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Perspectivism with Objetivity, Causal and Temporal*

Perspectivismo con objetividad, causal y temporal

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Abstract: It has been suggested that the only plausible way to integrate causality in the scientific image of the world is through a subjectivist causal perspectivism. Causation would exist only from the point of view of an agent capable of doing things. The conception of time associated with such causal perspectivism is certain temporal perspectivism that is also subjectivist. Following some ideas of Ramsey, Huw Price is a recent exponent of these approaches, which are rooted in Russell's critique of the notion of causality and in McTaggart's irrealism about time. We analyze this line of thought and argue for an objectivist interpretation of those perspectivisms. It will be crucial a distinction between perspectives and the subjects capable of adopting them, as well as an analysis of the conditions for adopting perspectives.
Key words: Causation, Flowing Time, Perspectives, Points of View, Objectivity, Pluralism.

Resumen: Se ha sugerido que la única forma plausible de integrar la causalidad en la imagen científica del mundo es a través de un perspectivismo causal de tipo subjetivista. Las relaciones causales sólo existirían desde el punto de vista de un agente capaz de llevar a cabo acciones. La concepción del tiempo asociada a tal perspectivismo causal sería cierto perspectivismo temporal también subjetivista. Siguiendo algunas ideas de Ramsey, Huw Price es un reciente exponente de estos enfoques, que hunden sus raíces en la crítica de Russell a la noción de causalidad y en el irrealismo de McTaggart sobre el tiempo. Analizamos esta línea de pensamiento defendiendo una interpretación objetivista de los anteriores perspectivismos. En nuestra propuesta, será crucial una distinción entre las perspectivas y los sujetos capaces de adoptarlas, así como un análisis de las condiciones de adopción de perspectivas.
Palabras clave: Causalidad, Flujo Temporal, Perspectivas, Puntos de Vista, Objetividad, Pluralismo.

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"We are all stories, in the end. Just
make it a good one, eh?"
The Doctor, Season 5, Episode 13.[1]

Things change. Many changes seem to be the effect of certain causes. And there seems to be a flowing time associated to those causal processes. If causation is perspectival, so be it. If that perspectivism leads to a pluralism, so be it. But that perspectivism and that pluralism reflect things that happen in the world. They do not describe us.

In this work, we will argue for a non-subjectivist causal and temporal perspectivism. Even if causal relations are perspectival, they are not necessarily a mere subjective matter. They can be *both* perspectival and objective. And even if positions in a flowing time are also perspectival, they are not necessarily something simply relative to our subjectivity. Perspectivism entails a certain pluralism. But that pluralism does not lead to any relativism of a subjectivist variety.

The reality of causal relations and the reality of a flowing time are two of the most disputed issues in contemporary metaphysics. Russell's attack to the notion of causality and McTaggart's arguments against the reality of time are among the main sources of the discussions.[2] In a very important sense, subjectivist causal perspectivism is the last inheritor of Russell's old skepticism about causation and subjectivist temporal perspectivism is the last inheritor of McTaggart's old irrealism about time.

Our aim is not to reconstrue the arguments of Russell and McTaggart, nor analyze in detail those discussions, but to get on the way of some subjectivist conceptions of causation and flowing time. More concretely, we want to focus on the sort of subjectivist causal perspectivism we can find in authors as Ramsey or Price, and many others, and on the sort of subjectivist temporal perspectivism associated with their approaches.[3]

We will defend a causal and temporal perspectivism of an objectivist sort. A very important part of our main argument will be a *distinction* between perspectives, or points of view, and the subjects able to adopt them. To assume that distinction entails that there is also a crucial distinction between to be internal to a perspective, or point of view, and to be internal to the subject that is adopting it.[4]

Other not less important part will be a certain account of the conditions for *adopting* perspectives. It makes sense to defend an objectivist causal and temporal perspectivism if perspectives can have causal and temporal contents with an objective character beyond our subjectivity. We will argue that if causal and temporal perspectives have objective conditions of adoption, then it has to be possible to have in perspective causal and temporal contents with an objective character.

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1 This paper grew through discussions about Doctor Who's topics with our son Ulises. In particular, it acquired shape trying to give a not merely subjective sense to the claim that "we are all stories". Many of the ideas presented here were in fact suggested by him.

2 Russell (1913) and McTaggart (1908, 1927).

3 See Álvarez (2014, 2015).

4 Here, we will not make any relevant distinction between perspectives and points of view.

To adopt a perspective never is a purely subjective matter. Even perspectives with subjective contents have to have objective conditions of adoption. The pivotal point in our argument will be that in relation to causal and temporal perspectives we cannot imagine how such objective conditions can exist if they do not involve objective causal relations in an objective flowing time. So, at least these objectivities must be capable of being among the contents of some of our perspectives.

We will begin analyzing Ramsey's claim about the *agentive source* of causal and temporal appearances. There is, however, more than one way to understand the sense in which causal connections and a flowing time are generated by our actions. Ramsey wants to support that generation in first-person points of view understood in a strong subjectivist sense. But, he does not offer any explanation of the nature and mode of existence of such subjective points of view. We need one such explanation. We propose to understand the adoption of points of view as real processes integrated in other wider real processes, sharing all those processes the same problems with respect to causation and time. That way, either all of them would have to be interpreted in a subjectivist sense or it has to be possible to offer a plausible objectivist interpretation of causal perspectivism and temporal perspectivism.

We need to *explain* appearances. In particular, we need something in reality that is able to explain the existence of causal and temporal appearances, the appearances that we identify from our points of view. A plausible way to obtain that explanation goes through the assumption that to adopt a point of view is a process integrated in other wider processes capable of having causal and temporal features. Moreover, perhaps this is the only non-eliminative way to explain the existence of causal and temporal appearances. In any case, if we assume that explanation, then either the reality grounding the adoption of points of view has to have also a mere subjective nature or causal relations and flowing time have to enjoy a place in the objective reality itself.[5]

1. Ramsey's "Ultimate Contingency"

The first-person point of view of the agents has in Ramsey (1929)'s analyses of causation and time a crucial role. From our perspective as agents, our volitions, deliberations and decisions seem to be probabilistically independent on past or present events. That is, from our perspective as agents, we both feel and think we are spontaneous in our volitions, deliberations and decisions. This means that *we cannot but take ourselves as genuine causes of our actions*, or at least of our volitions, deliberations and decisions. In Ramsey's own words, "my present action is an ultimate and the only ultimate contingency"[6].

5 An objectivist perspectivism has to assume the pluralism entailed by perspectivism. It seems easy to assume such pluralism with respect to causes, but not so easy with respect to flowing time. Here, we will not analyze how to make sense of an objective temporal pluralism. But, the main idea would be that if the existence of a flowing time is entailed by the existence of certain processes, then different processes maintaining no connections among them could entail the existence of different flowing times. See Vázquez (2013, 2015).

6 See Ramsey (1929). The first-person point of view also has a key role in Ramsey's approach of probabilistic judgements. All of that has important consequences in relation to the problem of free-will and the analysis of decision both in epistemic and non-epistemic areas. A very important field where decisions from the first-person point of view need to pay close attention to time concerns the evaluation of synchronic and diachronic "luck". About that topic, see Hales (2015).

Price (2014, 587) has elaborated in deep that idea:

> "… an agent cannot take herself to have evidence about what she is going to do, *as she deliberates*. ('Deliberation screens prediction', as Rabinowicz (2002) puts it.) From the agent's point of view, her contemplated action must be regarded as probabilistically independent of anything she knows at the present — even if *other people* (or she herself at other times) could legitimately take something of that kind as evidence about her choice, or vice versa.
> In my view, this is the key to solving Field's puzzle. The differences Cartwright rightly points to between the probabilities we get from laws of association, on the one hand, and the probabilities associated with what we take to be causal dependences, on the other, are precisely the differences induced by the specialness of agency. Cartwright is right in thinking that we can't explain effective strategy in terms of the former; but wrong to think that we need causal laws to give us the latter. On the contrary, as I think Ramsey first saw, it's the other way round: the specialness of the agent's perspective grounds our talk of causation."

As Price notes, Rabinowicz (2002)'s claim is very clear. From the first's person point of view, "deliberation screens prediction". In other words, from the first person point of view the possibility of predicting what we are going to do *cancels* our intentions to deliberate about what we will do.

What is Field's puzzle? Cartwright (1979) defended with good arguments the need to appeal to genuine causal relations in order to articulate effective strategies of action. The tension between that need and Russell (1913)'s classic insistence in the limited role of causation in basic physics constitutes Field's puzzle.[7] Price is claiming that, even though effective strategies of action need causal explanations, we cannot understand them appealing to the existence of objective causal relations, as Cartwright suggests. We have to return to Ramsey's ideas about the special nature of the agent's perspective. Causation comes from agency.

Let us remember Russell (1913) approach to causation. His main claim was the following:

> "… the word 'cause' is so inextricably bound up with misleading associations as to make its complete extrusion from the philosophical vocabulary desirable."[8]

According to Russell, it is a mistake to think that causation is one of the fundamental "axioms" or "postulates" of science. After the previous words, Russell notes that

> "[…] in advanced sciences such as gravitational astronomy, the word 'cause' never occurs."

7 See Field (2003).

8 Russell (1913: 387).

Advanced sciences never look for causes. Moreover, what science employs in place of any supposed "law of causality", establishing that the same causes are followed by the same effects[9], is the mathematical notion of *function*. Russell says:

> "The law of gravitation will illustrate what occurs in any advanced science. In the motions of mutually gravitating bodies, there is nothing that can be called a cause, and nothing that can be called an effect; there is merely a formula. Certain differential equations can be found, which hold at every instant for every particle of the system, and which, given the configurations and velocities at one instant, or the configurations at two instants, render the configuration at any other earlier or later instant theoretically calculable. […] there is nothing that could be properly called 'cause' and nothing that could be properly called 'effect' in such a system."[10]

In the same vein, and in the same page, we can find Russell's final diagnosis about the *philosophical* obsession to find a law or principle of causality:

> "No doubt the reason why the old 'law of causality' has so long continued to pervade the books of philosophers is simply that the idea of a function is unfamiliar to most of them, and therefore they seek an unduly simplified statement."

Russell's claims continue having its force today, from microphysics to cosmology, and from neuroscience to economy. Moreover, the addition of discrete mathematics to the study of reality (logic, information theory, graph theory, decision theory, etc.) does not introduce any radical change. Scientific knowledge generally is a matter of functions, or at least relations. It is not a matter of causes and effects.

Russell considers two fields *outside* "advanced science"[11] where something close to the causal language can have some application. The first one is constituted by *applied science* and *ordinary knowledge*. Here, we can find laws of probable sequences of events with a structure very similar to causal laws. The second field is constituted by our *agentive experience*. Very often, we use causal terms to describe our actions. However, according to Russell, the use of causal concepts in these two fields outside advanced science only has a *subjective* relevance. In particular, laws of probable sequences of events have only a practical value relative to the interests and goals of some particular subjects. They have a value only in connection with some plans of action.[12]

In the last term, the subjective relevance of causal concepts that we find in those two fields only exist because of the asymmetry introduced by *memory* between the past and the future. For Russell, this means that the two fields outside advanced science where something

9 There are many ways to formulate this law or principle of causality. Very often, it is presented in terms of the "invariability of successions cause-effect", or in terms of the "uniformity of nature".

10 Russell (1913: 395).

11 Also, we can say "fundamental science", or "basic science", perhaps "theoretical physics".

12 Something similar can be said of probabilistic analysis of causation, like the classical one of Anscombe (1971), and of counterfactual or subjunctive analysis of causation, like Lewis (1979) proposal defining the causal arrow in terms of counterfactual asymmetries.

close to the causal language can have some application are not fields which can be taken directly as being part of the objective reality. They are fields *internal* to our experiences. They belong not to objective reality in itself, but to what have been traditionally called "the appearances".

Price (2014) calls our attention over the following quote from Russell:

> "The law of causality, I believe, like much that passes muster among philosophers, is a relic of a bygone age, surviving, like the monarchy, only because it is erroneously supposed to do no harm"[13].

Price argues for the virtues of what he calls a "republican" conception of causation, in contrast both with a "monarchical", or traditional, conception and with the nihilism of an "anarchical" conception. He agrees with Cartwright on the need to assume genuine causal connections in some contexts. But, he argues that Cartwright is not right in demanding causal laws. Price thinks that Ramsey was right on this issue. What is needed is to acknowledge the very special character of the *first-person point of view*. The actions coming from such a perspective, more strictly the volitions, deliberations and decisions to act, constitute the "ultimate and the only ultimate contingency" capable of originating genuine causal connections.

Curiously, the two fields that Russell considers to be mere "appearances" (namely, probable sequences of events with a practical value and some psychological attitudes bringing about certain actions) are taken by Ramsey and Price as constituting the ultimate source of causal connections. The *contingency of adopting an agentive first-person point of view* is the necessary and sufficient condition for the existence of causal relations.

Now, let us consider *time*. Flowing time seems to follow the same direction than causation. Causes seem to be placed in the past of their effects (alternatively, effects seem to be placed in the future of their causes). However, let us ask some apparently bizarre questions: Is this necessarily so? Is it necessary for the causal arrow to point out always to the *future*, so that causes have to be placed in the past of their effects?

Price (2014) appeals to Dummett. This author is famous for arguing that it is coherent the idea that we can change the past so long as we take ourselves *not able to know that past before our actions*.[14] If Dummett is right, then, it is not necessary that the causal arrow points to the future. It is simply a question of *fact*. That the causal arrow points out generally to the future follows from the way we are made. And sometimes, somehow, the causal arrow could also point out to the past.

As we have seen, Russell (1913) maintained quite a similar position. According to him, the causal arrow would point out to the future simply because we have *memories* of the past, but not of the future. It is simply a question of *fact* that the causal arrow goes all the way as it does. It simply depends on a psychological feature: the asymmetrical structure of our memory.

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13 Russell (1913: 387).

14 Dummett (1954, 1964).

Dummett's arguments depend on some semantical theses about truth and facts. Russell's arguments depend on a certain image of the world he assumes as coming from fundamental physics and on a certain image of our mind. However, there is something in common between the approaches of Dummett and Russell. Both of them consider that the reality of time has no more ontological grounding than what can be obtained from *the fact that we have some appearances*. Dummett is not realist. He does not admit a reality beyond what can be "proved". Moreover, in order to maintain consistency, what can be proved has to be interpreted as "what *seems* to be proved". At the end, the nature of time in linked to the *appearances of time* involved in our action. In Russell, things are so even in a more explicit sense. Strictly, there is no need of a flowing time in the basic objective reality described by science. And even if outside science we continue using a causal language in some contexts, this has only a subjective relevance. In the last term, the use of causal notions only is supported by an asymmetry of our memory. For Russell, a flowing time is only an attribute of our *experience*.

Russell (1913)'s conception of reality in relation to causation and time is quite similar to the conception of his old mentor McTaggart. There are not causal relations in objective reality. Change is not real. Reality has a certain sort of static structure. And the structure of objective time is constituted by a net of temporal sequences of facts that can be ideally described by certain systems of differential equations. This is in complete accordance with what McTaggart called C-series: sequences of facts included in other sequences of facts. For Russell as well as for McTaggart, causation and a flowing time are only "mere appearances".[15]

2. Turtles, Beaches, Arrows

These approaches invite us to a philosophical conception in which causes cannot have but a subjective mode of existence. They are *mere appearances* identified from the agent's perspective. A similar result can be obtained with respect to the existence of flowing time. Both Dummett and Russell convert time in something merely subjective. A flowing time is no more than a *mere appearance*. Dummett and Russell are in total harmony with McTaggart rejection of the irreality of time.

In this section, we are going to point out a deep *tension* in that conception. The tension is between the *fact* that we adopt the agent's perspective from a certain position in reality and a *picture* suggested to explain the adoption of such a perspective.

To begin with, let us analyze some details of Ramsey's notion of "the ultimate contingence". We cannot but take our own deliberations, decisions and actions as being completely contingent and spontaneous. In that sense, we cannot assume them as being determined by anything else. Consider the following quotes where Price explains Ramsey's position:

15 See McTaggart (1908, 1927) with respect to his rejection of the reality of a flowing time, with past, present and future events, which he called A-series. There are only static orders of events according to the relation "to be before/after or simultaneous to". This constitutes his B-series, which would be supported by C-series. About this, see the important works of Mellor (1981, 1998). Recent analyses of the structure of temporal appearances can be found in Hautamäki (2015), Liz (2015) and Vázquez (2013, 2015).

> "Ramsey is at least looking in the right direction, saying it [the time-asymmetry of causation] depends 'on tracing the different consequences of our possible actions, *which we naturally do in sequence forward in time*.' "[16]

Both causation and time depend on action. The time-asymmetry of causation and the existence of a flowing time with a past, a present and a future depend on the *ultimate contingency* involved in our action. As Price notes, in order to avoid circularity or regress, the meaning of "consequences" here cannot be causal, but something like "probabilistic dependences". But, the word "naturally" is not less problematic. In order to make clear the meaning of the last phrase of the text, Price uses the following *picture*:

> "Imagine turtles hatched on an East-facing beach. Is it any surprise that their journey takes them asymmetrically to the East? No, for *there are no routes to the West, from their point of view*." [The emphasis is ours]

Is the "ultimate contingency" something merely subjective? If we emphasize the role of the "East-facing beaches", it does not seem to be so. The perspectives of the agents pointing to a certain direction, displaying a certain orientation, would not have only a subjective nature. We can express this making use of Price's own words:

> "[The term "naturally"] reminds us that we are appealing to a feature of our natures —a universal feature for us, albeit perhaps a contingent one. As structures in spacetime, we human agents all share a common temporal orientation. Imagine depicting our deliberative lives on a spacetime map, with a little arrow connecting each instant of deliberation to its associated action (where there is one). For us, all those little arrows point in the same direction —from *past* to *future*, as we would normally put it. Or, to go back to the turtles, think of yourself as a beach, and of your own plans and deliberations as the turtles that hatch on that beach. What's true is not only that all plans hatch in the same direction on each beach individually, but also that all the beaches we know of face in the same direction."

However, to emphasize that role of the "East-facing beaches" destroys the sense in which Ramsey's ultimate contingence is intended to be really "the ultimate and the only ultimate contingency". And this is what originates a tension.

There is something misleading in Price's approach. There is a deep tension between something that is assumed as a *fact* about our position in reality and the *picture* that is intended to explain that fact. On the one hand, we have:

(1) The fact that we human beings *seem to be part of causal structures in spacetime sharing a common temporal orientation*. Moreover, the causal arrow and the temporal arrow seem to follow orientations coordinated with the arrow of our agentive intentionality.

16 This and the following quotes are from Price (2014, 598).

But, as Russell claims, it is very difficult to understand these orientations in the context of the basic objective reality described by science. In the basic objective reality of science there is no room for causal relations or for a flowing time. Moreover, problems do not come only from science. As McTaggart claims, perhaps there are also conceptual problems against the idea that the basic objective reality in a metaphysical sense can contain changes in a flowing time. Therefore, on the other hand, it is suggested the following *picture*:

(2) The causal arrow and the temporal arrow are coordinated with the arrow of our agentive intentionality because our agency is the source of causal relations and flowing time. *We create all the structure of reality that has to do with "orientation"*. We create causal connections and we create a flowing time. We create the ordinary structure of spacetime. Our pointing to some directions in our actions creates the *appearance of a spacetime full of events causally connected in a flowing time*.

1 describes a *fact* about our position in reality. We seem to be placed in a spacetime with certain orientations. 2 intends to offer an explanation of that fact. However, that explanation has to involve very peculiar ingredients. They cannot be ingredients that belong only to what "appears to us". And they cannot be either ingredients that belong to what can be found in a "scientific image" like the one assumed by Russell, or to what can be found in a "metaphysical image" like the one introduced by McTaggart. So, the explanation offered by 2 is only suggested through a *picture*: a subject creating a world of causal and temporal appearances.

Ramsey's appeal to an "ultimate contingency" is a particular case of 2. Our agentive capacities are the source of all the causal and temporal orientations we encounter in our experience and think of applying causal and temporal concepts. The exercice of our agentive capacities are the source of spacetime itself.

But, there is something very odd in the idea that *we create the orientations we are in*. There is something viciously circular in the idea that *we create the spacetime in which we seem to do such creation*. There is some kind of undesirable "bootstrapping". According to the fact described in 1, we seem to be in a certain sort of oriented reality, as the turtles are in a certain sort of oriented beach. But, according to the picture offered in 2, we create that oriented reality. And we do it in just the way it is in fact constituted. Moreover, we have to create it in that way. Our creation has to follow those routes.

According to 1, the turtles do not create the beach. *The turtles are on a real beach* having a certain orientation. The creation of the spacetime described in 2 requires *a previous position* in an oriented spacetime. And that orientation has some sort of conceptual, or logical, or metaphysical, priority. That causes occur in the past of their effects, that the past is closed and the future is open, that intentionality directs us towards the world in the ways it does, etc., entail some sort of conceptual, or logical, or metaphysical necessity having priority over the creation described in 2.

The picture 2 offers something very different. *The turtles are creating the beach* on which they seem to be placed. The turtles seem to be on a real beach, but that beach is *not a real beach in which the turtles are in*. The beach in which the turtles seem to be placed is a *mere appearance* of such a beach. It is simply a beach created by the turtles. What we read in 1 has to be interpreted not as describing a real fact, but as describing a mere

"appearance of a fact". According to 2, that causes occur in the past of their effects, that the past is closed and the future is open, that intentionality directs us towards the world in the ways it does, etc., do not involve any sort of conceptual, or logical, or metaphysical necessity simply because there are not such real facts. They seem to be real facts, but they are only "appearances of facts".

We can find this sort of *tension* in Russell and Ramsey. And we can find it also in Dummett. First, let us go to Russell. We subjectively distinguish between the past and the future because of the peculiar workings of *memory*. Only the past, not the future, can be known by memory. However, we can ask, how to distinguish memory (the direct knowledge of the past) from precognition (or prescience, the direct knowledge of the future) without presupposing a flowing time *independent* on the occasional exercise of our psychological faculties? On the one hand, like in 1, memory seems to require an independent directionality of time. But, on the other hand, like in 2, it is intended that memory creates the very distinction between the past and the future.

Now, let us recall Ramsey's view of causation. According to him, there are things for which our volitions can count as evidence and things for which our volitions cannot count as evidence. The first ones are placed in the future, the second ones in the past. Price (2014, 599-600) explains the "deep insight" of Ramsey's approach in the following terms:

> "[Readers of Ramsey are not generally aware that] it is the agent who is in the driver's seat, in determining the direction of causation in nature (in so far as there is such a thing), not the other way round. Or, if they are aware of it, they haven't also noticed what Ramsey got wrong and Dummett got right, that the resulting causal arrow need not point exclusively to the future."

The agents need to be placed in "the driver's seat". But, there is no room for that seat in the objective world described by science. So, even though the agents need to occupy the "driver's seat", it is suggested that even *that* "driver's seat" has to be created by the agents.

Finally, let us go to Dummett. His theses about backward causation lead to another version of the same tension. Dummett argues that one can take oneself to affect the past so long as one did not take oneself to be able to know about the relevant part of the past, before one acted. Our action generally lies in the future, but in some conditions it also can have some sort of "backward" causal influence. In Dummett's general verificationist approach, the possibility to act changing the past in the case we do not know that past before to act is certainly coherent. But, there is a problem. Does "not to know that past *before* our actions" presuppose a flowing time in which our knowledge of that past does not come but after our action is done? Again, on the one hand, like in 1, our action requires an independent determination of what is past, present and future. But, on the other hand, like in 2, it is intended that our action is capable of constructing *that* very past.

How to alleviate the tension between 1 and 2? The turtles are on a beach. And the beach suggests some orientations. But, the beach itself has to be assumed as mere appearance created by the turtles. There is a kind of disturbing circularity. There is a kind of undesirable "bootstrapping". Our guess is that the main source of the tension is the categorical distinction between the beaches and the turtles. We cannot *distinguish* between the beaches and

the turtles in the categorical way Price does. The beaches can be other turtles and the turtles can be other beaches. In other words, what appears to be a beach from a certain perspective can become a turtle from another perspective, and the other way around.

Not to distinguish categorically between the beaches and the turtles means that the creation of spacetime structures by the subjects cannot be seen as something they do "ex nihilo", so to speak. It also means that the causal structures in the spacetime we seem to be in, and the common temporal orientation we seem to share, can be seen as a spontaneous non-subjective creation of reality. There would be an objective "ultimate contingency" in reality itself, being the subjects parts of that reality.

The subjects follow certain routes which in turn are created by an objective reality that includes them. We can make sense of that new image considering the beaches and the turtles as parts of some wider processes with an *objective creative force*. In the context of such wider processes, the tension between 1 and 2 disappears.

Who is "in the driver's seat" is not precisely the agent. It is *the agent adopting a point of view*. And such adoption can be seen as a process involved in other wider processes having all of them an objective and ultimately contingent creative force.

3. An Objectivist Perspectivism, Causal and Temporal

It is time to offer a direct argument for the objectivity of perspectival causal relations and for the objectivity of a perspectival flowing time.

For brevity, we will talk about the *conditions of adoption of a perspective* referring to the conditions in which it can be said that a subject is adopting the perspective. To be *objective* will be understood as existing in reality and to be *subjective* as existing only from a certain perspective. Hence, there could be items that are *both* objective and accessed from a perspective. In that case, we will say that the contents of the perspective are objective contents and that the perspective is *transparent* with respect to them. Also, in principle, there could be items that are objective and not accessed from any perspective. However, if something is merely subjective, it could not be objective.

Our argument has two main *premises*:

1. *Perspectives have to have conditions of adoption with an objective character.*
   The conditions for adopting a perspective cannot be merely subjective. If the conditions for adopting a perspective were merely subjective, then we would have to assume the possibility that something like a stone or an atom can adopt perspectives of any sort. If the adoption of perspectives were not to have objective conditions of adoption, then whatever entity could adopt any sort of perspective.

2. *The objective conditions of the adoption of perspectives generating causal and temporal appearances have to include causal relations in a flowing time.*
   It is obvious that the appeal to some objective conditions involving causal relations and a flowing time would contribute to explain how it is possible the adoption of perspectives generating causal appearances and temporal appearance. However, the important point is that perhaps *only* the appeal to such objective conditions is able

to explain the existence of those appearances. Appearances of causal relations in a flowing time are not like appearances of ghosts and witches, or like appearances of divine phenomena, or like appearances of collective entities. In many of these cases, the objective conditions of adoption of the perspectives generating those appearances do not need to involve the objective real existence of those phenomena. In contrast, appearances of causal relations in a flowing time are in the same boat than phenomena like qualitative consciousness, intentionality or actions, and many of their derivates. According to premise 1, perspectives generating causal and temporal appearances have to have objective conditions of adoption. According to premise 2, these objective conditions of adoption have to involve the objective real existence of those very phenomena.

From these premises, we can obtain the following *conclusion*:

3. *It has to be possible that the causal and temporal contents of our perspectives have an objective character.*
   According to premise 1, the adoption of causal and temporal perspectives have to have objective conditions of adoption. This entails that we are adopting *a second reflective perspective* with respect to those objective conditions of adoption. Now, according to premise 2, these conditions would have to involve causal relations in a flowing time. Hence, it has to be possible that the second reflective perspective is *transparent* with respect to them. It has to be possible that those causal and temporal contents have an *objective* character.

The conjunction of 1 and 2 entails 3. The need of objectivity in the conditions for adopting perspectives, together with the fact that perspectives generating causal and temporal appearances need to have conditions of adoption involving causal relations and a flowing time, entails that those causal relations and that flowing time can have also an objective character. Our conclusion is that it has to be possible that causal relations and a flowing time have an objective character.

The two main ways to try to escape from that conclusion lead to very serious problems. One of them would focus on *premise 2*. It consists in rejecting that perspectives generating causal and temporal appearances have to have conditions of adoption involving causal relations and a flowing time. However, it is very difficult to see how this can be rejected. Indeed, eliminativism about the existence of causal and temporal *appearances* would not have this problem. If there were no causal and temporal *appearances*, then we would not need to look for the conditions for adopting perspectives generating those appearances. But, eliminativism is not an option here. Simply, we cannot claim that there are not causal and temporal appearances.

The conditions of adoption of a perspective have to offer some sort of explanatory understanding of why the perspective can be adopted in those conditions. Consider the generation of causal and temporal appearances in objective conditions of adoption *c* that do not involve causal relations and a flowing time. Even though we were to know that there are some conditions *c* such that they obtain if, and only if, there are some causal and temporal

appearances, that knowledge could lack any explanatory force with respect to why causal and temporal appearances could be generated in conditions *c*. This is just what we find both in McTaggart's series-C and in Russell's systems of differential equations describing the basic objective reality. They propose conditions *c* that are *unable* to offer any explanation about the generation of causal and temporal appearances. Simply, as a matter of fact, *they do not explain the relevant appearances*.

The second way to escape from our conclusion would focus on *premise 1*. It would consist in rejecting that the conditions for adopting perspectives have to have an *objective* character. We have indicated a very important reason to avoid this move. If we accept it, we could not reject that stones and atoms can adopt all sorts of perspectives. Whatever entity could adopt any sort of perspective. Now, we can add another reason. If the conditions for adopting perspectives were not objective, then *no perspective could have any objective content*. That is, if the conditions for adopting perspectives were merely subjective, then every content would have to be merely subjective too.

We can offer an argument for the last claim. The negation of the consequent entails a negation of the antecedent. If some perspectives could have some objective contents, in the sense of being contents able to capture something in reality, then it would be possible to conceive a plausible general structure for an objective sufficient condition for adopting perspectives. Let be *o* one such objective content. Because *o* is an objective content, we can also say that in reality there is something that is *o*. Now, let *P* a perspective having *o* as content. The following offers a *plausible general structure* for an objective sufficient condition with respect to the adoption of perspective *P*:

> A subject *s* adopts a perspective *P* having *o* as content if the subject *s* is related with *o* in such-and-such adequate ways.

To be related with *o* in those adequate ways would be an objective sufficient condition for adopting the perspective *P*. Moreover, to adopt the perspective *P* satisfying that condition would entail that the content *o* of perspective *P* has an *objective* character. There would be something in reality corresponding to it, namely *o* itself. Perspective *P* would be transparent with respect to *o*.

Hence, it is not only that if the conditions for adopting perspectives were merely subjective, then we could not reject that stones or atoms can adopt perspectives of any sort. If the conditions for adopting perspectives were merely subjective, then stones and atoms themselves, as well as any other content, including all the contents of our scientific perspectives, always would have to fail to be objective.

Together with the conclusion of our main argument, the last result leads us to claim that perspectives will have *objective* conditions of adoption if and only if there can be *transparent* perspectives with a certain objective content.[17]

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17 The general structure above proposed for a sufficient objective condition with respect to the adoption of a perspective *P* involves the very item *o* that would count as the objective content of the transparent perspective *P*. However, it is clear that this would not have to be so necessarily. Our biconditional can hold even though the objective conditions for the adoption of a perspective do not involve the objective content of the perspective.

4. Conclusions

If a perspective put us in contact with an objective reality, then the content of the perspective is not something we can merely find in the subject that is adopting the perspective. That there is not a non-perspectival way to know whether our perspectives put us in contact with an objective reality has to be *compatible* with the attainment of such objectivity.

Also, one thing is that we cannot *separate* the contents of our perspectives from the contribution of the other constituents of the perspectives and another very different thing that we cannot obtain *objectivity* through the adoption of perspectives. We have to reach the objective world adopting perspectives. And the accomplishment of our attempts is something we have to decide always from the inside of our perspectives. We have to decide which perspectives can be taken to be transparent with respect to the objective character of their contents.

We have argued that causal and temporal perspectives are an example of this. We cannot but assume that these perspectives have conditions of adoption involving objective causal relations in an objective flowing time. And that those conditions of adoption can be the objective contents of other more reflective perspectives.

Our main argument is *not* a transcendental argument. Perhaps some objective conditions *c* for the adoption of causal and temporal perspectives can be discovered, which are explanatory not involving objective causal relations in a flowing time. In the same way, perhaps some objective conditions for the adoption of perspectives about qualitative consciousnes, intentionality and actions can be discovered which do not involve the objective reality of those phenomena. However, at the moment we do not have any of this (not even on the horizon!).

Causal and temporal perspectivism is unavoidable. We cannot reject that we have causal and temporal appearances. Moreover, surely we are able to identify causal relations in a flowing time only because we are able to adopt agentive perspectives. The arguments of Ramsey and Price are convincing. Furthermore, such perspectivism entails a relevant sort of pluralism. However, it does not entail any causal and temporal relativism of a subjectivist variety. Against Russell, we have claimed that causal relations can be something more than mere subjective appearances. Against McTaggart, we have claimed that flowing time also can be more than a mere subjective appearance. Causal and temporal perspectivism, even a causal and temporal perspectivism entailing a causal and temporal pluralism, is compatible with an objectivist conception of causal relations and flowing time.

Perspectivism leads quite directly to pluralism. From a perspectivist conception wanting to be objectivist, that temporal pluralism should not be more problematic than a causal pluralism. Just as a phenomenon can offer different aspects and causal relevances from different perspectives, it would also offer different temporal aspects and temporal relevances.

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