desideratum. Despite this flexibility, there is stability in an individual's perspective. After all, an individual's dormant perspective restricts the extent to which she can change her active perspective. Moreover, an individual may have relatively stable cognitive and epistemic styles, emotional dispositions, core beliefs and values that may manifest across her possible active perspectives. Thus, the proposed view satisfies the stability desideratum.[30]

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