

Homework: View

Investigate the way your "view" affects your moment to moment practice/life

- Usha Aeon: how we perceive things based on where we are presently.
- Gaya Ethaniel: OK so find what kind of views one has and how they affect.
- Pema Pera: as in "what makes you different from Woody?" :-)
- Calvino Rabeni: Is it possible to add - are you responsible for your view?
- Mitsu Ishii: Your "view" is basically your deepest held paradigm, the way you take reality, your existence, the world, how you see it at a high level or meta level.

What Is A View?

In other words, what is my view of what a view is?

I was noticing how big a role View itself plays in my basic paradigms and beliefs. My basic beliefs resonate with several traditions, but perhaps more strongly with modern science and Taoism / Confucianism.

I'm going to "cheat" a little - since the following quotes do a pretty good job on my behalf. In the Wilhelm interpretation of the I Ching we find a chapter on the phenomenon of [Contemplation \(View\)](#):

In nature a holy seriousness is to be seen in the fact that natural occurrences are uniformly subject to law. Contemplation of the divine meaning underlying the workings of the universe gives to the man who is called upon to influence others the means of producing like effects.

Then a series of stages is presented showing the evolution of View in a person who practices and advances the development, by way of contemplation and practice. I chose to quote a stage in the middle, although I think any of them have some resonance at some place / time in one's life:

Six in the third place means:

Contemplation of my life
Decides the choice
Between advance and retreat.

This is the place of transition. We no longer look outward to receive pictures that are more or less limited and confused, but direct out contemplation upon ourselves in order to find a guideline for our decisions. This self- contemplation means the overcoming of naive egotism in the person who sees everything solely from his own standpoint. He begins to reflect and in this way acquires objectivity. However, self-knowledge does not mean preoccupation with one's own thoughts; rather, it means concern about the effects one creates. It is only the effects our lives produce that give us the right to judge whether what we have done means progress or regression.

To take a phrase from a western philosopher: I'm an ontological monist but an epistemological pluralist. In other words, Reality is one, but there are innumerable [Ways of Knowing](#) it.

There is a whole set of other ideas implicit in this about the nature of reality and one's potential role and capacities as a human being and / or sentient being. I'd say chief among these is that Reality is a "process" kind of place, and the human, as all other phenomena, an expression of that process, along with its changes, potentials, and limitations.

A possibly subtle implication of this is the status of the idea of "transcendentalism" in its varieties, which I see as relative and about methodology, not ontology. In that case, "transcend" just means the appearance of a different view (to whatever Subject "owns" that view). In other words, a change in "identification". To reverse a common slogan, what does it mean that I am "Of the World, but not In It"? Of course I'm "in" it, but the nature of being a "part" is only a perspective - not a separation or disconnection.

Okay, if there's a "view", then who or what is the "viewer"? Here I'd say, there's no difference, no separate Viewer to "have" the view. Subject and Object co-arise; the viewer IS a view. (Or a process, but not a Thing or a Substance, to leave aside a couple of philosophical standbys). This implies, firstly, there's no intrinsic ability of a Self to be either independent from views or to choose arbitrary views. Second it implies, the Self, as a view, is structurally incapable of fully "seeing" itself, or Reality either. This throws into doubt simple ideas about "direct" versus "indirect" perception and knowledge. There's no "bystander" to have knowledge, especially self-reflective knowledge.

A lot depends on or results from this view of views:

- This does not mean the self, or person, does not exist, and that there's nothing to do and nowhere to go - rather, the doing, the wanting, the commitments are aspects of the view and expressions of the process.
- What of knowledge then? What could it be and where might it be located? Is it a property of persons? Of systems?
- ... and so on.

What's My View?

How do these ideas affect my life and practice?

- **Everything is practice.** Practice is not a special procedure, do this then that, etc. Many activities can become the setting of mindful practice. In fact, one is always practicing *something*. If I become more aware of what exactly that is, I can make a choice about whether that is a *suitable* practice based on an understanding of what effects I'd like to have, how I'd like to be, what I imagine a fuller life to be.
- **The universe is a complex and dramatic place.** I enjoy it, try to harmonize with it, but don't think it can be fully controlled or understood (or formally modeled, in that sense of what knowledge might be). I don't "believe" in the idea Reality might be ultimately simple in a formal way. I'm okay with the mystery and incompleteness of that position.
- **Experience is multidimensional.** There's no actual restriction, only one of view, any seemingly limited situation. A meta-practice is to become aware of and partake in the richness of what life has to offer.
- Direct and indirect knowledge have their place, with most being indirect, from the point of view of a self. I believe in bounded rationality (relative to an individual) but distributed intelligence.
- I believe in the value of "practice" and development of "consciousness", but don't extrapolate this idea to an idealized extreme state (enlightenment or liberation). I've set a high value on this, to the point that I did not make other priorities - wealth, family, etc. a high priority.

- It doesn't strike me as philosophically inconsistent to hold a wide variety of styles and "ways of knowing". They don't have to all "agree" or be commensurate, but I have some faith that they are consistent with Reality in different ways. In fact, I think it is important that there exist a wide variety of perspectives that compete and "couldn't all be right" in order for humanity to function well.
- I don't consider my viewpoint privileged, or that of anyone else, or any particular philosophy, creed, or tradition. I don't try to follow specific philosophies or spiritual traditions. This gives me a type of freedom and also a the burden or responsibility to work things out for myself (using whatever help and resources I can muster). This position leaves me vulnerable to judgment and competition from people who have more narrow, well-defined ideas.
- Since I believe **intelligence is distributed**, and to reside mainly outside my "self", then it behooves me to be a good observer, a good listener, and to learn to use knowledge I can't identify with. This orientation results in me being less effective as a decisive "do-er" or man of action. But it also means I can accept and appreciate the efforts of others who act out capacities I don't have.

This stuff is hard to think / write about. People create a story about themselves and the world that is by nature semi-consistent by any logical or philosophical framework. Undefinable "values" type words are the fuzzy images of complex and overlapping considerations. This quality of impreciseness is a *good thing*. What does one value? Imagine you had to choose... that you can't "define" your way out of a choice when values conflict. These are the kinds of questions posed by myths and stories of many traditions.

- Truth or Beauty?
- Knowledge or Freedom?
- Love or God?