The Perspective Challenge

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Abstract

This paper discusses the requirements for comparing different traditions and ways of thinking, which is an important issue in many fields, including ethics, anthropology, religious studies and political science. The first part of the paper discusses the premises and implications of Alasdair MacIntyre's argument against the "perspective challenge", which questions and relativizes the truth of tradition-bound views. The second part provides a solution to this challenge, through a component analysis of the concept of a "point of view". The major thesis of the paper is that although it may be impossible to change all constituent elements of a point of view in one undertaking, at least some of them are changeable incrementally either by using the available resources of one's own tradition or by adopting elements from another. In the analysis given herein, the impossibility, or at least the difficulty, of switching the point of view between traditions generally results from the observer-related factors of a point of view, such as the background knowledge and expectations of the subject. These factors also include the metaphysical commitments and ontological premises that direct the subject's modes of thinking and understanding.

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Part I

Introduction

For a comparative study to be valid in any scholarly discipline, the objects of comparison must be considered from a perspective that does justice to all of them. Therefore a major requirement for comparative studies is that the things compared are equivalent and commensurate from the chosen point of view. This article discusses the requirements for comparing different traditions and ways of thinking, which is an important issue in many fields, including ethics, anthropology, religious studies and political science.

The starting point of the discussion here is Alasdair MacIntyre's view of the perspective challenge and its implications as he presents them in his *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (1988, 2003). The perspective challenge expressed by MacIntyre

questions the possibility of making universally valid truth claims from within any one tradition, since the very existence of rival traditions, each with different criteria for truth and falsehood, relativizes and challenges all truth claims.

The present article addresses various questions related to the concept of a tradition, the perspective challenge and intercultural learning. They include, but are not limited to, the following: What is the perspective challenge? From where does it arise and why? On what conditions does the plausibility of MacIntyre's solution rest? And what problems are related to his solution? In answering these and other questions, I will use the concept of "a point of view" as an analytical tool and therefore will begin by shedding light on features that are central to this concept. The principal thesis of the paper is that, although it may be impossible to change all constituent elements of a point of view in one undertaking, at least some of them are changeable step-by-step (e.g., through the process of learning new skills and acquiring new knowledge).

Initial remarks on the concept of a point of view and the perspective challenge

Though the term *point of view* is used in everyday language and in science, its meaning remains ambiguous and unspecific. In its most concrete sense, *point of view* refers to the physical, spatial, and temporal position from which something is seen or viewed.[1] Figuratively, it refers to the perspective from which a subject or event is perceived or a story narrated. This figurative meaning is closely related to another meaning, for a point of view can also refer to a person's state of mind or opinion.[2]

Though the meaning of *point of view* remains unclear until the term has been operationalized/applied, at least one common feature of its possible meanings is evident in the different uses of the expression "from *x*'s point of view" – namely that the term can act as a kind of operator for use as a prefix. The expression "from *x*'s point of view" indicates that the grounds for stating the subsequent are somehow restrictive and limiting. If a statement is made from a certain point of view, then not everything has been taken into account and not all relevant possibilities considered.

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By contrast, only some aspects of an object are selected, depending on interests, aims, values, and background assumptions, among other things[3].

The sign √ is used below as the symbol of the viewpoint operator:

$\sqrt{x}$:   "From x's point of view"

$\sqrt{x}p$: "From x's point of view, p."

$\sqrt{j}q$: "From John's point of view, the situation has become better."

(j: John, q: the situation has become better)

It is worth noting that the viewpoint operator is not truth-functional, because the truth value of the sentence "From x's point of view, p" (where p is any declarative sentence) is not determined by the truth value of p. Thus even if p were true, $\sqrt{x}p$ is not necessarily true.[4] This non-truth-functionality results from the fact that points of view involve, as constituents, intensional and culture-dependent (i.e., time-and-place-bound) elements such as beliefs, background knowledge and interests that influence the way an object is seen or considered.[5]

These intensional elements also give rise to what Alasdair MacIntyre calls the "perspective challenge", which questions the possibility of making truth claims from within any one tradition.[6] The perspective challenge also entails a great uncertainty about whether the representatives of different traditions can understand each other at all.

The perspective challenge thus emphasises what it sees as the perspective-boundedness of cognitive endeavours. Therefore the challenge is apt to be interpreted as involving the problematic assumption that perspectival facts exist, i.e., facts whose obtaining is relative to a point of view. British philosopher Adrian Moore strongly rejects this notion, because, as he asserts, "'Absolute' and 'perspectival' simply do not apply to facts. They apply at the level of what represents, not at the level of what is represented".[7] That argument is persuasive in so far as the acceptance of perspectival

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facts would threaten to lead to a problematic position: it would be unclear whether or not facts could be distinguished from mere opinions and misinformation. Thus, both metaphysical relativism (i.e., the view that objects, and reality in general, only exist relative to other objects) and epistemological relativism (i.e., the view that there are no universal criteria of knowledge or truth) would follow from perspectival facts. This makes the idea of perspectival fact self-refuting, if not downright self-contradictory.

What MacIntyre means by the term "tradition", and what distinguishes one tradition from another, are important for the following discussion. He discusses various traditions of intellectual inquiry including Aristotelianism, Augustinianism, the Scottish Enlightenment and the liberalistic tradition, and uses justice and practical rationality as examples of concepts that have had different meanings and standards in different traditions. These traditions differ also in their catalogue of virtues and in their concepts of selfhood, among other things.[8] However, the term "tradition" as used by MacIntyre refers not only to philosophical movements, but also to world-views, cultures, societies, religions and ways of life. These are in different ways embodied in various social institutions, and constitute, in a loose sense, different traditions of beliefs and practices, as well as intellectual inquiry and ethical standards.[9]

Here it is relevant to note the following. The question of how to distinguish one tradition from another is perspectival in the sense that the criteria depend on our interests, aims, values, background knowledge and the selected features of the objects of comparison, among other things. The distinguishing criteria for different traditions may include their various historical and geographical origins and continuums, as well as different concepts, beliefs, values and practices.

The relation between cultures and traditions is also complex, as the same traditions can be present in different cultures, and different traditions may exist within the same culture. MacIntyre maintains that traditions are embodied in utterances and actions, and "thereby in all the particularities of some specific language and culture".[10] Traditions, and the diverse practices that constitute them, can be distinguished both

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conceptually and ontologically. This is seen in the fact that a tradition as a whole does not necessarily perish even if a practice that has been part of that tradition dies out. Thus, one aspect of traditions is that they are historically changing collections of diverse practices, of which different traditions can share many.[11]

MacIntyre contends that the perspective challenge rests on the following line of reasoning. All people live within a particular social and cultural tradition. They have grown into that tradition, into its practices and institutions, and into its systems of belief, and they have adopted its account of justice and rationality. Their particular tradition is something they have accepted as given and not acquired as a result of individual choice. As partakers of a tradition, they have no means of adopting general and timeless standards through which they could ascend above the particularity of their situation or that of others.[12] MacIntyre crystallises this challenge as follows:

> If there is a multiplicity of rival traditions, each with its own characteristic modes of rational justification internal to it, then that very fact entails that no one tradition can offer those outside it good reasons for excluding the theses of its rivals.[13]

The solution for perspectivists is to abandon the traditional meanings of *true* and *false*. Perspectivists also contend that, instead of seeing rival traditions as something exclusive and incompatible, they should be seen as different and complementary points of view concerning the realities they address.[14] For perspectivists, different traditions inhabit the same world but conceptualize and categorise it differently. It is as if different traditions form separate horizons of understanding from which general agreement and common standards of rationality and justice are doomed to remain unattainable.

Despite the fact that the perspectivists' view (as characterized by MacIntyre) may seem plausible, even compelling, MacIntyre considers it fundamentally misconceived and misdirected.[15] According to him, the proponents of the perspective challenge fail to see the possibility of learning an alien tradition from within as if it were one's own

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tradition. This requires "going native", or immersion in an alien language as a "second first language". MacIntyre elucidates this requirement by invoking anthropology: anthropologists who have resided among natives long enough have learned a foreign language as a "second first language" (or so it has been claimed). Anthropologists have then been able to translate and re-create the ideas and concepts of the natives' tradition into their "first first language".[16] Such translations are successfully carried out if the participant in the native tradition identifies her or his own tradition in the translation.[17] This requires (although MacIntyre does not say so) that both the translator ("anthropologist") and evaluator of the translation ("a native") master each other's first language. Both persons should therefore be bilingual or should understand both the source and the target language. In the case of languages with a small number of speakers, such competent translator/evaluator pairs may be rare, even non-existent, which may at least temporarily prevent the evaluations of the validity of a translation.

Issues of translation and translatability

As a starting point for clarifying MacIntyre's view of translation, a well-known fact should be mentioned here: the primary objects of translation are words and sentences, texts and utterances.[18] Translatability is thus a property that belongs to words, sentences, texts and utterances in the first place, and whole languages in the second. However, translation and translatability, when the terms are used in a wider sense, can also apply to other objects such as cultures and traditions.[19] This wider sense is problematic and has been questioned by authors such as MacIntyre.

Additionally, it is important to distinguish from each other (1) translation between languages, (2) translation inside a language and (3) translation between different traditions, paradigms or world-views. In short, translations between languages are from one language to another. Translations inside a language are from one dialect or slang to another, or from one historical form of a language to another.[20] In translations between different traditions, paradigms or world-views, concepts from one tradition are applied to expressing and explaining the concepts and ideas of another. It perhaps

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goes without saying that translations between different traditions require either translation between languages or translation inside a language.[21]

The problems related to translation between different traditions are basically of two types. First, the traditions between which a translation should take place may use different terms for the same concept and the same term for different concepts. These differences must be identified and explained in order to have an accurate translation. Second, one of the traditions may completely lack a concept that is used in the other. These cases require what MacIntyre calls "translation by linguistic innovation".[22]

Based on translations made by bilinguals (such as MacIntyre's anthropologists), other people who have not mastered foreign languages can then acquire a more or less adequate and reliable view of other traditions' and cultures' notions and commitments. However, learning alien traditions from the inside basically requires that there are either bilinguals or people who "go native", or both. Essential in this process is that one learns to understand an alien tradition from inside as if it were one's own tradition. This is virtually impossible for the masses. Instead, they must rely on translations, paraphrases and commentaries produced by experts. Translations are therefore necessary for intercultural understanding on a large scale.

MacIntyre thus emphasizes that a valid comparison and evaluation of different traditions requires native-level language skills and 'inside' cultural information that is unattainable for most non-natives. Therefore, non-natives must resort to translations. MacIntyre emphasizes, however, that translation is not always possible. He thus rejects the idea of universal translatability.[23] Instead, he distinguishes various cases in which problems about translatability are related to incompatible and incommensurable belief systems.[24] Although MacIntyre addresses many issues concerning the translating of ideas from one tradition into the language of another, he ultimately marginalizes translation, and instead focuses on learning an alien language as a second first language.[25] In this learning process, when the learner first attempts to translate the alien culture's terms and expressions into her or his own first language, the

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process inevitably produces mistranslation and misinterpretation.[26] However, one can learn the new language such that one can use it like a native speaker and writer. But that does not happen through a translation process.

It may seem that MacIntyre has pulled the rug from under his own feet by questioning translation. However, he eventually reaches a conclusion that refutes the perspective challenge. Learning the language of an alien tradition as a second first language makes it feasible that one tradition not only disproves the views and practices of the other but that it also fails according to its own standards of rationality and consistency. Recognizing such "success" or "failure" of one's own tradition does not require a universal or tradition-independent perspective. Instead the "success" or "failure" of a tradition can be seen and identified in different ways from various particular and tradition-bound perspectives. An example of this is the conflict between Galileo, a representative of modern natural science, and the Catholic Church. The Church has finally, after centuries, admitted that the heliocentric model of the solar system proposed by Galileo is correct. One might say that the Catholic Church has in the Galileo affair overcome its epistemological crisis by incorporating scientific principles and results into its world-view. The Church has thus increased its means of dealing with epistemological crises by adopting at least some scientific standards.[27]

The "success" or "failure" of a tradition

MacIntyre thus suggests that one tradition can defeat another in terms of its ability to solve various epistemic, ethical or social problems. Such a defeat is possible if one tradition reaches a more advanced stage of development than another and is able to prove this by overcoming views that have been previously held by both traditions or the rival tradition only. It follows that, although no absolute or universal point of view exists, the perspective challenge is powerless against a tradition-bound form of inquiry that begins, but does not necessarily end, with received ideas, beliefs and presuppositions about one's own tradition.[28] This kind of inquiry can result in new ideas, beliefs and presuppositions that might not have arisen otherwise. Therefore,

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newly originated ideas and understanding can also be new for the encountering traditions.

Thus for MacIntyre, the representatives of different traditions can benefit from points of view that differ from their own tradition-bound perspectives. For most people, this takes place largely through translations and other second-hand information. Based on translations, books, and films, among other things, people may see that other traditions cope better or worse with some issues than their own tradition. Despite being perspectival, selective and limited, such "sight" can still be realistic in the sense that it represents the reality of other traditions from the observer's point of view.

Based on this reasoning, MacIntyre firmly rejects attempts to invoke and develop a tradition-independent and universal form of inquiry. According to him, "it is an illusion to suppose that there is some neutral standing ground … which can afford rational resources sufficient for enquiry independent of all traditions".[29] Suffice it to say, the history of hermeneutics and cultural studies shows that a good number of scholars, such as Karl-Otto Apel, have held the opposite view, on various grounds.

According to MacIntyre, the perspectivist "fails to recognize how integral the conception of truth is to tradition-constituted forms of enquiry".[30] This failure is accompanied by the supposition that it is possible to switch the point of view between different traditions. However, MacIntyre holds that the multiplicity of traditions does not mean multiple perspectives between which we could switch, but only that it provides "a multiplicity of antagonist commitments, between which only conflict … is possible".[31]

Despite this constraint, MacIntyre also holds that a tradition can in many ways be rationally discredited by its very own standards of rationality. Basically, traditions are vindicated with respect to the adequacy of their responses to epistemological crises.[32] In such crises, another tradition may be shown to be more effective and to possess

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more powerful tools (i.e., concepts, norms, practices, etc.) than the tradition that turned out to be problematic. So although rationality exits only within a tradition, traditions can be defeated by other traditions. In MacIntyre's view, successful and more rational traditions are precisely those that have the rational wherewithal to overcome an epistemological crisis.[33] Different traditions and cultures can enrich and add to the conceptual tools available to them by becoming, through cultural encounters, aware of certain problems and limitations in themselves and others – problems they would have failed to recognize without such encounters – and by acquiring new rational means originating from such encounters (or by borrowing the rational wherewithal from other cultures).

MacIntyre's view presupposes that one is committed to a concept of rationality that allows for the possibility of one's own tradition to err. For a committed member of a rigid religious or political tradition for example, this may be an impossible option. On the other hand, even an earnestly committed believer may be able to use her or his imagination to take some perspective-changing steps that pave the way for at least some understanding of another tradition. I will argue that although it may be impossible to change all constituent elements of a tradition-based perspective in one undertaking, at least some of them are changeable step by step. Thus, if my argument is successful, the perspective challenge is at least partially solvable.

Part II

A component analysis of the concept of a point of view

Thus far we have gained a more nuanced view of the issues and problems related to (inter)cultural learning and the tradition-bound form of inquiry, which are preconditions for MacIntyre's solution to the perspective challenge. As suggested above, studying the perspective challenge formulated by MacIntyre benefits from a component analysis of the concept of a point of view. This is true especially if we assume that the challenge is particularly related to certain constituent elements of a point of view, whereas other factors of a point of view may be less relevant in this

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respect. In order to justify the reasonableness of this assumption, the concept of a point of view with its epistemic basis is discussed below.

It is true of everyday life as well as of scientific investigation that the totality of reality can never be addressed, and certain aspects of reality that can be observed and that are considered particularly relevant are selected while others are ignored. Therefore when we consider something from a point of view, we only perceive part, or some, of the aspects or properties of it.

The following cases exemplify the limitedness and perspectivity of our cognitive endeavours. It is common for one to see or hear something that another person in the same situation may fail to see or hear, for instance when a passenger in a car sees a vehicle approaching and the driver fails to, for one reason or another. Scientists and researchers can also sometimes be in a "blind spot" where they fail to perceive something important. Although the theories and conceptual tools used by researchers can help to clarify many things, they can also prevent perceiving other things that are equally noteworthy. This confirms the view that scientific study in particular should be many-sided, and carried out, if possible, from more than one point of view. An important social issue is that different limited and partial perspectives on reality can create abstract boundaries between different people and social groups, which may become sources of disagreement and conflict. On the other hand, specific perspectives allow for understanding, because if we are to consider and understand anything at all, it must be done from a point of view.

Even if we think we see a material object in its entirety, for example, we actually see only those properties of the object that our sense perception and actual observational conditions permit us to see. Our "resolution power" and analytic capacity are limited (and more limited for some than for others), hence our point of view is connected with partial or incomplete information. A point of view, then, represents "openness to the world" (i.e., the capacity to observe and understand reality), and simultaneously a certain kind of limited or partial perspective.[34] This perspectivity is not limited only to

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perceptual observation, it is also met in abstract thinking and rational deduction such as arithmetic and conceptual analysis. To take an example, we can substitute x with either 12 or 5 + 7 in the equation $7 + 5 = x$, depending on whether we intend to present the result of the addition or the commutative property of it.

The "location", or viewing-point, of the observer is one of the elements of a point of view. A viewing-point is literally a spatial location, but it can also in a metaphorical sense be one that is cultural, historical or ideological situatedness. Other main aspects of a point of view include its range and focus. If we borrow optical terms, it can be said that insofar as a point of view has a clear focus, everything else in its scope (i.e., that which is not focused on) is part of the more or less fuzzy environment surrounding the focal point.

We can also distinguish between observer-oriented points of view and object- or focus-oriented ones. This distinction is illustrated by imagining a tube through which we look at our surroundings. At one end of the tube is the eye of the observer. At the other end is a view. When a point of view is considered as someone's, or as belonging to someone, we have an observer-oriented concept of a point of view. When a point of view is considered to be directed toward something, we have an object- or focus-oriented concept of a point of view.

The tube itself can also be part of what we see when we look through it at our surroundings. Similarly, the "limits" of a point of view can appear in the view we get when we consider something from a specific point of view. Therefore a point of view can raise features and factors (e.g., needs, interests, values) that would not appear if reality were seen from a different point of view. To put it another way, the properties and structure of a tube (or of a point of view itself) form new constellations (and "colourations") together with the view that opens from the tube – constellations that would not appear if the tube were not there (or if the point of view were different).

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Points of view are not neutral or impartial – they do not leave everything as it is. Instead they are constructive and normative, because they actively contribute to what is or can be seen or considered. A related fact is that a person's opinions correlate with her or his point of view. On the one hand, a person's opinions and attitudes can change if he or she changes the point of view from which he or she observes or considers something. It can therefore be said that an optimist and a pessimist have different points of view concerning the same reality. On the other hand, changes of opinion and attitude are apt to lead to a shift in a point of view. For example, if someone who earlier exhibited a consumerist lifestyle becomes an environmentalist, then he or she would supposedly pay much more attention to environmental issues compared to before; thus her or his point of view with respect to the reality would have changed. Hence a change of point of view may include a reconfiguration of conceptual and moral commitments that enables us to see things in a new way.[35]

In the case of different cultures and traditions, one can ask whether they embody different perspectives on the same reality rather than different realities as such. In a physical sense, all cultures of course exist in the same world. However, different cultures as social realities are identifiable as partly separate and partly overlapping entities in a similar way as societies are distinguishable based on language, habits and the various other factors that connect or separate them. Various beliefs and ontological commitments exist in different cultures. So, even if different cultures exist in the same world, they drive and sustain multiple world-views, customs and traditions. The answer to the above question is thus perspectival: from an epistemological point of view, different cultures embody different perspectives of the same reality; from another point of view they create different social and conceptual realities. MacIntyre says that rather than interpreting rival traditions as mutually exclusive, as perspectivists see it, one should understand different traditions as providing other ways of visualizing the realities they describe to us.[36] MacIntyre thus endorses the idea of "one world, many perspectives" and rejects the concept of completely isolated and unrelated traditions. However, he also holds that there is no universal perspective available. As a result, he holds that our (pre)understanding of other traditions is al-

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ways informed or guided by some particular tradition or other.[37] Moreover, MacIntyre rejects the possibility of moving among different perspectives[38] – a claim this article challenges. This challenge requires the following: first, to distinguish and identify the constituent elements of a point of view, and second, to show that at least some of the elements can be changed by using constituents borrowed from another tradition. Those tasks are the focus of what follows.

Let us begin by identifying the constituent elements of a point of view. As a starting point, we can distinguish three main groups of elements: observer-oriented elements, object-oriented elements, and tools-oriented elements. In an observed-oriented concept of a point of view, the following components can be distinguished: the observer; her or his spatial and temporal position; the observer's social, cultural, political, economic, or alternative position (i.e., her or his situatedness); and the observer's mental attitude. Meanwhile, important observer-related and culture-dependent features of a point of view include the culturally determined standards of truth, rationality, and consistency inherent in the tradition to which the observer belongs. These standards are controlling realities that regulate views and attitudes.

In an object-oriented concept of a point of view, the following components can be distinguished: the object, its observable or conceivable features or properties, and the environment or context in which the object appears. Somewhere between an observer-oriented concept and an object-oriented concept is the tools-oriented concept of a point of view, which is related to what was above called a "tube". I say *between*, because the subject and her or his background information not only are observer-related components of a point of view, but can also serve as tools of observation and introspection. The components of the tools-oriented concept include concepts, theories, methods, and approaches, all of which are chosen and used by the observer and, as such, depend on the observer.

The observer-oriented and object-oriented concepts are related, since the features relevant or important in an object under observation or subject matter under

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discussion are determined by factors related to the observer and her or his situation. Such variables include the observer's spatial and temporal location, knowledge, and interests, as well as her or his social, cultural, political, and economic positions. These variables also include the wider theme, context, and tradition of the discussion in question. This wider theme surrounds the subject matter of the discourse, while the tradition of the discourse provides the observational tools (e.g., concepts, metaphors, and theories) for the observer.

Altogether, the term *point of view*, in a figurative sense, refers to perception and linguistic thinking, which consists of many factors, some of which relate to the observing subject, while those and others can relate to the tools of observation and/or object of observation. These constituent elements and their ability to be substituted by other elements are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: The constituent elements of a point of view and the possibilities for their replacement

Observer-related factors	*Is it possible to substitute other elements of the same type …*	
	…from one's own tradition?	*…from another tradition?*
The subject (i.e., observer, viewer, possessor) or type of subject	*Yes*	*Yes, if present and reachable*
The subject's interests, aims and values	*Maybe*	*Maybe*
The subject's mental attitude and state of mind (i.e., the 'colour' of the viewing)	*Maybe*	*Maybe*
The subject's background knowledge and expectations, including metaphysical commitments and ontological premises that direct the subject's modes of thinking and understanding	*Yes, to some extent*	*Maybe*

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The subject's spatial and temporal situation (i.e., vantage point)	*Yes*	*Maybe*
The subject's cultural and historical context, including the culturally determined standards of truth, rationality and consistency	*Maybe, through the imagination*	*Maybe, through the imagination*
Tools-related factors		
Observational instruments (e.g., binoculars, telescope, microscope), the tools of the trade	*Yes*	*Yes*
The conceptual apparatus (including concepts, metaphors, models, theories, and frameworks) used by the subject	*Yes, to some extent*	*Maybe*
The method or approach to viewing	*Yes*	*Maybe*
The basis of viewing, the data (i.e., source material)	*Yes*	*Yes*
Object-related factors		
The object, subject matter or focus of a point of view	*Yes*	*Yes*
The object's features or properties	*Yes*	*Yes*
The environment or thematic context in which the object appears; the domain of discourse	*Yes*	*Yes, to some extent*

The table above expresses the conviction that the constituent elements of a point of view, or at least most of them, can be switched step-by-step either by using the available resources of one's own tradition or by adopting elements from another. Such substitution requires relevant knowledge ("à la anthropology") of the other tradition, as well as of one's own, adequate translations, and the ability both to imagine and to feel compassion. Though MacIntyre admits the possibility of such knowledge and sensitivity, he adamantly denies the possibility of switching between the perspectives of different traditions.[39] However, as this paper has shown, there is reason to consider this adamance groundless.

Based on the above discussion, a complete fusion of horizons of understanding (*pace* Gadamer) is not necessary for solving the perspective challenge. Smaller steps or

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changes may already help one to see the "success" or "failure" of one's own tradition. A relevant question in this context is: what is the difference between the *changing* and the *development* of a point of view? Generally speaking, a change is the difference between the earlier and later state of affairs – a difference that can be quantitatively or qualitatively observed, measured, or interpreted. A development, in turn, is a process or gradual unfolding of changes, and a form of change as such. Change, as thus characterized, is a major concept, and development its subconcept. Again, the relationship between change and development can also be characterized in terms of a continuum. Development is a change process in which something constitutive to the original also continues to exist after the change and in which some original parts or properties are consequently also included in the unfolded or updated version. For example, a farming tradition may develop through the influence of another tradition when a farmer from one community learns about the crop rotation practiced in another, while maintaining some features of his own community's original practices. Correspondingly, a point of view "develops" through perspectival changes in so far as something of the original point of view survives the change. No central or essential elements of the original point of view survive in more drastic perspectival changes.

If this account is correct, the obstacles to a changing or developing point of view are practical, not principled. Observer-related factors such as the interests, aims, and values of the subject, as well as her or his mental attitude, are usually very resistant to change, as is the subject's cultural and historical context, including the culturally determined standards of truth, justice, and rationality. However, if the person in question is creative and acquainted with another tradition to a relevant extent, she or he may also be able to change these factors, at least partly and temporarily, with the imagination. It is important to note that one does not necessarily need to be committed to changing her or his point of view. On the contrary, it is enough that one can imagine and understand what the reality would be if one or another component of her or his tradition and perspective differed from its   actuality.

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The factors presented in the above table are points of reference for encounters between different traditions and cultures (or, if you prefer, between the followers of different traditions). In such encounters those traditions do not necessarily change, at least not in a drastic way, and often remain more or less the same. However, in some cases a tradition can replace, or substitute, elements of another tradition with other elements of the same type, or can simply remove (i.e., annihilate, obliterate) another tradition with respect to the elements above. For example, in the Galileo affair, science replaced certain Bible-based premises and expectations with new scientific premises and observations, and perhaps ultimately rendered the Bible-based world-view (in its literal forms) untenable for many people. However, what is even more important is that science began to use a new conceptual and technical apparatus, the scientific method, thereby replacing an old, pre-scientific tradition of inquiry.

Based on the above considerations, the changes in the background knowledge of the subject and in the conceptual tools used by her or him are crucial to the changes in her or his point of view. Different traditions can make mistakes or fail, and can therefore be potentially subject to change in relation to any of the factors of a point of view. However, failings are often related to the background knowledge and expectations, including the metaphysical commitments and ontological premises that direct people's modes of thinking and understanding (an observer-related factor) as well as the conceptual apparatus and data in use (tools-related factor).

As noted above, MacIntyre opposes the perspective challenge which argues that different traditions are, in a sense, closed perspectives, so that persons from one tradition cannot, under any circumstances, grasp the point of view of another. Although MacIntyre thinks that grasping different perspectives is possible, he considers it impossible to move among them. However, in light of the above analysis, MacIntyre's view is problematic for the following reason: we are entitled to hold that switching between different perspectives is possible at least as far as their individual components are concerned. Moreover, it may be that a whole tradition or perspective cannot be added to or replaced by another tradition, but that some (perhaps many) of

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its components can. However, a distinction must be made here between actually having a particular perspective, and imagining what it would be like to have it.[40] MacIntyre does not deny the possibility of imagining what it would be like to have a perspective that differs from one's currently held perspective, although he emphasizes the tradition-bound form of inquiry. Thus, according to MacIntyre, imagining having a different perspective is doomed to remain tradition-bound. Contrary to this, it can be argued that a person who has adopted a new tradition and abandoned another (e.g., a person whose world-view has changed from a pre-scientific one to a scientific one) may be able to vividly and accurately imagine what it is to consider reality from the abandoned perspective.

In everyday discourse, different points of view are often distinguished and named according to the type or characteristics of their subject. Examples are a female point of view, a male point of view, a child's point of view, a citizen's point of view, anyone's point of view, an impartial point of view, a biased point of view, a Western point of view, a non-Western point of view, a narrator's point of view and a character's point of view, to name but a few. Sometimes the naming of a point of view is based on the tools or apparatus (e.g., an idea, principle, procedure) of observation, as in the case of a moral point of view, a judicial point of view and a scientific point of view. The naming of a point of view can also be based on the phenomenon that is the object of consideration, as in the case of the point of view of criminality or of taxation. Thus in a sense, the factors presented in the above list can be "condensed" into one, which is more often than not the type of subject. Some perspectives cannot be changed, should we say, essentially and in reality but only partially and in the imagination, because the subject (or the type of subject) of a point of view cannot change her or his essence. Examples here include a female point of view and a male point of view.

According to the list above, most components of points of view are related to or dependent on the subject (or bearer/occupant) of the point of view and her or his interests. This concerns tools-related components as well, because the tools of the

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trade, concepts, metaphors and theories are knowingly or unknowingly chosen and used by people. In addition, "conceiving" and "defining" are human practices that direct our consideration of reality and determine (i.e., "slice", "construct" and "structure") the referent-objects of our words.

Although it may sound strange at first, the object of seeing or conceiving, along with its properties and environment, is also an essential aspect of a point of view. First, it is the factor that can indicate or help determine what point of view is in question: we can often say or guess what point of view is in question when we hear what the object or the topic under discussion is and know who the discussants are as well as something of their interests. However, information about an object and its properties alone may be insufficient to reveal the point of view under consideration. Second, the environment or the thematic context in which the object under consideration appears fixes the other end of a point of view. Thus the social, cultural and historical environment of the observer on the one hand, and the environment of the object on the other, form the two ends or terminuses of a point of view. Depending on the "cognitive distance" between these terminuses or on the strangeness of the environment in which the object under consideration appears, various amounts of effort and conceptual familiarization (cf. "translation by linguistic innovation") are needed for an informed consideration. This is significant for various intercultural collaboration activities, for example, which are affected and shaped by cultural differences. Third, we should remember that perspectivity (i.e., the perspectival nature of visual and conceptual thinking) applies exclusively to representations, not to what is presented (i.e., the reality or *das Ding an sich*). So, although reality generally is seen from a point of view, the concept of reality is a concept of something that exists independent of sense perception and any point of view (or so it is at least in the eyes of both metaphysical and internal realists).[41] This view obviously excludes strong versions of cultural relativism and social constructivism from being relevant frames of reference for the study of the concept of a point of view.

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Conclusion

Alasdair MacIntyre strongly emphasizes the tradition-boundedness of our cognitive endeavours and the impossibility of switching the point of view between traditions.[42] This paper has argued that, even if it is impossible to change an entire point of view, some (especially tools-related and object-related) constituents of a point of view (such as concepts, models, methods and so on) may be changeable.[43] In any case, translating the ideas of one tradition into the language of another can show the limitations of a tradition to that tradition itself. In this sense, translation has a negative task, along with its many positive ones.[44] In the analysis given in this paper, the impossibility, or at least the difficulty, of switching the point of view between traditions results from the observer-related factors of a point of view, such as the background knowledge and expectations of the subject. Those factors also include the metaphysical commitments and ontological premises that direct the subject's modes of thinking and understanding. Other perspective-creating and maintaining factors are the subject's social, cultural and historical context, including the culturally determined standards of truth, rationality and consistency.

This paper thus concludes that MacIntyre's solution to the perspective challenge is reasonable, but in need of a major revision. The component analysis of the concept of a point of view provided by this paper remedies the following problems in MacIntyre's argument: 1) the presupposition that one is committed to a concept of rationality that allows for the possibility of one's own tradition to err, and 2) the assumption that people are irrevocably tied to the commitments of their own traditions. The first presupposition was made more flexible and thus less problematic by pointing out that one does not necessarily need to be committed to a change of her or his point of view. It is enough that one can imagine and understand what the reality would look like if one or another component of her or his tradition and perspective was different from what it actually is. Second, MacIntyre's view of the inability of traditions to complete each other is clearly overstated and therefore to be dismissed. Based on empirical evidence, we have strong reasons to believe, contrary to

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MacIntyre, that different traditions can complete and develop each other at least as far as the individual components of their points of view are concerned.

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NOTES

[1]   Currie 2012, p. 88.

[2]   Lehtonen 2011, p. 244.

[3]   Hautamäki 1986, p. 63, 65.

[4]   The following theorems follow from the non-truth-functionality of the viewpoint operator:
  I $\Diamond(p \land \mathsf{v}_x p)$:   It is possible that p and from x's point of view p.
  II $\Diamond(p \land \mathsf{v}_x \neg p)$:   It is possible that p and from x's point of view not-p.
  III $\Diamond(\neg p \land \mathsf{v}_x p)$:   It is possible that not-p and from x's point of view p.
  IV $\Diamond(\neg p \land \mathsf{v}_x \neg p)$: It is possible that not-p and from x's point of view not-p.

[5]   Cf. Hales & Welshon 2000, p. 21.

[6]   MacIntyre 2003, p. 352.

[7]   Without going into detail, it suffices to say that Nietzsche's views on perspectivism with regard to truth do not necessarily conflict with this. For more on this topic, see Hales & Welshon (2000, p. 18–21), who contend that "Nietzsche is explicit about the distinction between being believed true in a perspective and being true in a perspective" (*ibid*., p. 20). This distinction can be compared to that between 'what represents' and 'what is represented'. According to Hales and Welshon, Nietzsche represents so-called "weak perspectivism" (*ibid*., p. 18).

[8]   MacIntyre 2003, p. 349–350.

[9]   *Ibid*., p. 349, 364.

[10]   *Ibid*., p. 371.

[11]   *Ibid*., p. 350.

[12]   *Ibid*., p. 350.

[13]   *Ibid*., p. 352.

[14]   *Ibid*., p. 352.

[15]   *Ibid*., p. 353.

[16]   *Ibid*., p. 374.

[17]   *Ibid*., p. 375.

[18]   Therefore we can (perhaps naively) call translation an activity that transfers (more or less accurately) meanings carried by one syntactic sequence to another syntactic sequence. An-

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other (but not necessarily less problematic) attempt to characterize translation is presented by Saul Kripke (1979, p. 248–250) as follows: if a sentence of one language expresses a truth in that language, then any translation of it into any other language also expresses a truth (in that other language).

[19] Osborne 2000, p. 56.

[20] MacIntyre 2003, p. 372.

[21] "Translation inside a language" may appear to be an oxymoron and therefore it may be tempting to use other terms such as "paraphrase", "rephrasing", "adaptation" or "interpretation". It is commonly said that all translation is interpretation (cf. *ibid.*, p. 386: "every translation is an interpretation"), since it involves choosing between various meanings (and types of meaning, including literal and implied). This choosing is done by means of word choice, punctuation, insertion, deletion, explanation, specification and so on. On the other hand, translation is not the same as interpretation, since not all interpretation is translation. Interpretation is the search for meaning and its transfer from one presentation to another, i.e., the presentation of speech or text in a new speech or text, which is often done within one and the same language.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 372.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 327–328.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 379–380.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 374.

[26] MacIntyre 1990, p. 43.

[27] MacIntyre 2003, p. 365.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 364–368.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 367.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 367.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 368.

[32] Such crises are of two interrelated types. In the first, a fact has been discovered which from a traditional perspective is untrue (i.e., p and from x's point of view not-p). In the second, something has been disproved that from a traditional perspective is true (or that the tradition holds true) (i.e., not-p and from x's point of view p). These types of epistemological crises are of course interrelated because the verification of a fact implies that its antithesis is false. An example is when Galileo's and Copernicus' heliocentric view replaced the widely accepted yet false conception of the earth as the centre of the universe.

[33] MacIntyre 2003, p. 365–366.

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[34] Nagel 1986, p. 6, 26.

[35] Cf. Gendler 2010, p. 36.

[36] MacIntyre 2003, p. 352.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 350.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 367–368.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 368.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 367–368.

[41] Moore 1997, p. 7–8, 45.

[42] In my view, whether this impossibility is real or not depends on the perspectival factor (i.e., the constituent element of a point of view) at stake.

[43] On the other hand, tools-related and object-related constituent elements of a point of view may also be strongly culture-bound.

[44] MacIntyre 2003, p. 387–388.

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