Exploring Poly-Perspectivism

Using Multiple Perspectives for a More Comprehensive Understanding of Reality

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Key Propositions

1. **Reality is too complex for any single perspective to fully capture.**
   This foundational idea is emphasized in the abstract, introduction, and early sections of the paper. It argues that the world vastly exceeds human cognitive capacities, making any individual model or framework inherently limited. As such, people must rely on simplified representations to make sense of reality. This insight frames the need for a broader, more inclusive epistemological approach.

2. **Poly-perspectivism provides a more comprehensive understanding through engagement with multiple viewpoints.**
   The paper advocates for poly-perspectivism as a strategy to mitigate the limitations of singular perspectives. While no individual can hold all viewpoints simultaneously, structured dialogue and interdisciplinary collaboration enable a richer and more integrated understanding. This is supported throughout the abstract and introduction, and linked to traditions such as Critical Realism and theories of enculturation in Section 3.

3. **All perspectives are partial and context-dependent.**
   The paper emphasizes that perspectives are inherently shaped by cultural and historical conditions, and that their validity is often limited to specific contexts. For example, Indigenous traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) offers unique insights not typically captured by Western science. This proposition appears in Sections 1 and 3 and is illustrated with case examples, such as the development of economic systems under different historical pressures.

4. **Two major epistemological errors are epistemic relativism and epistemic reductionism.**
   To navigate between extremes, the paper warns against epistemic relativism—where all perspectives are treated as equally valid, undermining meaningful engagement—and epistemic reductionism—where diverse views are collapsed into one dominant framework, erasing important distinctions. This dual critique is central to the paper's argument and is explicitly discussed in the introduction and again in Section 3, citing Archer (1995).

5. **Productive coordination is key to managing epistemological diversity.**
   As an alternative to reduction or relativism, the paper proposes productive coordination: selectively integrating or juxtaposing perspectives based on context and purpose. This principle allows for flexibility without sacrificing coherence. The idea is outlined in the abstract and further elaborated in Sections 1 and 3 as the core strategy of poly-perspectivist reasoning.

6. **Cognitive biases and enculturation inhibit perspective-shifting.**
   The paper highlights that individuals are often unconsciously shaped by their cultural environments, and that discomfort with cognitive dissonance tends to reinforce existing perspectives. These psychological and social constraints can prevent the adoption of alternative viewpoints. Section 3 discusses these dynamics, drawing on theories of enculturation and referencing cognitive dissonance research by Festinger (1957) and Schwartz et al. (2018).

7. **Emergent and vanishing properties explain limits of merging models.**
   The final major proposition addresses ontological constraints on synthesis. Some properties only appear at higher levels of complexity (emergent), while others may disappear when moving between levels (vanishing). These dynamics limit the extent to which models from different domains can be meaningfully merged. Section 4 explores this idea in depth, citing foundational work by Anderson (1972) and Laughlin & Pines (2000).