

“Point of view” is a phrase we usually encounter in discussing how opinions of people have so much variety. One believes this or that because one has “a different point of view.” But, watching the sun rise on these clear, cold November mornings has shown me that we also have different points of view according to our physical positions.

Runo and I sit roughly four feet apart at our breakfast table. Our backs are against the same short wall. But, when we look out through our east window as dark turns to dawn and then to light, we have very different views.

There is a field across the road with a barn and house at the south end. He can see all of both buildings now that the leaves have fallen from the silver maple in our yard. I can just barely see a bit of the barn. Two people, sitting side by side four feet apart and yet we have very different views of the physical world on the other side of our window. So, we traded places to see for ourselves the effect of position on perception and were surprised how much different our views could be.

This has made me wonder about a variety of things. Is eyewitness testimony worth anything? After all, two people viewing the same incident must have very different views. Did Kevin McCarthy hit a fellow Republican Congressman from Tennessee in the kidneys, or did he not? I suppose it depends on your point of view.

And then there is the question of how accurate a view of the world is when it comes just from our particular individual point of view. If I have a lot of monetary resources, I may have a very different view of the morality of wealth than if I am poor and am struggling to survive.

The words printed on a page must look very different to a child who does not yet know how to read than they do to the adult reading a story to that same toddler.

And imagine a complicated mathematical equation chalked on a blackboard—though, I guess blackboards are something from the past—and that bunch of numbers and symbols means nothing if the viewer does not have mathematical competence.

Food for thought, I guess, though I already know I am going to be very suspicious of eyewitness testimony after looking out that east window this morning and seeing a very different scene than Runo saw just four feet away.

