



Concepts of the Philosophy of Assumptions and its Theoretical Implications

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to give an overview of my findings in the field of gnoseological and ontological certainty. I proposed a philosophy of assumptions. I will introduce some concepts, in particular the notion of an actual mental model, which points to the impossibility of bypassing the subject in cognitive activity. This also reflects the proposal to include in the methodological assumptions of science, the claim that reality is given to us in cognition only through the contents of consciousness. Finally, interpretations in terms of newly introduced concepts as virtual reality, functioning of artifacts, and truth are placed. The previous results of my cognitive findings were used to compile the overview. This inquiry is based on a lifetime of unsystematic reading and then selecting texts for the topic by a snowballing process. This is how my thought-conceptual system, a world view, was created, which I attempt to objectify in this way.

Keywords: Philosophy of assumptions; actual mental model; fixed mental model; thought-conceptual system; ontological model.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF ASSUMPTIONS

We live in a time of unprecedented cognitive expansion, in an information society. The flood of knowledge has surprisingly such a consequence that we are disoriented by it and ask, as generations before us have asked: What is certain? Because we need to know to take meaningful actions. Only if our knowledge of the reality around us is certain, we will be able to intervene in it successfully. So the search for cognitive certainties has its history. However, the history of philosophy leads us paradoxically from discovering what is certain to stating uncertainties.

The first uncertainty discovered by Eleatics (Zlomky, 1989) was the finding that we do not know the nature behind phenomena. Unless we assume that the essence manifests itself as it appears to us, we have no chance to say anything certain about it. Plato (Platón, 1921) also realized this in his idea of the dark cave in which we observe only mere shadows of reality that the divide between essence and appearance is difficult to overcome. Francis Bacon (1990) understood Plato's cave as

a metaphor that *de facto* reflects how the reflection of reality enters our consciousness, how the reflection of reality is created in consciousness, and then he named one kind of cognitive distortion as the idols of the cave.

George Berkeley (1995) attempted to depict in detail the cave in which man is enclosed. He concluded that there is a dam of the senses between man and the world and that this dam is so impenetrable that we cannot tell anything about what is behind the sensory signals. Even though we can assume that the senses, while separating us from reality, tell us what it looks like, this does not change the fact that we have discovered a second divide between reality and man: the senses. Having become uncertain about what is beyond the senses, René Descartes *et al.* (1947) sought at least some certainty and found the certainty of concrete human consciousness. This certainty; however, becomes a statement of another enclosure in which man is confined with respect to reality: all that man learns about reality are mere contents of consciousness, and it is possible to assume that nothing certain can be asserted beyond these contents of consciousness unless we accept the assumption that reality enters our consciousness through these contents of consciousness. Either way, we must state the third divide between reality and man.

Líznar (2006) states that *Ladislav Klíma* became convinced that we are enclosed in logical forms of thinking and cannot think otherwise – our thinking is bound by logic and we cannot get out of this cell in any way. And this is the fourth divide between reality and man. I have discovered four barriers between reality and man that seem to make cognition impossible. First, it is the caesura between phenomenon and essence; next, the impossibility of asserting anything with certainty beyond the sense stimuli and then beyond the contents of consciousness; and fourth, the impossibility of getting out of logical forms of thought to the certainty that they are justified. Let us recapitulate them.

1. We do not know for certain that we are not deceived by logical forms of thought (L. Klíma).
2. We cannot assert anything certain beyond the contents of consciousness (Descartes).
3. We cannot assert something certain beyond sense perceptions (Berkeley).
4. It is uncertain for us to know the substance behind phenomena (Eleatics).

These four uncertainties are due to our *quadruple closure* into the contents of consciousness:

1. We are closed *in the mind*, in what we think, in ideas, in logical forms.
2. We are enclosed *in consciousness*: all that we are aware of are the contents of consciousness.
3. Many of the contents of consciousness are then mediated by the *senses*, which separate us from the reality they already mediate, enclosing us behind a sensory dam.
4. These contents of consciousness show us reality only as it appears to us; the essence is then hidden behind these *phenomena*, although it is also manifested by them; we are enclosed in the phenomena, and this divide is opened to us only by a long process of cognition.

We have identified these four fundamental uncertainties as certainties. However, only as long as our reasoning makes sense, i.e. if it can be assumed that the thought-conceptual and logical forms in which our thinking is enclosed are adequate to the reality about which they testify. If this is not the case, our situation is hopeless. In order to move on, we have no choice but to accept the unprovable proposition as a premise, and thus to assume that our reasoning is meaningful, i.e. that the thought-

conceptual and logical forms, in which our thinking is enclosed, make it possible to bring reality before consciousness in its authentic form, as it is. It is the same with the other three identified uncertainties – the divides between consciousness and reality. Even in their case, we must make certain assumptions. In the case of the *certainty of consciousness*, we are going to assume that there is something behind its contents, namely reality, and that the complex analytic-synthetic apparatus of the brain functions to convey reality to us, as far as possible, as it is. Similarly, we assume behind the *sensations* that which is their source, that which is perceived, again, reality.

The relation of phenomenon and essence then leads to the necessary assumption that through *phenomena* we recognize the essence hidden behind them. While it is clear that we must accept the given assumptions (otherwise our journey ends), and that therefore they are not accidental, the assumption that there is something behind the contents of consciousness, and specifically behind the sensations, seems to allow the possibility that there is anything or nothing behind them (philosophers, after all, have made ample use of it). However, this is not our way. We are going to start from the assumption that there is something definite and knowable behind them, that which *immediate intuition* shows us – namely, that there is an objective reality. We are going to start from the assumption that the contents of consciousness are what convey reality to us essentially, within the limits of possibility, as it is (for us). We are going to assume that reality is thus more or less, in essential features, knowable.

These *minimal assumptions* are necessary for us to even start thinking. If we accept them, we expect them to confirm the feedback. If, under certain minimal assumptions, all the contents of consciousness can be explained, then we can say that these assumptions are justified. This certainty will only become apparent in the further progress of cognition, to the extent that we are able to interpret all the contents of all consciousness. For the moment, let us state that the cognitive process begins by making assumptions (based on the intuitive opinion), some of which will prove in interpreting the contents of consciousness and others that will not. These are then replaced by other intuitive assumptions, based on the previous cognitive practice, which has the ambition to prove themselves, and so on.

CONCEPTS OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF ASSUMPTIONS

So far we have only got to the uncertainties. Is anything itself certain at all? When we assume that our reasoning makes sense, and thus we cross the innermost barrier between man and reality, we have reached the sphere of man's enclosure in consciousness, in which we can distinguish between consciousness and its contents at most. The certainty which René Descartes discovered here, is the certainty of consciousness which is evident, obvious to every man. How did he find out? Socrates' *I know that I know nothing* was foreshadowed by Descartes' *I only know that I doubt*. From there he came to the certainty *I think, therefore I am*, and we can reformulate it *I am aware* as the primary evidence, the certainty that is given to every human consciousness. Thus three realities are so evident to man at the same time: consciousness itself, man's self, which is the bearer of consciousness, and the contents of consciousness.

Unlike the stage of consciousness and the self ("sitting in the auditorium" of a Cartesian theatre), the contents of consciousness are richly structured internally (we can see, hear, think, feel something, etc.), but at the same time, they form a kind of a whole that the brain constantly brings before our consciousness. When we close our eyes, the part of it mediated by sight disappears; the whole of it disappears when

we lose consciousness. Let us call this whole by the term *actual mental model* (AMM for short), for the following reasons: we call the contents of consciousness a model because they model reality, i.e. because they are in a special relation to reality – they bring it before our consciousness so that we consider these contents of consciousness as the reality that it is (whereas it is only reality as it appears to us). This model is a mental model because it is created by the mind through conscious (in the sense of “consciousness-generating”) and deliberate processes. And the actual attribute points to the fact that it happens in the present. It is also worth mentioning that we are aware of the *flow* of actual mental models rather than a mere present cut.

The complex analytical-synthetic work of the brain does not end there. It organizes the contents of consciousness thanks to the working of its *System 1* and *System 2*, as described by Daniel Kahneman (2012), who distinguishes two apparatuses in our mind, one of which thinks quickly, promptly, and intuitively, and the other slowly, deliberately, and deductively. In my view, System 1 produces a *fixed mental model* (FMM) as the background against which the contents of consciousness happen (when we perceive, remember, imagine) and from which meanings are given to the contents of consciousness. The product of System 2 is then a *thought-conceptual system* (TCS), which arises by abstraction from the fixed mental model and moves within it when we think. This can be spoken and the words recorded. In this way, hitherto subjective knowledge is objectified and a thought-conceptual model of reality can be communicated and confronted. The most global of these is the paradigm, or if you prefer, the *ontological model* (OM), as opposed to the thought-conceptual system, which is individual and commonly referred to as a worldview.

To build the ontological model we will have to start again with assumptions. First of all, as we have already seen, we need to assume that our reasoning makes sense. Then we can reason: From the established certainty, *I am aware*, via Descartes’ assumption *I think, therefore I am*, we assume that there is a sort of ontological entity that carries the contents of my consciousness that there is my self, my consciousness. However, I can only go beyond my consciousness again by means of an assumption, namely this: The contents of my consciousness arise through the constant interaction of being, reality, and the mechanisms of my self, my brain, which have arisen to enable the orientation of my self in reality.

In this way, we have created the possibility of relying on what is called *common sense*, i.e. a basic ontological view, an ontological idea that is imposed on us in a natural way without any purposeful effort to form it. What does common sense tell us? What are its assumptions?

It is you and the things around you. The things around you exist independently of whether you perceive them. One of those things is your body, from which your consciousness, the self, looks out; the body and the self are so closely intertwined that the body is subject to your will and at the same time it shapes your needs.

The things around you are three-dimensional, spatial, material, mutually impenetrable, spread out in three-dimensional space. Things have weight and that determines the up-down coordinate. There is flat ground below on which things rest. You also have a place in this space, and accordingly, you determine the other coordinates of things (right-left, front-back).

Things gradually change, come into existence and disappear. We call this reality time, and we understand it as a continuous and uniform change of what there is. In this happening, we distinguish between the past (that which used to be and is not anymore), the future (that which is not yet but it will be), and the

present (that which is now). We also recognize the passage of time by the regular alternation of periods of light (day) and darkness (night), which is due to the movement of the sun across heaven's vault.

Things around you are of different kinds. We can distinguish between animate and inanimate. Of the living, the closest to you are those that are also bearers of consciousness and have a body formed like you – humans. You are one of them. You move among other things and subdue them, and thus keep yourself alive – you can change things by intervening in their arrangements and to create new things from old. Thus, alongside the things that keep themselves in existence, there is a group of things that are kept in existence by human activity. Humans do this activity together and they individually specialize in its components. This is made possible by the fact that they communicate with each other, etc.

The assumptions of common sense became the starting point for the investigation of reality by philosophy and, from it depending on the definition of the field of inquiry, by the special divided sciences (the field of philosophy is then defined by the remaining questions, i.e. those which the special sciences do not deal with; its mission is to form a unified system of knowledge of the whole existence, an ontological model from the partial knowledge of the special sciences). These assumptions are corrected, changed, discarded and replaced by more adequate assumptions of reality in the course of the cognitive process.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF ASSUMPTIONS

The most basic of common sense assumptions is the so-called naive realism, i.e. the intuitive view that reality is given to us in perception essentially as it is. Modern science also relies on it. As far as it is concerned, at its base we usually find the so-called scientific realism, which is based on the following assumptions:

1. The world is material and exists independently of humans.
2. The world would remain the world even if humans did not exist.
3. Ordinary physical objects and scientifically named entities exist objectively and independently of the human mind.
4. An experiment cannot prove the truth of a theory, it can only indicate the possibility of truthfulness.
5. An experiment can prove that a theory is not true (Košumberský, 2017).

And according to our findings, one of these assumptions should be the claim that reality is given to us in cognition only through the contents of consciousness. To become aware of something, it must become the content of our consciousness. At this moment, for example, it is the image of the text you have in front of you now, and at the same time the thought you are reading. They are brought before your consciousness by your brain based on what you perceive, this text, part of reality. Similarly, the brain brings the whole world, every single thing, everything that we are aware of, the whole of reality, what we see, hear, taste, feel, etc. before consciousness through sense perception, and it becomes a process in our mind, something distinct from reality itself, and it is always true: it is *reality-in-our-consciousness*, it is a fusion, an alloy of reality and consciousness. So what is available to you, to your consciousness, is a kind of conglomerate of a special nature, neither reality nor consciousness, or both reality and consciousness; so something in between, a kind of third thing between reality and consciousness, the *content of consciousness*. Only thus mediated before consciousness, before our self, we can become aware of reality.

If someone tells you (as your first impression or common sense, for example, tells you) that reality is given to us directly, immediately, don't believe him. Omitting direct contact with reality, practice, in cognition what is given to us to be aware of is

the product of the complex analytical-synthetic work of the brain, which the brain presents to us so that we identify it with reality. That it is not reality itself is evidenced by optical illusions (perspective, for example, for all of them) and thought paradoxes that point out the places where this model of reality in your consciousness, the content of consciousness, “deviates” from reality. As Alfred Korzybski (1933) says, “a map is not a territory”. In the mind, before consciousness, we have only a map of reality, not reality itself.

What does this imply? The fact that recognizing reality is not as easy as it might seem and as science claims. Science, however, is successful precisely *because* of the assumption that we know reality in principle as it is. This methodological assumption is only applicable as a starting point though, not as a statement that this is the way things are. It is not the way things are, which we discover on closer inspection, as we could see above. The assumption that reality is given to us in cognition only through the contents of consciousness problematizes the relation of science to reality. It claims that it is always mediated through the human subject. For the philosophy of assumptions, however, the problem is vice versa in scientific facts and data, which seem to be independent of the subject and objective on their own, being what the process of cognition is all about. (Cf. e.g., the New Positivist atomic fact.)

Let us, therefore, take a closer look at the meaning of the word *fact*. It is an insight into a partial fact that has been obtained by confronting the knowledge of several subjects. The essential thing here is that at first this partial fact had been viewed by the subject who reported on its state, i.e. the subject objectified, fixed his internal state, which can thus be eventually confronted with the fixed states, based on the same fact, of other subjects, through the actual mental model and the fixed mental model of these subjects. It is therefore obvious that the objectivity of a fact does indeed rely on a kind of direct viewing of reality, but this happens within the subject through the contents of his consciousness, and only by interpreting this subjectively detected state of reality externally, by objectifying, fixing, it becomes objective and can possibly be confronted with other testimonies of the state of reality. And this confrontation takes place through the perception of fixations, records viewing subjects, and thus through their contents of consciousness.

We are in a more complicated situation as far as *data* is. To the predominant extent, they are acquired by various sensors and sensing devices and processed on computers completely independently of the human subject. However, only up to the point of their interpretation. Mechanisms for data collecting and processing are merely extensions of sensory (microscope, telescope, television image, etc.) and mental (fixations such as memory records, algorithms, programs) powers of the subject, who uses them to form an actual mental model and a fixed mental model in his mind, and from there he comes to a thought-conceptual system and an ontological model which he can then work with, as in the case of facts. Among other consequences of the philosophy of assumptions, consider the following:

The content of consciousness is generated as a whole, which is internally structured. For example, optically, our field of view is broken down into things – which we are aware of what they are; these entities are thus gifted with meaning, made significant, focused by a conceptual network, thanks to the work of System 1 and System 2 (Kahneman, 2012). These systems both generate the immediate model of reality, the AMM, before our consciousness, that which constitutes the content of our consciousness in perception (via System 1), and, on the other hand, its conceptual focus and interpretation (via System 2).

The immediate model of reality arises before consciousness mostly based on direct sensory perception of reality (we are excluded from this sensory pressure of reality in sleep), but recently there have been technical achievements that can simulate, replace reality in the senses. This is a so-called virtual reality.

In the context of virtual reality, we have the opportunity to think about the validity of the abovementioned assumption that there is something behind the contents of consciousness. It is possible to consider that there are contents of consciousness but nothing behind them, as it is the case with virtual reality. Is there really nothing behind virtual reality? Wrong: behind virtual reality, there is a complex technical apparatus that mediates it for us. Likewise, there must be something behind the contents of consciousness in order to arise in our consciousness. What do you suppose? Reality, indeed.

At the same time, in confronting virtual reality, we find out that the immediate model of reality, AMM, can arise before consciousness in other ways than direct perception. Think about what you see immediately: it is a text, or more precisely, spots. And the sensory perception of these spots allows your brain, your mind, a small miracle: that by perceiving them you can hear my voice, you become aware of my thoughts, you see with your inner sight the things I am talking about. This is due to the special organization of these spots, which fix words arranged in a certain way, whose gradual perception leads us to concepts and ideas. This arrangement of words can be called a program, because it programs its perceiver, the reader, creating in his consciousness, as he gradually perceives, an intended fictional model of reality.

Thus we can see that the recorded word allows us to fix and then to back-mediate the product of System 2, namely, the conceptual model of reality in our consciousness (TCS), and not only that: it also allows us to reconstruct, before our inner sight, a model of reality from the perception, an AMMp (the result of System 1 functioning) as an AMM from the fixation (where the fixation is the perceived objective record), or even to create a fictional model (which happens, as we have seen, in the perception of literary works). Verbal art is then based on the aesthetic arrangement of words. The sensory source for a fictional, artifactual model of reality, in addition to words, can also be a quotation of reality arranged in a certain way, such as sculpture, painting, photograph, film, music, hologram (because an artifact, in general, is an aesthetic arrangement of reality).

In the previous text, in the enumeration of the assumptions that scientific realism accepts, we encountered statements operating with truthfulness (specifically scientific theories) that relies on the notion of truth. This is essential for our consideration. When we talk about the certainty of cognition, it is always true cognition – what is not true is not described as cognition but as an error, fiction, or a lie. What does it mean that something is true, that it is true? We do not have to go far for the answer: we have an automatic pointer inside that constantly tells us what is true: the specific feeling “This is true”. This feeling has a broader scope, so it can include states such as sleep (in a dream we have the feeling that it is true, which usually disappears when we wake up), an error, or a delusion. However, we are interested in it as a guide to the state where we find out that what we think corresponds to reality.

This feeling has been formalized into what is called the correspondence theory of truth; it is so-called because of the situation in which this feeling is based on the conformity, the correspondence of what we perceive and what we think – on the fact that the model of reality from perception, the AMMp, corresponds to the conceptual-mental model of reality. Cognitively, we try to achieve this conformity by continually

adjusting the thought-conceptual system to match our perceptions, but sometimes we fail to do so, and then we talk about delusions and paradoxes.

Science works with the thought-conceptual system, TCS, objectified – outspoken, written down, fixed; in this context, we talk about it as a model in the narrow sense (it consists of a set of true statements, i.e. having a truth value 1, which means that it is a model of reality in the logical sense). All scientific papers are then written with such ambitions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As a result of my TCS objectification, i.e. his previous work to find a certain starting point for any reasoning about reality, is the statement that this certainty is the evidence of the fact “I am aware”, and that from here we can proceed to further reasoning only when we assume that our reasoning makes sense, and other assumptions seem similarly obvious to him, so he derives a methodological procedure from making them. He sees the starting point for the cognitive activities of philosophy and then of science in the registration of the assumptions of common sense.

Through the registration of “I am aware” I believe that to find certainty, all cognitive activities take place through the contents of consciousness, which he understands as the product of the complex analytical-synthetic work of the brain, aimed at conveying reality to us as it is, if possible. Accordingly, the contents of consciousness are “something third” between reality and consciousness as a special construct of “conscious reality”, which I named “the actual mental model” (AMM). Other products of mental apparatuses are then “the fixed mental model” (FMM) and “the thought-conceptual system” (TCS). By communicative objectification (outward interpretation) of individual concrete TCS and their confrontation, society, more precisely science, eventually comes to a unified, objective “ontological model”, hence a paradigm.

The theoretical space presented, thus allows me to interpret or constitute such concepts as virtual reality, functioning of artifacts, a programme or truth. The emphasis on the importance of the subject in the process of scientific cognition is likely to be debatable for scientific realism.

CONCLUSIONS

The significance of the work will be judged only by the recipient community. This will show to what extent it has succeeded in convincing that the only thing we are given of reality directly is the actual mental model.

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