

ON POINTS OF VIEW, PERSPECTIVES, FRAMES, SCENARIOS AND SCHEMAS. DOES NON-CONCEPTUALITY PLAY A RELEVANT ROLE?¹

*SOBRE LOS PUNTOS DE VISTA, PERSPECTIVAS, MARCOS, ESCENARIOS
Y ESQUEMAS. ¿JUEGA LA NO-CONCEPTUALIDAD UN PAPEL RELEVANTE?*

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the role of non-conceptuality in perspectives, points of view, frames, scenarios and schema. It argues for the hybrid nature of perspectives, frames and schemas. Against the idea that the concepts mentioned are purely conceptual or that their most important characteristic is conceptual, the article emphasizes the fundamental role of non-conceptual content. In the case of frames, we compare them with the notion of schema as used in psychology and cognitive behavioural therapy, illustrating how non-conceptual frames influence perception, decision-making, and courses of action. The analysis proposes a understanding of these concepts as interrelated and argue that the non-conceptual aspects of frames and schemas affect drastically the points of view we hold and the scenarios we imagine.

KEYWORDS: perspectives, frames, non-conceptual content, schemas, scenarios.

RESUMEN

Este artículo explora el papel de lo no conceptual en las perspectivas, puntos de vista, marcos, escenarios y esquemas. Defiende la naturaleza híbrida de las perspectivas,

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los marcos y los esquemas. Frente a la idea de que los conceptos mencionados son puramente conceptuales o que su característica más importante es su conceptualidad, el artículo enfatiza el papel fundamental del contenido no-conceptual. En el caso de los marcos, los comparamos con la noción de esquema tal como se utiliza en la psicología y la terapia cognitivo-conductual, ilustrando cómo los marcos no-conceptuales influyen en nuestra percepción, nuestra toma de decisiones y en nuestros cursos de acción. El análisis propone una comprensión de estos conceptos como interrelacionados y argumenta que los aspectos no conceptuales de los marcos y esquemas afectan drásticamente los puntos de vista que sostenemos y los escenarios que imaginamos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: perspectivas, marcos, contenido no conceptual, esquemas, escenarios.

1. INTRODUCTION

The way we, human subjects with cognitive abilities, relate to the world and the entities that inhabit it is a question that has been traced throughout the history of philosophy. How do we mean what we mean? How do we know what we think we know? How can we interact with other people ethically? In all these questions we can find the concepts of perspectives, points of view, frames, and scenarios. Usually, these constructs are analysed in purely conceptual terms, like when we discuss scientific perspectives or conceptual frameworks. Non-conceptual dimensions of those concepts can be often relegated to the background.

In this brief article, I aim to analyse and provide some notes about the non-conceptual aspects of the aforementioned concepts. It contends that perspectives and points of view are equivalent and that, along with frames, they are hybrid entities blending conceptual and non-conceptual content. By contrast, scenarios function as mental and propositional depictions of states of affairs, lacking non-conceptual content. To clarify the concept of frame, we compared it to the concept of schema as depicted by A. T. Beck, J. E. Young and other authors within the framework of behavioural psychology (Beck *et al.*, 1987; Young *et al.*, 2003; Rafaeli *et al.*, 2010). The two central claims in this article are that, on one hand, points of view, perspectives, frames and schemas are not purely conceptual entities and second, that in some situations, non-conceptual content plays a more relevant role in our way to have perspectives, interpret the world and guide our actions.

2. POINTS OF VIEW, PERSPECTIVES, FRAMES, AND SCENARIOS: SOME CLARIFICATIONS

The concept of point of view is rooted in our ordinary language. We use it to refer to our opinions, views, attitudes, beliefs, stances and feelings. However, in the history of philosophy, it has not always been a core or important concept, like others such as being, knowledge, language or justice. Even so, we can track the use of the concept by many philosophers across centuries, with special relevance in Leibniz, Kant, Nietzsche, Russell and Ortega y Gasset.² It gained relevance in recent years in the realm of the philosophy of science, with the work about scientific pluralism from philosophers such as Michela Massimi (Massimi and McCoy, 2020) or Ronald Giere (2006). With a broader scope, not restricted to the philosophy of science, we can find recent philosophical research where the concept of point of view is the central object of study (Liz, 2013; Vázquez and Liz, 2015; Colomina-Almiñana, 2018; Hautamäki, 2020; Liz and Vázquez, 2022).

Vázquez and Liz have offered a structure or canonical definition of the notion of point of view (Liz, 2013; Vázquez and Liz, 2015), where the idea is that a subject has a certain attitude towards conceptual and non-conceptual content under some circumstances. Hautamäki (2020) has offered another definition of point of view, in which an object is represented to a subject by aspects of the object. In a more agentive sense, the subject that has the point of view about an object x is the one that selects, consciously or unconsciously, which aspects of x are relevant for the representation.³

Both conceptions (Vázquez and Liz on one hand, Hautamäki on the other) are compatible, as they stress different aspects or characteristics of the same concept, the one of point of view. Depending on which characteristics of our points of view we want to stress (our attitudes towards conceptual and non-conceptual content, or the selection of the aspects that an object offers), we are going to use one structure or the other. And tolerance (in a Carnapian sense) is key here, as to have different but compatible accounts of the notion of point of view is very consistent with perspectivism. Another thing that should be noted is that those same definitions or structures are also used for the concept of perspective.

² For a discussion of the relevance of the concept of point of view throughout the history of philosophy, see (Vázquez and Liz, 2015b: 7-16).

³ In the same volume, the texts by Manuel Liz, Margarita Vázquez, and Antti Hautamäki explain these two notions of point of view in greater detail.

As those authors do, in this article we will maintain that both points of view and perspectives are synonymous concepts in ordinary language as well as in a philosophical one.

For the concept of frame, we understand, with K. Cukier *et al.*, that they are hybrid mental models with conceptual and non-conceptual content. They are the “fundamental building blocks of human cognition. [...] Frames are not ‘imagination’ or ‘creativity’, but they enable it” (Cukier, K. *et al.*, 2021: 26). But they are not exclusively purely conceptual constructs. While some frames, such as scientific ones, are highly conceptual, others are shaped by non-conceptual and affective content, such as one in which we have the attitude to trust or distrust our family and friends. The notion of frame as depicted by Cukier *et al* and by Bermúdez (2021), among others, is strongly oriented towards practical situations which imply decision-making processes and reasoning. Those situations often require changing from one frame to another, an action which is called reframing (see Cukier *et al.*, 2021: 123ff).

Regarding scenarios, we understand them as depictions of states of affairs or “mental images” where we place something through a point of view. Let us think about these sentences: (1) “Where do you see yourself in ten years?”, (2) “Are you going to marry your girlfriend?”, (3) “I think I will pass the exam”, (4) “I am scared that the pasta is not going to be tasty, my friends will not like it”, (5) “Now, in my life, I am feeling happy” and (6) “The last two years have been hard”. Those six sentences depict scenarios, states of affairs, where we place entities (ourselves, other persons or things like pasta). (1)-(4) depict future scenarios, while (5) shows a current or present scenario, and (6) a past scenario. Those scenarios are part of the conceptual content of the point of view. They can go from being very vague to very specific, but they always carry propositional content. They show us a specific situation in which we place ourselves or other entities. How do frames and scenarios relate to each other, as well as with perspectives/points of view? Before answering this question, let us first consider a different concept, the one of schema.

3. NON-CONCEPTUALITY IN FRAMES AND SCHEMAS

The idea of schema can be traced back to many authors in philosophy, such as Kant, Cassirer, Merleau-Ponty or Davidson. In psychology, it can be traced back to the works of authors such as Jean Piaget, Frederic Bartlett or Aaron Beck, who introduced the concept in the realm of cognitive behavioural therapy. According

to Beck, mental affections such as depression can be understood as expressing or holding a self-negative schema, which is developed from strongly negative experiences in the life of the subject (Beck *et al.*, 1987).

Following the ideas of Beck, more recently Jeffrey Young and other authors have developed a model of schema therapy (Young *et al.*, 2003; Rafaeli *et al.*, 2010). It is a therapeutic model that focuses on adaptative and maladaptive patterns of thought, ways of interpretation and courses of action. According to them, “a schema is an abstract representation of the distinctive characteristics of an event, a kind of blueprint of its most salient elements. [...] [which] serves as a guide for interpreting information and solving problems” (Rafaeli *et al.*, 2010: 11).

Schemas appear during childhood and adolescence but can be elaborated upon throughout life. All schemas are rooted in basic emotions, as well as in memories, cognitive content, and bodily sensations (Young *et al.*, 2003). They are learned and established in our minds through our lived experiences and our responses to those experiences, as well as the fulfilment of basic needs. The subject develops the schema because it helped to adapt to a certain situation. Later situations in the subject’s life can trigger the early “learned” schema, and at this point the schema can still be helpful or can be not applicable at all. In that second case, the schema can be maladaptive and, therefore, be problematic for the subject’s cognition and mental health (Rafaeli *et al.*, 2010).

Schemas act like software in our minds, shaping our thought before we consciously think of or act on something. They compel us to perceive, act and make decisions in a certain way, in an adaptive or maladaptive way. They can influence how we understand reality and to act upon it.

For example, if we somehow learn to face problems with conviction and hope, we develop a schema where we are less likely to panic or obsess when things go wrong. Our actions, decisions and relationships with other persons will go in a certain direction. From this schema, we will carry some kind of perspectives which would be very difficult to achieve from a different schema. When we perceive most aspects of life as, for example, warnings or potentially big problems, it reflects a schema (an early maladaptive schema) very different from the one rooted in conviction and hope.

So, schemas are hybrid as they comprise conceptual and non-conceptual. And non-conceptual elements are of big relevance. Schema with more non-conceptual content, rooted in basic emotions (like happiness or fear) and body sensations (like joy or pain), make us unconsciously take perspectives on things in a certain direction, depicting a certain mental scenario (a hopeful or a depressive scenario,

for example). And the act of reframing does not come only through a conceptual re-elaboration, but through an exposure to lived experiences.

As well as schemas, frames put us in disposition to perceive, act, react and interpret reality in a certain way. They enable us to adopt certain perspectives in which we select some specific aspects (conceptual and non-conceptual), aspects that are “available in the domain” of the frame. This selection is not always conscious nor made freely. In the same way that we do not choose which schemas develop over time and are used in specific moments, we do not always choose which perspective or frame we hold, which can be rooted in emotional or practical attitudes. As we know, “The world of the happy man is a different one from that of the unhappy man” (Wittgenstein, 2002: 87, 6.43).

4. CONCLUSION

As we have seen, points of view, frames, and scenarios are not the same concepts, but they are closely related. Frames are mental models (or patterns) according to which we interact with the world. Points of view, as well as perspectives, are attitudinal relations with reality, a relation in which we can only represent a certain number of aspects of the world. And some of our perspectives point to a specific scenario, understood as the depiction of a state of affairs. Perspectives do not always need to point to scenarios, just as we do not always need them to be in the domain of a frame⁴.

The non-conceptual dimensions of perspectives, frames, and schemas are indispensable for understanding their nature and function. But this does not mean that they are only non-conceptual. It is just as wrong to say that they are only webs or sets of concepts. Thus, we have noted their hybrid (conceptual and non-conceptual) characteristics, as well as the fundamental role that lived experiences and emotions play.

Schemas as depicted by Beck, Young, and others exemplify frames with a heavy non-conceptual content, as they integrate emotions and experiential content. Schemas may lead us to perceive specific situations in ways that are inaccurate. Similarly, framing and reframing are not always carried out rationally (see Bermúdez, 2021: 111-112). But they can also quickly trigger important perspectives, attitudes and interpretations that are helpful. In both cases, the non-conceptual

⁴ Note that nothing has been said about whether frames are internal or external to a perspective. This omission is intentional, as it is beyond the scope of this article to analyse this question.

aspect of schemas and frames influences perspectives and scenarios in profound ways, even functioning as possible conditions for possessing certain points of view that would be impossible to hold otherwise.

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