



# laetus in praesens

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## Development of an Initial Classification of Viewpoints

### Functional Synthesis of Viewpoints (Part I)

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**Short Summary:** A conceptual model is described to supply a context within which the increasingly isolated fields of knowledge and experience can be related without jeopardizing their autonomy. This is achieved by defining a space such that every viewpoint held in society is uniquely determined and related within that space in terms of its purpose and its ability to organize its subject matter. The properties of the space are such that developmental, directional, unitary and convergent features are emphasized with regard to society as a whole, groups and individuals. The final model effectively constitutes a map of functions or modes of experience by which individuals or groups can relate themselves to other viewpoints. An audio-visual display is described which could illustrate the model and an experiment to validate it is discussed. [NB (0.5mb pdf) ]

This paper was one basis for the much later *Functional Classification in an Integrative Matrix of Human Preoccupations* (1982) used as the basis for the subject classification of the *Yearbook of International Organizations* and the *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential*

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## PART II

### Problem

We each take up **individually** during the course of a day a large number of unrelated viewpoints. Some viewpoints seem to embrace a

whole range of activities, whilst others deal only with particular details and are not consciously linked to viewpoints subsequently held. For example, to assess the pain in my feet I hold one viewpoint, to get petrol for the car I hold another, to consider the implications of the Russian landing on Venus I hold a third, and so on. From holding one viewpoint such as the consideration of a scientific problem, my attention may be drawn to the movement of a fly on the window. I seem to hold unrelated viewpoints in sequence during some periods, whilst during others I am proceeding according to a definite program, e.g. when I explore means of solving an equation. Every action in the latter case is reviewed, ordered and related as a means of obtaining a solution. Now, in order to order my life so that it is not a meaningless succession of related and unrelated viewpoints, I must attempt to obtain a viewpoint which will supply a context for these many attitudes and thus provide me with an integrated but flexible approach to experience. I do not want to lose any of the advantages of my present viewpoints, which are reasonably well suited to handling the detail of my life, but I wish to ensure that my scientific viewpoint is related to my artistic viewpoint, etc. I want to be able to continually evaluate the functional value of each viewpoint to me and the reason for which I am involved in the particular activities.

We find a similar problem in society in general. Different groups in society hold views whose functional value for society as a whole is difficult to establish in one and the same context. Each occupies itself with some details or groups of details, e.g. religions, palaeontologists, trade associations, the IMF, the John Birch Society, radio astronomers, the Olympic Committee, etc., but it is not easy to understand what relationship they bear to one another. Each apparently operates in an isolated field. It seems easier to consider them as dealing with isolated topics because of the difficulty of visualizing a more comprehensive functional viewpoint, which would be apparently less adapted to detail and therefore less useful. It is however by deliberately not attempting to recognize or define any such relationship that we prevent ourselves from sensing any direction in society. This attitude as applied by the individual to himself also tends to prevent him recognizing a personal sense of direction and leads to difficulty in integrating himself into society to obtain an optimum sense of fulfillment.

## Definitions

The words 'viewpoint', 'purpose', and 'discipline' have already been used in connection with the concept of direction. These words will now be defined more clearly for later use.

### (a) viewpoint (point of view / standpoint / point of reference)

These terms are considered synonymous. They describe a position taken up on the basis of certain assumptions, in particular the assumption of what is 'objective' and what is 'subjective'. From such a position, varying elements of experience can be evaluated or compared. In order to take up such a position, a fixed method of looking at the environment must be adopted. If it is not fixed then successive elements of experience cannot be linked and viewpoints follow, and are conditioned by the environmental flux. A fixed viewpoint is analogous in its use to the Paris standard metre. The assumption must be made that the length of the standard metre does not change over time for it to be useful as a means of relating secondary standards.

It is useful to think of such a viewpoint as being at the origin of a polar coordinate system. When we consciously evaluate in terms of a particular standpoint we are at the origin of the coordinate system. When we evaluate in terms of this system without being conscious of the assumptions made, we have reified the system and use its matrix as a matter of habit without being in a position to change it. It is suggested that we can only occupy one viewpoint consciously at a particular instant, but that we can be operating in terms of more general viewpoints some of which have been reified temporarily. So that, for example, I can take up a scientific viewpoint and assume its validity and then plunge into the details of an experiment. I have reified the scientific viewpoint and am operating in terms of it, but I am using a particular experimental viewpoint, and it is *in* terms of that that I am conscious. If a viewpoint is held consciously, then it is possible to choose to change to another viewpoint. If it is held as a matter of habit, then this is not possible, and the change itself will be based on habit. In this manner, it is suggested that we order our experience within a hierarchy of such viewpoint systems. This hierarchy is discussed later in this part.

### (b) purpose (as related to direction and motive)

The model attempts **objectively** to place the person using it in relation to other viewpoints in terms of his currently, **subjectively** sensed purpose. It is therefore important that the subjective, directly conscious, galvanizing aspect of **purpose** be distinguished from the sense in which it is inferred indirectly from objective observation, often as **motive**.

Whilst it may be easy to take up a particular viewpoint consciously, it is necessary to act in terms of that viewpoint to be able to maintain it, and at the same time to minimize the effects of extraneous distracting influences. Basically, purpose is this ability to arrive at, hold, and act consciously in terms of, a viewpoint despite the distracting effect of unrelated environmental factors. Purpose is the only constant element of conscious experience when the switch from one viewpoint to another is made. This definition allows for the fact that the viewpoint may envisage the completion of a certain task, e.g. the experimental verification of an hypothesis. Purpose here represents the continuing ability to maintain the viewpoint which envisages this end. But the definition also allows for the case where no definite end can be consciously identified, i.e. when the goal is not clearly defined and only the immediate next step is known, even where the latter is restricted to maintaining the status quo in face of environmental opposition.

It is possible to have a very clear purpose in the sense of recognizing the succession of **acts** required to achieve the end, without having the will to carry them to completion. These three features are here combined into the definition of purpose, so that to be purposeful carries the significance of having the will to stick to the acts required to achieve the envisaged end.

The definition does not cover the questions of 'unconscious purpose' and evolutionary directional development. From the viewpoint definition it is clear that if one is not conscious that one is holding a particular viewpoint, one has either forgotten why one consciously took it up, or else was unconsciously forced into it by the necessity to integrate environmental experiences. In these cases the ability to maintain the viewpoint is a question of habit which is in harmony with and reinforced by its environment and therefore not purpose

which operates to change the environment and fit it to the individual, in the face of immediate environmental opposition. Habit is a feature of the evolutionary process, and the latter has **direction** - society is evolving in an ill-defined direction, *but* the end state of this process, if any, is not known. By becoming consciously purposeful, however, man gathers up his habits, evaluates and modifies them, and initiates new courses of action, and thus increasingly defines the direction of development of himself during his life and of society as a whole in the long-term. Man is therefore gradually becoming conscious of the directional trends in his environment and is replacing them, or recognizing his responsibility for them, by consciously established purposes.

It could be said of 'unconscious purpose' that it is explicitly defined by, or embedded in, the act and is therefore identical with direction in the overall evolutionary sense. It is only when the act is carried out reflectively, that is to say when it is evaluated as it is being performed, that there is any conscious detachment from it. The viewpoint from which this is done could be said to be temporally equidistant from all moments of the act and acts as a time-binder, as opposed to the former case where there, is just action in response to the environment without any link between the elements of the act other than their cause and effect relationship. To hold this viewpoint, detached from the act, requires purpose.

Purpose is not currently an academically popular term. This is compensated by its increasingly frequent use in daily speech, politics and business management. People are increasingly concerned with criteria for decisions. The detail that appears to be forgotten when a philosopher or a psychologist, who is forced to be objective, cannot find 'purpose' is that in looking for purpose - if he does look - he has a purpose, and he has the only purpose that he could detect whilst holding his current viewpoint. He will not find purposes somewhere else. If he looks he has a purpose, as his purpose is to look. Purpose cannot be isolated from the act, since it is the ability to hold, to be conscious of and perhaps even to define explicitly, the relation among the elements relevant to the conscious act. The philosopher looking in from the outside at an act which is not his own, or which he is not in the process of performing, is not relevant to that act and therefore the purpose relation does not touch him, so he cannot detect it. What both he and the psychologist can and do detect is **motive** and causality, or even evolutionary direction, as mentioned above. The reason that these are detectable is that a socially agreed frame of reference is supplied (in terms of a particular viewpoint) and it is within this matrix that the act is placed and viewed externally. The act is reified and not considered internally through the momentary dynamics of its execution. Thus by the design of the approach, only elements external to the act are detectable. We are not suggesting that this approach is in any way incorrect, since it is the purpose of both the psychologist and the philosopher, in most cases, to explain experience in this way. Such an approach is the basis of communication.

Where an individual is not conscious of what he is doing and is merely responding through habit to his environment, the external approach is the **only** relevant one, since in this case the individual is not conscious of the internality of the act. As was discussed in connection with direction, purpose is not yet a factor. It could be said that **purpose only exists when it is defined** conceptually in relation to the particular act. It is this act of definition that raises the act from the status of a habit. In the same way, the standard unit of measure only exists by definition and supported by some very powerful assumptions (c.f. H. Reichenbach, ref. 18). This paper will attempt to show that when purpose is a factor, even if it is only defined as a first approximation to a 'real' purpose, it can be used as a basis for the construction of a model with the properties listed in the Introduction.

(It is interesting to note that when purpose is a factor, 'purpose' is used in speech rather than 'motive'. For example, 'the national purpose' is used rather than 'the national motive', but we can speak of the 'motives' of another country, since we do not participate in its acts. In the same way I speak of 'my purpose in writing this paper' rather than 'my motive...', although again the reader could speak of 'his motives...' (referring to mine), since he is looking in from outside. Speaking in terms of 'my motives', however, is tantamount to defining and conceiving myself 'from outside' as a thing in terms of an **external frame of reference**. My recognition of myself 'from inside', which is the basis of any sense of individuality and personal unity, is thus excluded and lost - for it lies in the internality of the act of taking up the viewpoint and related frame of reference. By speaking of 'my motives...' I therefore actively prevent myself from experiencing any sense of unity - except in the sense of the totality of external features which I view impersonally in common with other observers.

This distinction may be illustrated by considering a mirror as analogous to the external frame of reference. It is correct for me to evaluate ray **motives** in terms of measurable data concerning ray observed actions **in** the mirror, but I lose the possibility of recognizing that I had a certain **purpose** in looking into the mirror, i.e. in taking up that viewpoint. I chose to use that particular mirror. Here one is ordering experience in or through the mirror and not recognizing that one has a three-dimensional body independent of the mirror, of which the mirror image is only a two-dimensional projection (cf. Plato's cave). It is only as the three-dimensional body that one can recognise purpose and choose to change to another mirror.)

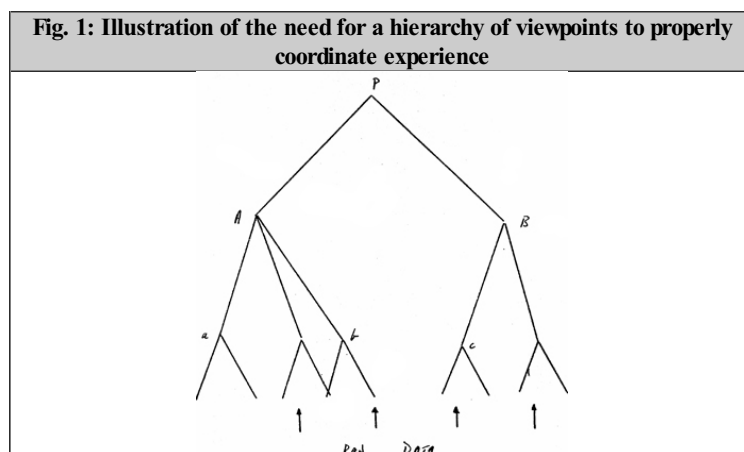
The strength of the holding power of purpose increases with the degree of consciousness and explicitness of purpose. If our governing purposes are not defined consciously, then we are ruled by environmental factors and habit. The purposes we do have are then embedded in a contest of habit. The greater the extent to which our purposes can be made explicit, the greater our ability to act in terms of our chosen ends. Once a purpose has been explicitly defined, its validity can be tested by whether one accepts the sacrifices or priorities it demands. It is only by having an explicit purpose that a conclusion can be reached, and only by reaching a conclusion is it possible to evaluate the whole act in terms of the overall purpose that gave rise to it, in order to be relatively free to formulate the next subsidiary purpose.

### **(c) discipline (as related to function)**

Discipline is used to refer loosely to any organized, non-habitual response to the environment. Each viewpoint, if it is held often enough by enough people, results in a discipline. It is used here to cover organized response in the most consciously, private sense through to modes of experience as organized in the most universal psycho-social functions, e.g. art, religion, science, etc.

## **Argument**

The viewpoints we hold vary in degree of comprehensiveness. The viewpoint I hold when fixing my shoelace now, is not as comprehensive as that from which I consider my family life. In the latter case, the many viewpoints I hold during time spent with my family are linked by the viewpoint I hold when I consider family life. Clearly, if I wish to establish what I am doing each action for, all the time, to determine its relevance to my purposes, I must try to work back to the most comprehensive viewpoint(s) I can hold. It is important that I do so as can be seen from Fig. 1.



Unless I recognize viewpoint 'A' whilst, or between, holding successively viewpoints 'a' and 'b', these two viewpoints and their related subject matter will be unrelated. Similarly, unless I hold viewpoint 'P' whilst holding successively viewpoints 'b' and 'c', experience from these two viewpoints will be unrelated. Achieving viewpoint 'A' from 'a' and 'b' ; a process of integration the first time it is done, and a process of generalization thereafter.

On the above basis there are clearly many levels of viewpoint, from that required to consider the flicker of a speck of dust to the most comprehensive. But since each viewpoint represents a definite degree of integration of experience, it should be possible to isolate major transitions in viewpoint, as a first approximation to the characteristics of different types of viewpoint. Such transitions should be reflected in the historical development of ideas in society and also in the growth of individuals within society. A first stage could therefore lead from a mythical moment by moment involvement in the environment to the point where the elements of the environment have been objectified. The individual gradually separates himself conceptually from his environment and evaluates his immediate experience in terms of his current position, a first viewpoint level. A second stage might lead through involvement in the many cycles of habits and other rhythmic activity required to ensure an ordered life, to the point where experience is evaluated in terms of this cyclical life experience, namely a second viewpoint level. And finally, since a progression in this ordered life results from attempts to achieve certain life objectives, a directional element is introduced which can only be evaluated with respect to a third viewpoint level.

Each such viewpoint may be held with respect to physical, emotional or mental experience. The distinction made between emotional and mental is the commonly accepted one, namely, an emotion is that experience which may be represented by such phrases as 'I like him' or 'I fear his ideas'. Mental is that experience which may be represented by such phrases as 'I think he is likeable' or he is mentally unstable'.

The three viewpoints are considered in the next sections for each of the three types of experience, for both the individual and for society as a whole. This approach is used as a means of introducing an approximation to a satisfactory model which is then generalized to avoid the suspect rigidity of this viewpoint classification.

## Individual

### *Individual: Physical Viewpoints*

1. If my body position is fixed, or I am only moving slightly, such as when I am seated, or in my bath, then my environment is constellated into stationary patterns around me. These patterns, such as tables, trees, etc., are fixed in relation to my body position. In taking up this body position, I have taken up a certain viewpoint and have effectively set to a coordinate system by which I will assess the positions of the elements of my environment. This may be considered as a **first physical viewpoint**.
2. A **second physical viewpoint** is required, once the body is moved, to integrate experience between succeeding locations and set up a framework to relate them. It is suggested that in our daily life we have a limited number of key points which act as centres for a coordinate network by which we can assess our position. Examples of such points are home, office, and club. For example, I always gauge my position in terms of how far I am from home or office. Note that we continue to evaluate our moment by moment experience with respect to our immediate body position, the first viewpoint level, but we integrate this into a framework constituted by our second level viewpoints. If they were not so integrated, we would not be able to find our way from one place to another.

Now, to further clarify the meaning of 'viewpoint', note that I do not need to be conscious of holding the viewpoint in this case. I do not have to recognize it or consciously gauge where I am in relation to the house. But in this case my experience merely becomes a succession of occasions governed by habit and the first viewpoints I successively hold. It is only when I recognize my viewpoint - generally because I have a particular purpose - that I introduce any long-term unity into my experience. For (example, when I go shopping, it is only this 'going shopping' viewpoint that gives meaning to and links the succession of activities involved.

3. If one moves one's home from one town to another, a **third physical viewpoint** is required to integrate the physical life experienced at the two locations. This can best be described as the viewpoint of the experienced traveller, since only through

repeating such transitions can one arrive at this viewpoint and not relate all intervening experience in terms of distance from home. Note that at each location, as a home, a set of second and first level viewpoints is set up.

## ***II Individual: Emotional Viewpoints***

1. Emotions represented by the phrases 'I am attracted to this', 'I am repulsed by that', which fluctuate in response to the immediately present environment, represent changes which occur with respect to a new type of viewpoint. These are emotions which are felt against the background of the current mood, which may last an hour or a day. It is the mood which supplies them with a context and governs their scope. Emotions are positive or negative with respect to the standard set by the mood. The mood may therefore be termed the **first emotional viewpoint**.
2. Moods are however evaluated against the background of the emotional tone of one's life. Moods are positive or negative with respect to the tone. The tone is the resultant of the emotional life and contacts in one's home, club, office, etc. It is to some extent represented by such generalizations as 'he is a cheerful (gloomy, etc.) fellow'. This may be termed the **second emotional viewpoint**.
3. Over a period of years a change from one second viewpoint to another may take place, say from 'cheerful' to 'gloomy'. This change, if it is controlled, must be a change with respect to some criterion - otherwise one's emotional experience in the two states cannot be related and there is no overall continuity. A **third emotional viewpoint** is required to integrate the experience at and between the two different states.

## ***III Individual: Mental Viewpoints***

1. I may ponder on the subject of what time it is or how to solve an equation. The thoughts which I have as I ponder one of these subjects are only connected and made relevant by the context into which I place them and by their reference to the problem I am facing. To tackle such a problem, I adopt what may be termed the **first mental viewpoint** - it confines itself to the subject at hand and represents an ordering and application of scattered thoughts. Note that if I have 'forgotten what I was doing', then I have momentarily lost this viewpoint.
2. Now, I may change from a theoretical problem to an experimental one. This change occurs within the context of one of my particular disciplines or 'ways of looking at things', which is only mine by virtue of my ability to hold the viewpoint required in terms of that discipline. This may be termed the **second mental viewpoint** - it integrates my mental experience within my science or discipline.
3. Finally, I may change my *mode* of looking at things over a period of years from, say, scientific to artistic (in the critical sense) or some other disciplined approach. Such a change, to ensure continuity, should occur with respect to a **third mental viewpoint**. If it does not, then my mental experience in these two areas is unrelated. The contexts are not connected and they are completely isolated sets of experience, without any common meaning. This is the problem which many people face today. How does one arrive at this third mental viewpoint and link one's experience in these fields?

## ***IV Individual: Overall Viewpoints***

We have seen that it is possible to arrive at a position where one's physical, emotional and mental experiences are each individually integrated. But we have not mentioned any viewpoint or context which could link these three areas of experience. Such a viewpoint would however exist if the three 'third' viewpoints were identical as in the case where there was an overall purpose in life. For in such a case every type of experience is evaluated in terms of its value as a means to that end.

# **Society**

Having considered the major types of individual viewpoint, we find a parallel set of viewpoints held by society as a whole.

## ***I Society: Physical Viewpoints***

1. Up until a few centuries ago society's view of the universe was strictly geocentric. The heavens were assumed to move about the Earth. This is the **first physical viewpoint** and corresponds to the pre-Copernican era. It is still used however in daily life as a first approximation and therefore the sun still 'rises'.
2. The development from this point of view was the work of Copernicus and Kepler. They introduced a new view of the Earth's relationship to the solar system by determining that the Earth moved, and it moved around the sun. This may be termed the **second physical viewpoint**.
3. Having determined how it does move, we are just beginning to assess how long-term changes in this movement will affect us and what we should do about it. For example there has been speculative consideration on whether the Earth should be moved into a different orbit when the sun temperature starts changing. This corresponds to a **third physical viewpoint** - with respect to what criteria should we plan and control our environment, and into what is it developing.

## ***II Society - Emotional Viewpoints***

1. The **first emotional viewpoint** is best represented by the background to the day to day fluctuation in the content of newspaper headlines and scandals. This background is the current mood of society as conveyed in such expressions 'the roaring twenties', 'life in the sixties', etc. Since the Earth is not integrated physically yet, these expressions apply principally to Western society.
2. These social moods have to be viewed against the background of the tone of the era. This tone, the **second emotional viewpoint**, is indicated by 'such expressions as the present 'permissive era', 'the Victorian era', etc.
3. The change from era to era is such a slow process that it is difficult to speculate on the significance of the criteria with respect to which such a change would be made. Perhaps in time to come society will plan to cultivate certain emotions for certain periods, but the **third emotional viewpoint**, in terms of which this would be done, is a long way off.

### *III Society: Mental Viewpoints*

1. Society is currently concerned with ideas related to certain topics. For example, we have the space race, the population explosion, drugs, etc. Each of the latter represents a **first mental viewpoint** with respect to which ideas bearing on these topics are ordered.
2. These topics are discussed in terms of the set of categories currently approved by society. This intellectual framework represents the **second mental viewpoint**.
3. Over time the set of categories changes as we have seen recently with the introduction of the scientific method which largely replaced the scholastic approach. Again such changes occur over such long periods that we do not register with respect to what **third mental viewpoint** such changes are taking place.

### *IV Society: Overall Viewpoints*

Where is society going at the moment? What does the human race want to achieve? What sort of social standards do we want? These questions would be answered in terms of an overall purpose which might exist if the three 'third' viewpoints above were identical. So far we have only made tentative moves toward taking up this viewpoint and planning for our- long-term future.



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