Istituto Universitario SOPHIA University Institute

ICTS International Center for Transdisciplinary Studies

No View from Nowhere

Relations, Polarization, and Fraternity



Marco Sanchioni

Vice Rector, Sophia University Institute

Director, International Center for Transdisciplinary Studies

THE PATH

Two steps

1

From physics, a metaphysics

A picture of how reality is made, taken from relational quantum mechanics.

→

2

A lens on social life

Does this picture make polarization and fraternity more intelligible?

WHAT KIND OF INFERENCE

A lens, not a reduction

A precise structure

Taken from physics and used as a lens. Nothing about society is deduced from it.

Judged by what it shows

Blurred distinctions become sharp; phenomena studied separately turn out to be related.

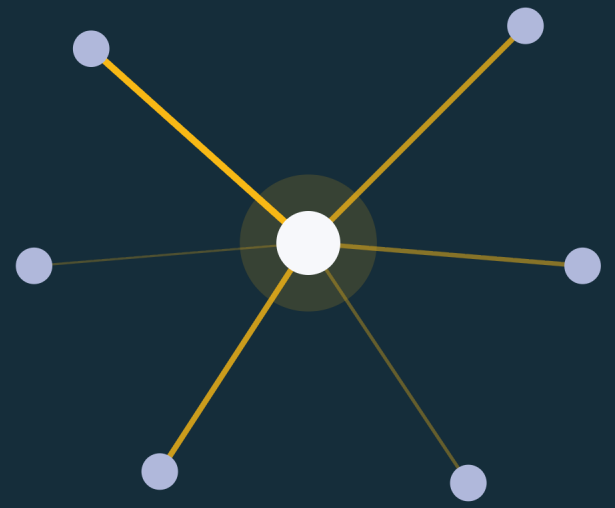
Two uses, kept apart

Descriptive: what polarization does. Normative: what an adequate fraternity requires.

THESIS 1 · RELATIONAL QUANTUM MECHANICS

Properties exist only in relation

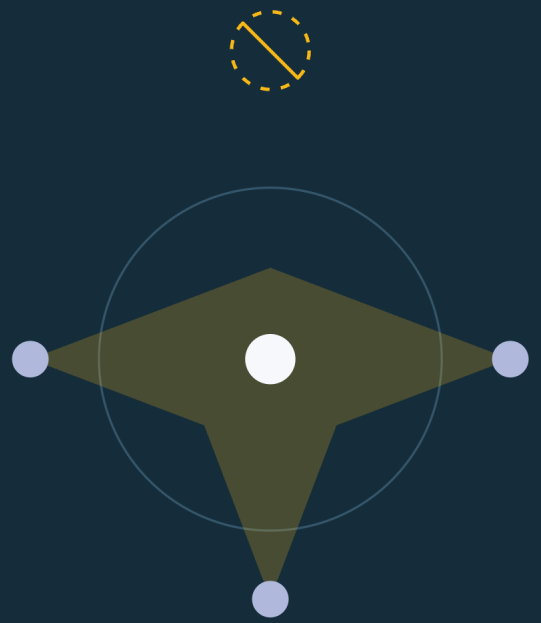
- Always relative to another object
- **Many**: different relative to different systems
- **A matter of degree**: yes, no, or “in part”



THESIS 2 · RELATIONAL QUANTUM MECHANICS

No observer sees everything from above

- Every description is relative to a system
- Every perspective is **partial**
- Not a technical limit: **no view from nowhere**



THESIS 3 · RELATIONAL QUANTUM MECHANICS

A record makes perspectives comparable

- Partial, yet **not everything is relative**
- The theory keeps track of all the relations
- The record compares; **it does not observe**



THESIS 4 · RELATIONAL QUANTUM MECHANICS

An object is more than its relations

- The object **exists in its own right**
- Some properties need no relation: spin
- They decide which relations it can enter



FIRST STEP · SUMMARY

The picture

1 Properties are relational, many, and a matter of degree

2 Every perspective is partial

3 A shared record belongs to no one

4 Beneath the relations, objects exist in their own right

SECOND STEP · FROM PHYSICS TO SOCIAL LIFE

Fraternity, as a first approximation, is a non-polarized relation

A normative use

The lens does not say we ought to be fraternal. It says what an adequate fraternity requires.

Four requirements

Each is ontological (respect the relational structure) and diagnostic (deny one form of polarization).

Background

A. M. Baggio: fraternity as the “forgotten principle” of liberty, equality, fraternity.

A fraternal relation lets each person remain many things, each in their own way

FROM THESIS 1

Properties are relational, many, and a matter of degree.

WHAT POLARIZATION DOES

A forced measurement: one belonging is made sharp. Entirely inside, or outside.

A fraternal relation survives disagreement, and sees in the other another perspective on the same world

FROM THESIS 2

Every perspective is partial. There is no view from nowhere.

WHAT POLARIZATION DOES

A partial perspective takes itself for the whole. Whoever disagrees becomes an enemy.

A fraternal relation preserves what is held in common, without making a master of it

FROM THESIS 3

A shared record makes perspectives comparable, and belongs to no one.

WHAT POLARIZATION DOES

It denies the record (echo chambers), or turns it into a point of view (the “real people”).

A fraternal relation recognizes the other on the basis of what we share, before what distinguishes us

FROM THESIS 4

An object exists in its own right, beneath its relational properties.

WHAT POLARIZATION DOES

Recognition depends on a relational property: position. At the extreme, dehumanization.

FROM TOLERANCE TO FRATERNITY

The fourth requirement makes the difference

REQUIREMENTS 1, 2, 3 · THESES 1, 2, 3

Tolerance

It can admit many identities, live with disagreement, and respect common institutions.

REQUIREMENT 4 · THESIS 4

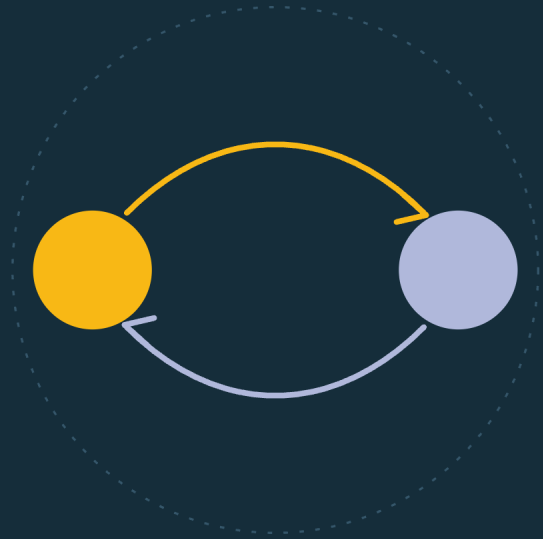
Fraternity

The bond rests on a common origin and comes before agreement. Brothers and sisters do not choose one another.

FRATERNITY · NO PRIVILEGED OBSERVER

A bond among equals

- Every system is **both observer and observed**
- y relative to x, **and x relative to y**
- Authority, filiation: **an added asymmetry**



THE MINIMAL CORE

Persons who recognize one another on the basis of a common origin, and so leave free the identities that arise from relations

Deeper than any belonging

No need to reduce the other to one thing.

Before agreement

Disagreement does not threaten the bond.

Of each person, of no group

Nobody can take possession of what is held in common.

Many belongings

Our channels to others: fraternity needs their plurality.

CONCLUSION

One relational structure, four violations

POLARIZATION

- Alignment of identities
- Echo chambers
- Populism
- Dehumanization of the adversary

THREE INDICATIONS

1. Protect the plurality of belongings
2. Multiply the places where people who think differently meet
3. Take care of the institutions that serve as our common record

Istituto Universitario SOPHIA University Institute

ICTS International Center for Transdisciplinary Studies

Thank you

No View from Nowhere:
Relations, Polarization, and Fraternity

Marco Sanchioni

marcosanchioni.com