

Persons, Peirceish, perfidious pluralism – rescuing Sellars

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Abstract: In *Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man* (1962), Wilfrid Sellars contends that there is *tension* between manifest image (MI) and scientific image (SI) discursive formations. To end the tension and resolve the *clash* between the MI and the SI, Sellars does not aim to *reconcile* the two images. Rather, through the application of his functional classification semantics, typified by his distinction between logical irreducibility and causal reducibility, he aims to *join* the normative category of persons to the SI, to enrich and complete the SI. In other words, the way all things hang together stereoscopically in one unified and coherent image is by integrating persons into Peirceish. My principal aim in this paper is to argue that, rather than resolve the *clash* between the MI and the SI by joining the ‘lifeworldly’ conceptual framework of persons to the SI for the purpose of enriching and completing the SI, what Sellars ought to have done is adopt a *negative* dialectical ‘resolution’ of the clash between the images. This strategy invites one to dismantle the Placement Problem through the logic of “disintegration”. I take Sellars to have curiously hinted at this Adornian intellectual orientation in the concluding sentence of *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (1956).

Keywords: Sellars; Manifest image; Scientific image; Peirceish; Adorno; negative dialectics.

1. *Fusion – not reconciliation: why this matters*

Dubbing Wilfrid Sellars ‘a philosopher’s philosopher’ is worth repeating. Regardless of the ultimate appraisal of Sellars’s account of the relationship between the manifest image of humanity-in-the-world (MI) and the Peirceish-regulated scientific image of humanity-in-the world (SI) in *Philosophy and the Scientific Image* (PSIM),¹ I think it is safe to say that Sellars’s position is nothing if not *highly* nuanced. One evocative example of such nuance is the penulti-

¹ Peirceish is a discourse that construes *everything* in purely naturalistic descriptive terms for the purpose of constructive alignment with the causal explanatory interests of our best scientific theories.

mate sentence of PSIM, which can easily be underplayed or overlooked, by either those of a facile Hegelian disposition,² or some ‘left-wing’ Sellarsians, or some ‘right-wing’ Sellarsians:³

The conceptual framework of persons is the framework in which we think of one another as sharing the community intentions which provide the ambience of principles and standards (above all, those which make meaningful discourse and rationality itself possible) within which we live our own individual lives. A person can almost be defined as a being that has intentions. Thus the conceptual framework of persons is not something that needs to be *reconciled with* the scientific image, but rather something to be *joined* to it. Thus, to complete the scientific image we need to enrich it *not* with more ways of saying what is the case, but with the language of community and individual intentions, so that by construing the actions we intend to do and the circumstances in which we intend to do them in scientific terms, we *directly* relate the world as conceived by scientific theory to our purposes, and make it *our* world and no longer an alien appendage to the world in which we do our living. (SPR: 40)

Prima facie, the difference between (a) reconciling the ‘lifeworldly’ conceptual framework of persons and the language of community and individual intentions, with the categorial ontology and discursive formations of the SI, and (b) joining the ‘lifeworldly’ conceptual framework of persons to the SI for the purpose of enriching and completing the SI, seems stylistically, not substantively, different. This is because both the act of reconciliation and the act of joining result (if successful) in ending the clash between the images, which is what Sellars principally aims to accomplish.

However, just because the respective acts of ‘reconciling’ and ‘joining’ (if successful) end the conflict between ‘the perennial philosophy’ and ‘postulational scientific strategy,’ *this* in and of itself provides no legitimate reason to regard ‘the reconciliation of the MI with the SI’ and ‘the joining of the MI to the SI’ as semantically interchangeable. For, Sellars makes it clear in the quoted passage above that he envisions a *fusion* between the two, rather than a reconciliation between the two discursive drives and cognitive orientations.⁴ The conceptual framework of persons and the language of community

² Sellars frustratingly construes the synoptic vision in terms of “synthesis” (SPR: 9). I will return to this issue in the latter stages of the paper, starting with IIIa.

³ Left-wing Sellarsians (most notably Richard Rorty, Quill Kukla, Robert Brandom, John McDowell, and Michael Williams) prioritise Sellars’s critique of the Myth of the Given. Right-wing Sellarsians (most notably Ruth Millikan, Patricia Churchland, Paul Churchland, William Lycan, Jay Rosenberg, Daniel Dennett, and Johanna Seibt) prioritise Sellars’s commitment to a strong form of scientific realism and his commitment to a prescriptive variety of naturalism at the ontological level.

⁴ However, what complicates the substantive (as opposed to merely verbal) distinction between

and individual intentions are to be *integrated* with the conceptual framework of postulational science and the “doggedly naturalistic” (O’Shea 2007: 187) language of description and explanation for a specific purpose and epistemic achievement: to enrich and complete the SI. As Dionysis Christias puts it, the idea here is “a smooth incorporation of normativity within the scientific image” (Christias 2016a: 460).

Sellars is not disposed to ‘reconcile’ the MI and the SI if that were to mean assuming (i) that they are *equal* rivals in *all* functional forms of discursive life (in *both* representational [descriptive-explanatory] and expressive [normative] discourse), and (ii) that they are mutually dependent for each other’s enrichment and completeness.⁵ Rather, Sellars is disposed to finding a way to only enrich and complete the SI by adding the MI’s normative-centric vocabulary to the SI. Crucially, the MI is not to be enriched and completed – it will, in an important sense, ‘wither away’ as the SI develops. Talk of ‘reconciling,’ not that of ‘joining’ – *contra* Willem deVries (2016b: 119) – is at best misleading for appreciating the details of Sellars’s “stereoscopic vision” (SPR: 9). The difference between (a) and (b), therefore, is *substantively* different.

2.

2.1. Irreducible discontinuity

As is well known, Sellars structures his project in PSIM around the aim of revealing

how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term ... To achieve success in philosophy would be [...] to ‘know one’s way around’ with respect to all these things [...] in that reflective way which means that no intellectual holds are barred. (SPR: 1)

‘joining x to y ’ and ‘reconciling x with y ,’ to the extent that Sellars’s argument concerns how to join the MI to the SI (rather than reconcile the two), is the following passage from PSIM: “... the task of showing that categories pertaining to man as a *person* who finds himself confronted by standards (ethical, logical, etc.) which often conflict with his desires and impulses, and to which he may or may not confirm, can be reconciled with the idea that man is what science says he is” (SPR: 38).

⁵ Jay Rosenberg appears to switch between fusion-talk and reconciliation-talk as if there is no *substantive* difference between the two *types* of talk: “Much of Sellars’s philosophical work can be understood as an attempt to show how the person-constitutive categories of the manifest image might be reconciled with or coherently added to the scientific image to produce a ‘stereoscopic’ or ‘synoptic’ image” (J. Rosenberg 2009: 285).

In other words, Sellars sees the function of the best philosophical inquiry not to rest content with the first-order task of carving reality at its joints, but to engage with the second-order task of doing justice to the inherently polydimensional structure of various logical spaces. Sellars insists that banal natural kinds such as cabbages, as well as scientifically “recalcitrant” (Rosenthal 2016: 150), ‘queerer’⁶ kinds, such as duties and aesthetic experience, are made sense of in equal measure (cf. SPR: 4). In doing so, he contrasts the “the analytic conception of philosophy as myopia” – namely, the first-order task of carving reality at its joints – with “the synoptic vision of true philosophy” (SPR: 3), his second-order task of doing justice to polydimensional discourse.

Significantly, in PSIM, the reflectively-minded philosopher is confronted by an antimony:

I want to highlight from the very beginning what might be called the paradox of man’s encounter with himself, the paradox consisting of the fact that man couldn’t be man until he encountered himself [...] Its central theme is the idea that anything which can properly be called conceptual thinking can occur only within a framework of conceptual thinking in terms of which it can be criticised, supported, refuted, in short, evaluated [...] The attempt to understand this [...] turns out to be part and parcel of the attempt to encompass in one view the two images of man-in-the-world which I have set out to describe. For, as we shall see, this difference in level appears as an irreducible discontinuity in the *manifest* image, but as, in a sense requiring careful analysis, a reducible difference in the *scientific* image. (SPR: 6)

Sellars’s claim that there is “an irreducible discontinuity in the *manifest* image, but as, in a sense requiring careful analysis, a reducible difference in the *scientific* image” serves as his nuanced strategy for resolving the antinomy by “stereoscopic vision, where two differing perspectives on a landscape are fused into one coherent experience” (SPR: 4). To quote Stephanie Dach here, “the process is one where the conceptual frameworks of the MI and the SI need to be mutually adapted” (Dach 2018: 572; cf. Christias 2019b: 464), to the extent that the mutual adaptation here – which is necessary for integration/fusion by stereoscopic envisioning – involves a specific sense in which the MI is irreducible to the SI, and a different, incommensurable sense in which the MI is reducible to the SI.

In what immediately follows, I will explain, following Jay Rosenberg (2007a; 2007b), Christias (2016a; 2016b; 2019b) and James O’Shea (2007; 2009; 2016), that the stereoscopic vision is best made sense of by situating it against

⁶ See Giladi 2019a, 2020a for further on the characterisation of normative kinds as ‘queer’ or scientifically recalcitrant.

the backdrop of Sellars’s “functional classification” semantics (J. Rosenberg 2007a: 15), typified by his 1953 distinction between logical irreducibility and causal reducibility.

For Sellars, the conceptual framework of persons, the hallmark of the MI, is *logically* irreducible to the discursive formations and categorial framework of the SI. What this means is that the language and ‘constitutive-interest,’ of personhood is incapable of translation into the language and framework of natural science (see Habermas 1971: 196). As Sellars writes:

[w]hatever users of normative discourse may be conveying about themselves and their community when they use normative discourse, what they are saying cannot be said without using normative discourse. The task of the philosopher cannot be to show how, in principle, what is said by normative discourse could be said without normative discourse, for the simple reason that this cannot be done. His task is rather to exhibit the complex relationships which exist between normative and other modes of discourse. (PPPW: 82)

[O]ne scarcely needs to point out these days that however intimately conceptual thinking is related to sensations and images, it cannot be equated with them, nor with complexes consisting of them. (SPR: 32)

Indeed, there are sound methodological reasons for not teaching ourselves to respond to perceptual situations in terms of constructs in the language of theoretical physics. For while this could, in principle, be done, the scientific quest is not yet over, and even granting that the main outlines are blocked in, the framework of physical objects in space and time, shaped over millennia of social evolution, provides, when accompanied by correct philosophical commentary, a firm base of operations with which to correlate the developing structure of scientific theory, refusing to embrace any stage without reverse as our very way of perceiving the world, *not* because it wouldn’t be a *better* way, but because the better is the enemy of the best (SPR: 97).

Now the idea that epistemic facts can be analysed without remainder – even ‘in principle’ – into non-epistemic facts ... with no matter how lavish a sprinkling of subjunctives and hypotheticals is, I believe, a radical mistake – a mistake of a piece with the so-called ‘naturalistic fallacy’ in ethics (SPR: 131).

If one aims to either logically reduce sentences involving first-person intentional vocabulary to sentences involving purely non-intentional vocabularies (cf. Fodor 1974: 104; Wedgwood 2007: 145), or to even Ramsify sentences involving first-person intentional vocabulary (viz. Ramsey 1931; Lewis 1970;

Jackson 1998: 140), then such semantic tasks involve translating the *intentional* MI framework into the *extensional* SI framework.⁷

Focusing on Ramsification at least, suppose T refers to the theoretical terms of first-person psychology; and suppose that $O_1 \dots O_n$ stands for a set of heterophenomenological predicates, such as ‘is a concurrent neurophysiological event’ and ‘has minimising prediction error.’ To Ramsify T , then, one replaces the first-person psychological terms with the existentially bound variables of relevant empirical terms (i.e. observable heterophenomenological descriptors): $R(T) = (\exists!)O_1 \dots O_n T[O_1 \dots O_n]$. In the Ramsey Sentence ‘ $R(T)$ ’, theoretical terms are logically eliminated, leaving only the empirical content of the observational sentence as the semantic content of $R(T)$ (viz. Carnap 1975: 82-83). In the case of Ramsifying first-person psychology, normative content does not feature as part of the semantic content of $R(T)$, whose predicates are only cognitive neuroscientific descriptors.

However, this effort to bring about a cognitively meaningful language shorn of intentional content is ultimately doomed to failure for at least two principal reasons. First, normative vocabulary underpins the logic of Ramsification and its revisionary extensional semantics in the first place, as epistemic virtues, such as plausibility and simplicity, motivate the very exercise of swapping the theoretical terms with the bound variables of regimented observational sentences (see Putnam 2002: 30-31; 141). Second, Ramsification – as well as logical reductionism – fails to make cogent enough *functional sense* of sentences that have ostensible commitments to “iffy” normative kinds (SPR: 24; cf. Baker 2013: 35; xv). As Sellars writes regarding the latter point, “[...] such a reconstruction [translating the intentional MI framework into the extensional SI framework] is *in principle* impossible, the impossibility in question being a strictly logical one” (SPR: 38).

Crucially, it is important to note how the following two positions, despite sharing much in common with Sellars’s position, are *not* involved in how he steers his argument that the conceptual framework of persons is logically irreducible to the SI. First, Sellars’s argument does not principally make use of a general anti-positivist⁸ commitment to the autonomy of philosophy in the face of the colonisation of MI spaces and categories by devout followers of an unqualified, imperialistic, hierarchical Unity of Science Thesis (UIHUST).⁹

⁷ I recognise that it is a widely and seemingly unquestioned assumption that the complete SI would be described by a purely extensional semantics.

⁸ This is not to say that Sellars was devoid of anti-positivist commitments. For example, SPR: 20-22 evinces Sellars’s *qualified* Unity of Science Thesis. As Michael Hicks notes, “[t]o see Sellars’s ontological monism as requiring of him a naive conception of the unity of science is to accuse him of precisely the view he means to be criticising” (Hicks: forthcoming). Cf. O’Shea 2007: 45.

⁹ See Nagel 1961; Oppenheim and Putnam 1958; A. Rosenberg 2014.

Such a position contends that every phenomenon explicable by special sciences, such as biology and psychology, is in principle reductively explicable by fundamental physics. Suffice to say that UIHUST is naïve, ‘greedy’ (in Daniel Dennett’s sense), and, above all, *easily* refutable, so much so that UIHUST is not taken especially seriously in the philosophy of science.¹⁰ Second, Sellars’s argument for the logical irreducibility of normativity does not make use of either (i) P.F. Strawson’s Kantian commitment to how “the absence of the reactive attitudes is a world of human isolation so cold and dreary that any but the most cynical must shudder at the idea of it” (Wolf 2008: 73) or (ii) Donald Davidson’s anomalism about the mental.

Regarding (i), Strawson’s descriptive metaphysical defence of reactive attitudes as core features of our ordinary conceptual scheme is not a strategy that plays a role in Sellars’s argument. For that matter, if anything, there is more compelling reason to think of Sellarsian metaphysics as a hybrid, *sui generis revisionary* and *descriptive* project, rather than in terms of a straightforwardly descriptive focus on the core features of our actual conceptual scheme: Sellars tries to combine descriptive metaphysical interests about ordinary language and our everyday practices (à la Strawson, J.L. Austin, and C.I. Lewis) with a revisionary metaphysics of science (the process philosophy of A.N. Whitehead), and dialectically play them off each other until they settle into a mutually supporting structure.

On the subject of (ii), Davidson’s commitment to the nomological (as opposed to logical) irreducibility of mental predicates *subtly* differs from Sellars’s strategy. According to Davidson, “there may well exist a physical open sentence coextensive with each mental predicate” (Davidson 2001: 215-216). However, though Davidson qualifies this possibility and avoids clear Ramsification, writing that “to construct [a physical open sentence coextensive with each mental predicate] might involve the tedium of a lengthy and uninformative alternation” (Davidson 2001: 216), Davidson’s position is different to Sellars’s. This is because, for Sellars, logical irreducibility is not a failure of coextension: it is a failure of analyticity. Sellars, unlike Davidson, does *not* follow Quine in rejecting the analytic/synthetic distinction. Davidson accepts that semantics must be extensional. As such, he is committed to the idea that the coextensive physical open sentence may be so long that it becomes unworkable. Sellars, however, following Rudolf Carnap and Lewis, never abandoned *intensional* semantics. For him, the whole point of ‘meaning as functional classification’ is

¹⁰ I think it is worth emphasising that, as Cartwright *et al.* 1996 has convincingly argued, UIHUST is *not* attributable to Otto Neurath, especially considering Neurath’s anti-foundationalism, anti-pyramidism, and articulation of an ‘encyclopaedia-model.’

to make intensions compatible with a prescriptive naturalistic ontology.

The driving force of Sellars's argument is his use of functional classification semantics to elaborate the naturalistic fallacy:

Now the idea that epistemic facts can be analysed without remainder – even 'in principle' – into non-epistemic facts [...] with no matter how lavish a sprinkling of subjunctives and hypotheticals is, I believe, a radical mistake – a mistake of a piece with the so-called 'naturalistic fallacy' in ethics. (SPR: 131)

To say that a certain person desired to do *A*, thought it his duty to do *B* but was forced to do *C*, is not to describe him as one might *describe* a scientific specimen. One does, indeed, describe him, but one does something more. And it is this something more which is the irreducible core framework of persons [...] Now, the fundamental principles of a community, which define what is 'correct' or 'incorrect,' 'right' or 'wrong,' 'done' or 'not done,' are the most general common *intentions* of that community with respect to the behaviour of the members of the group. It follows that to recognise a featherless biped or dolphin or Martian as a person requires that one think thoughts of the form 'We (one) shall do (or abstain from doing) actions of kind *A* in circumstances of kind *C*.' To think thoughts of this kind is not to *classify* or *explain*, but to *rehearse an intention* (SPR: 39-40).

Making sense of persons (and their entangled normative categories, such as agency and knowledge) in *this* cognitive context functionally means that our sense-making framework is not exclusively in the business of describing and explaining. The cognitive context of the specific discourse concerning persons and their associated normative categories is one typified by *expressive* as opposed to *representational* speech-acts.¹¹ In Hegelian-pragmatist fashion, Sellars holds that individuating persons is not determined by a description of person-practices, but rather by an account of how *these* specific practices convey persons' sensitivity to a normative community (cf. Levine 2019: 253), the ways in which persons are sensitive to fellow language-using, norm-bearing agents (cf. Kukla and Lance 2009: 185), the ways in which persons occupy a recognisable standing in the social space of reasons. As Quill Kukla (writing as Rebecca Kukla) and Mark Lance point out,

Sellars is getting at the point that recognising someone as a person is not merely an observative act, but also a practical act of the second kind ... We become and remain

¹¹ Cf. "[...] [W]e cannot intelligibly attribute any propositional attitude to an agent except within the framework of a viable theory of his beliefs, desires, intentions, and decisions ... [W]e make sense of particular beliefs only as they cohere with other beliefs, with preferences, with intentions, hopes, fears, expectations, and the rest" (Davidson 2001: 221).

the types of beings that have specific, agent-relative engagements with others through an ongoing network of hails and acknowledgments. (Kukla and Lance 2009: 180-181)

The discursive morphology of the conceptual framework of persons regards representational discourse as *functionally* unsuitable for facing up to and making sense of normative kinds *qua* normative kinds. This is because making sense of these ‘iffy’ and scientifically ‘recalcitrant’ phenomena is the business – or constitutive-interest – of *expressive* discourse: persons are not ‘emergent’ kinds over and above the descriptive-explanatory categories of science; the categorial status of persons is that of an entity with a recognisable standing in the logical space of reasons, rather than a non-aggregative natural kind.¹² Understood in this way, while the emergentist discourse of non-aggregativity is anti-reductionist, it is anti-reductionist in a functionally different way to Sellars’s notion of logical irreducibility, insofar as non-aggregativity is a *representationalist* species of anti-reductionism. Talk of recognisable standings in the logical space of reasons, since this talk is *expressive*, is not of interest to any descriptive and explanatory projects in the first place, given their functional role differentiation. As Richard Bernstein writes,

[e]verything that can be described and explained about persons can be described and explained in terms of the scientific image. The ‘something more’ that is left over is not something more to be described and explained; it involves the having and rehearsing of intention. (1966: 125)

To repeat Sellars’s oft-quoted passage in *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (EPM), “[on the subject of normative kinds (such as knowledge, meaning, and persons),] we are not giving an empirical description ... we are placing [them] in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says” (SPR: 169).

This irreducible discontinuity in the MI – logical irreducibility – is only half the Sellarsian story. To complete the Sellarsian story, one needs to articulate what he means by ‘causal reducibility’ – the reducible difference in the SI.

2.2. Reducible difference

Sellars defines ‘causal reducibility’ in a way that is bound up with (i) his *scientia mensura* principle in EPM, and (ii) his particular take on the error underpinning the naturalistic fallacy:

¹² Hegel, *contra* Sellars, regards persons as emergent kinds: “Spirit has thus proceeded from Nature [...] But it is one-sided to regard spirit in this way as having only *become* an actual existence after being merely a potentiality ...” (EPW §376Z; Eng. tr. 1970: 444).

... in the dimension of describing and explaining the world, science is the measure of all things, of what is that it is, and of what is not that is not. (SPR: 173)

If we use 'ethical assertion' in such a way that 'Jones ought to pay his debt' is an ethical assertion, but 'Jones feels that he ought to pay his debt' is not, then we can say that to claim that Ought is causally reducible to Is is to claim that one can give a causal explanation of the history of moral agents without making ethical assertions (PPPW: 48-9).

[A] concept will be said to be causally reducible to descriptive concepts if (roughly) it [...] occurs in the antecedent of a properly constructed casual explanation only as a subordinate element in a descriptive mentalistic context [...] Thus, a non-naturalist who holds that the only way in which moral obligation can enter into the causal explanation of human history is via facts of the form Jones thinks (feels) that he ought to pay his debt, would be holding that Ought is, in the above sense, causally reducible to Is. In traditional terminology, he would be claiming that obligation enters into the causal order only as an element in the intentional object of a mental act. (PPPW: 122)

Sellars distinguishes causal reducibility from logical reducibility in terms of how causal reducibility is concerned with descriptive-explanatory power, which is functionally "orthogonal" to logical irreducibility (Levine 2019: 255). The primacy of the SI consists in how the SI, rather than the MI, instructs on ontological matters.¹³ Understood in this manner, the MI will 'wither away' *on the ontological side of sense-making* (cf. O'Shea 2007: 162), since in the domains of description and explanation, the SI is better at finding out what there is than sophisticated common sense.¹⁴ Significantly, the descriptive-explanatory function of *causally* reducing persons to "a complex physical system" (SPR: 22) is to make sense of persons *qua* a postulational SI category devoid of *any* commitment to (the use of) normative terms. In other words, a causal reduction of 'person' to 'a complex physical system' is the representational function of Peirceish:

¹³ Viz. "But, *speaking as a philosopher*, I am quite prepared to say that the common sense world of physical objects in Space and Time is unreal – that is, that there are no such things" (SPR: 173). Viz. "The framework of common sense is radically false (i.e. there *really* are no such things as the physical objects and processes of the common sense framework)" (PP: 354).

¹⁴ Quine (1948) construes ontological commitment in terms of being a bound variable of a regimented sentence of our best current science. Sellars's metalinguistic functional role criterion for ontological commitment, however, "*explains* the syncategorematic character of predicates *without any reference to quantification*" (N&O: 51). Sellars insists that our best current science tells us what there is because our best current science causally "hook[s] up" (N&O: 10) with the measurable, determinate objects explicitly named in true empirical propositions. Determinate reference, not indeterminate reference, explains "*how* 'variables of quantification' hook up with the world" (N&O: 10). Indeterminate reference, not indeterminate reference, explains *how* true empirical sentences 'picture' objects.

[t]he naturalistic ‘thesis’ that the world, including the verbal behaviour of those who use the term ‘ought’ – and the mental states involving the concept to which this world gives expression – can ‘in principle,’ be described without using the term ‘ought’ or any prescriptive expression, is a logical point about what it is to count as a description *in principle* of the world ... [N]aturalism presents us with the ideal of a *pure* description of the world (in particular human behaviour), a description which simply says what things *are*, and never, in any respect, what they *ought* or *ought not* to be; and it is clear (as a matter of simple logic) that neither ‘ought’ nor any other prescriptive expression *could be used* (as opposed to *mentioned*) in such a description. (CDCM: 283)

To quote deVries (2019b: 233) here, “[t]he description is not ‘gappy’ at the level of the fundamental ontology of the natural world”. Through the application of his functional classification semantics, typified by his distinction between logical irreducibility and causal reducibility, Sellars aspires to uphold the primacy of the SI “without reaching for ... an eliminativist sledgehammer” (O’Shea 2009: 194)¹⁵ In other words, the way all things hang together stereoscopically in one unified and coherent image is by integrating persons into the Peirceish-regulated model of describing and explaining.

I think it is reasonable to claim that Sellars’s commitment to anti-foundationalism and expansive conceptual frameworks, typified by his notion of synoptic vision, aims to be democratic and non-supremacist, because his position makes it clear, given his frequent use of ‘polydimensional,’ that there must be a pluralism of vocabularies in play to adequately make sense of things. Above all, Sellars’s commitment to anti-foundationalism and to the synoptic vision paints a reasonably convincing picture of a thinker who wishes to replace, as Adriana Cavarero (2016) would phrase it, a *rectitudinal*, fixed, and vertical image of sense-making practice with a stereoscopic, dynamic, and horizontal image of sense-making practice. Such commitments *eo ipso* do not involve a commitment to (1) UIHUST and/or (2) a conceptually crude and crass variety of naturalism (cf. deVries 2019a: 37).

Thus far, I have reconstructed how Sellars envisions the joining of the conceptual framework of persons to Peirceish. Like O’Shea and Christias, I think Sellars’s stereoscopic vision is best construed as a functionalist ‘naturalism with a normative turn,’ in that persons are logically irreducible but causally reducible to the descriptive-explanatory categories of science (cf. O’Shea 2009: 207). This is what I take Sellars’s position to be. The functional classification distinction between normative discourse and descriptive-explanatory dis-

¹⁵ Cf. deVries 2017: 1647: “Sellars never intimates that future science will give us occasion to discard folk psychology, although some of Sellars’s students have drawn that conclusion”. See also Christias 2016b: 2854.

course not only anchors the important Kant-inspired Sellarsian claim that “[t]he scientific image and the framework of persons ... have different tasks that operate in different domains” (Levine 2019: 255). In what immediately follows, I will argue that there is a danger that Sellars’s idiosyncratic *Aufhebung* of persons *nonetheless* risks erasing persons and the MI’s discursive form of life.

3.

3.1. The “Eye on the whole” and Begriffsbildung – the opening Adornian salvo

In 1997, Richard Rorty (1997: 8-9) remarked that Sellars’s project was “an attempt to usher analytic philosophy out of its Humean and into its Kantian stage;” whereas “[Robert] Brandom’s project can usefully be seen as an attempt to usher analytic philosophy from its Kantian to its Hegelian stage”. Whatever truth there may be in this characterisation by Rorty, it nevertheless underestimates how deeply Hegelian Sellars himself already was.¹⁶ On this specific subject, deVries (2017: 1653) has argued that

Hegel and Sellars are both, in the end, monistic visionaries who try to explicate how it is possible for finite subjectivities to grasp the reality around them as it is in itself. No distinctions are primitive givens for them; each distinction must be justified, for, in the end, the world is One.

Sellars, much like Hegel before him, has an “eye on the whole” (SPR: 3). However, symptomatic of Western metaphysics, according to Theodor Adorno, is ‘identity philosophy’ – which represents the long-standing pathological cognitive propensity, beginning with Plato and ‘actualised’ by Hegel, to prioritise universality over individuality. For Adorno, “[i]dentity is the primal form of ideology” (1973: 148). The prioritisation of universality (and the concomitant concepts of unity and identity) is regarded by Adorno as harmful, insofar as the underpinning practice of conceptualisation (*Begriffsbildung*) here, namely the discursive operations of the ‘eye on the whole,’ is inherently violent and authoritarian. This is because, for Adorno, non-identity¹⁷ and difference are

¹⁶ Cf. deVries 2017: 1648: “however much of the Hegelian wine Sellars preserves, he is persistent in re-bottling it in naturalistic flasks”. For detailed discussions about the relationship between Hegel and Sellars, see issue 3 of Volume 27 of the *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*.

¹⁷ Viz. Adorno 2008: 7: “[B]y subsuming them all under this concept, by saying that A is everything that is comprehended in this unity, I necessarily include countless characteristics that are not integrated into the individual elements contained in this concept. The concept is always less than what is subsumed under it. When a B is defined as an A, it is always also different from and more than the A, the concept under which it is subsumed by way of a predicative judgement. On the other hand,

invariably sacrificed on the altar of unity-in-the-system.¹⁸ Parts are nothing; the whole is everything. To quote Espen Hammer (2020: 41) here, “[f]or Adorno, our concepts do what King Midas did when his wish for ever more gold was granted him – they turn what’s *living and different*, yet potentially intimate, into a *dead, repetitive sameness*”.

Since *Begriffe* function to *seize* the things at which they are directed,¹⁹ the cognitive activity of making sense of things through the application of totalising rule-conforming concepts is coercive, and does not respect the diverse integrity of existence itself. Rather, if anything, the ‘eye on the whole’ and *Begriffsbildung*, for Adorno, are effectively a kind of *viol cognitif*, where reality is brutally forced to conform to totalising discursive categories. Such cognitive totalising risks translating into a form of *social* totalitarianism, because the activity of subsuming under a whole leads to assimilating “all individuals into a general type, and thereby exclude or devalue their difference or singularity” (Stern 2009: 367). As Brian O’Connor (2013: 82) notes, “... for Adorno, this form of coercion is precisely what happens at the level of modern social organisation. This is no coincidence”. These points are vividly expressed by Adorno in the two passages below:

unity gets worse as its seizure of plurality becomes more thorough. It has its praise bestowed on it by the victor, and even a spiritual victor will not do without his triumphal parade, without the ostentatious pretence that what is incessantly inflicted upon the many is the meaning of the world [...] Thus established, the logical primacy of the universal provides a fundament for the social and political primacy that Hegel is opting for. (1973: 328)

The conception of a totality harmonious through all its antagonisms compels [Hegel] to assign to individuation, however much he may designate it a driving moment in the process, an inferior status in the construction of the whole ... [W]ith serene indifference [Hegel] opts once again for liquidation of the particular. Nowhere in his work is the primacy of the whole doubted (1974: 16-17).

To add textual weight to Adorno’s caustic critique of Hegel, one might point to the following passages from Hegel’s *Encyclopaedia Logica*, where the

however, in a sense every concept is at the same time more than the characteristics that are subsumed under it”.

¹⁸ Viz.: “What tolerates nothing that is not like itself thwarts the reconciliation for which it mistakes itself. The violence of equality-mongering reproduces the contradiction it eliminates” (Adorno 1973: 142-143).

¹⁹ The German term for ‘concept,’ *Begriff*, comes from the verb *Begreifen*, which in turn is derived from *Greifen*. ‘Greifen’ is often translated as meaning ‘to grab’ / ‘to grip’ / ‘to seize’ / ‘to snatch’ / ‘to capture’ / ‘to strike’ / ‘to take hold’ / ‘to bite.’

operation of reason (*Vernunft*) seems identical to the (aggressive) operation of the understanding (*Verstand*):²⁰

[w]e feel the need to bring unity to this manifold; therefore, we compare them and seek to [re]cognise what is universal in each of them. Individuals are born and pass away; in them their kind is what abides, what recurs in all of them; and it is only present for us when we think about them ... in thinking about things, we always seek what is fixed, persisting, and inwardly determined, and what governs the particular (EL: §21Z, 53; emphasis added).

What human beings strive for in general is cognition of the world; we strive to appropriate it and to conquer it. To this end the reality of the world must be crushed as it were; i.e., it must be made ideal. At the same time, however, it must be remarked that it is not the subjective activity of self-consciousness that introduces absolute unity into the multiplicity in question; rather, this identity is the Absolute, genuineness itself. Thus it is the goodness of the Absolute, so to speak, that lets singular [beings] enjoy their own selves, and it is just this that drives them back into absolute unity (EL: §42, 85 – emphasis added).

The presence of “govern” is especially important here, as this precisely seems to motivate (i) Adorno’s specific logico-metaphysical polemic that the logic of domination operates in the discursive operations of the ‘eye on the whole,’ and (ii) Adorno’s ‘negative dialectic’ reversal of Hegel’s claim in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (§20, 13) that *das Ganze ist das Wahre*:²¹

“The whole is the untrue,” not merely because the thesis of totality is itself untruth, being the principle of domination inflated to the absolute; the idea of a positivity that can master everything that opposes it through the superior power of a comprehending spirit is the mirror image of the experience of the superior coercive force inherent in everything that exists by virtue of its consolidation under domination. (Adorno 1993 [1963]: 87)

According to Adorno, the logical structure of modern social organisation is typified by drives towards the domination (and even obliteration) of differ-

²⁰ As Todd McGowan phrases it, “[t]he understanding is the vehicle of epistemic violence” (2019: 73).

²¹ Viz. Adorno 2008: 18: “Now, when I speak of ‘negative dialectics’ not the least important reason for doing so is my desire to dissociate myself from this fetishisation of the positive, particularly since I know full well that the concept has an ideological resonance that is connected with the advances made by certain philosophical trends and that very few people are aware of”. Viz. 2008: 20: “Unlike the kind of dialectics that the late Hegel called for, one in which the affirmative could be discovered at the end of all the negations, this concept calls for the very opposite”.

ence: “we are dealing with the principle of mastery” (2008: 9). These steering mechanisms geared towards universal reification produce a ‘false totality,’ to use Max Horkheimer’s term, and – at the material-psychological level – result in a damaged subjectivity, damaged life. The function of negative dialectics, therefore, is not to offer a liberal-inspired *resistance* to these totalising dispositions and ideological forms of modern social organisation. Rather, the function of negative dialectics is radical, construed as a *reversal* of logico-metaphysical power, according to which the category of difference (namely, non-identity) has *priority* over totalising categorial frameworks.²² As Adorno himself writes on this subject, “[t]o change this direction of conceptuality, to give it a turn toward non-identity, is the hinge of negative dialectics” (1973: 12).

The ‘eye on the whole,’ as such, invariably becomes an oppressive gaze, since “the unity of the self-preserving thought [as a “rationalised rage at non-identity”] may devour it without misgivings” (1973: 23). As one instantiation of the logical structure of modern social organisation geared towards increasing homogenisation, the ‘eye on the whole’ is guilty of a cognitive variety of imperialism, where such a position is the theoretical equivalent of Iris Marion Young’s concept of cultural imperialism:²³

[i]n societies stamped with cultural imperialism, groups suffering from this form of oppression stand in a paradoxical position. They are understood in terms of crude stereotypes that do not accurately portray individual group members but also assume a mask of invisibility; they are both badly misrepresented and robbed of the means by which to express their perspective. Groups who live with cultural imperialism find themselves defined externally, positioned by a web of meanings that arise elsewhere. These meanings and definitions have been imposed on them by people who cannot identify with them and with whom they cannot identify. (Young 1990: 59)

For Young, most modern societies contain multiple cultural groups, some of which unjustly dominate the state or other important social institutions, thus inhibiting the ability of minority cultures to live fully meaningful lives in *their own terms*. The dominant group in society can limit the ability of one or

²² Cf. Hammer 2020: 37: “... the exercise of “negative dialectics” – the attempt to reveal, rather than overcome, the *dis-unifications* ... that contemporary social practice keeps effacing. It becomes, one might say, a form a radical ideology critique whereby our various modalities and practices of identification, sense-making, and conceptualisation, including those of academic philosophy, are subjected to critique”. Cf. O’Connor 2013: 102.

²³ In the 1990s, the politics of difference focused on questions concerning nationality, ethnicity, and religion. Under this approach, the value of cultural distinctness is *essential* to individuals and not something accidental to them: their personal autonomy depends in part on being able to engage in specific cultural practices with others who identify with one another as in the same cultural group.

more of the cultural minorities to live out their forms of expression. In other words, the dominant culture threatens to swamp the minority culture, to the extent that particular cultural practices and different hermeneutic spheres – ways in which members of cultures interpret their experiences – are crowded out or erased.

How does this bear on the question about Sellarsian naturalism, though? I contend that the Adornian concern about Sellars's naturalism-with-a-normative-turn is that “[u]ltimately the scientific image will drown out the manifest image” (Hicks: forthcoming): the ‘eye on the whole’ and *Aufhebung* of persons, regardless of any left-wing Sellarsian intentions, threatens to swamp persons and the language of community and individual intentions (the MI’s discursive form of life). The vocabulary of Peirceish is epistemically authoritarian, in that it really risks forcing other forms of inquiry to adopt the discursive recourses and grammars of formal disciplines categorially different to the MI’s discursive and grammatical constellations (cf. McDowell 1994: 70):

[s]cientific objectification, in line with the quantifying tendency of all science since Descartes, tends to eliminate qualities and to transform them into measurable definitions. Increasingly, rationality itself is equated *more mathematico* with the faculty of quantification. While perfectly corresponding to the primacy of a triumphant natural science. (1973: 43)

Because the Sellarsian synoptic vision is *primarily* structured by the doggedly sparse physicalist ontology of the SI, the purely naturalistic vocabulary will invariably fail to fulfil the function of mitigating conflict with the constellation of persons and the language of community and individual intentions, since the conceptual framework of persons is subject to regulatory discourse, insofar as they must be *forced* into naturalistic categories that does not seem appropriate for *their specific* characters. Naturalistic categories and empirical science itself are the products of the domination, not revelation, of nature. Therefore, the doggedly sparse physicalist ontology of the SI is not as innocent as Sellars makes it out to be.

Under the synoptic vision, there is little or no way to epistemically counter colonisation and eventual obliteration by the SI, since what is the *base* of the synoptic vision *superstructure* is purely naturalistic vocabulary. If the base is constituted by Peirceish, then securing and protecting persons as agents and as conceptual thinkers within the doggedly sparse physicalist ontology of the SI is effectively impossible (see O’Shea 2009: 194).

3.2. The (left-wing) Sellarsian response

I think it is reasonable to contend here that Sellars would be rather unimpressed, and perhaps even cholericly frustrated, with this Adornian critique. For, the very idea of using the base-superstructure framework as a way of critically making sense of the logical architecture of stereoscopic thinking not only strangely charges Sellars with foundationalism, it also categorically misrepresents, to the point of even ignoring, Sellars's nuanced notion of unity bound up with his functional classification semantics. In what follows, I construct a Sellarsian rebuttal to my opening Adornian salvo.

In a curiously Hegelian mode, Sellars writes: “the very fact that I use the analogy of stereoscopic vision implies that as I see it the manifest image is not overwhelmed in the synthesis” (SPR: 9). Significantly, this sentence from PSIM thematically resembles, at least in spirit (rather than also in letter), Hegel's insistence in the *Difference* essay that dialectical-speculative judgements concerning unity do not involve any kind of commitment to subsumption that eliminates individuality and difference:

[t]o cancel established oppositions is the sole interest of reason. But this interest does not mean that it is opposed to opposition and limitation in general; for necessary opposition is *one* factor of life, which forms itself by eternally opposing itself, and in the highest liveliness totality is possible only through restoration from the deepest fission. (DFS; Eng. tr.: 91)

Though Sellars's own position – especially his psychological nominalism – is shorn of Hegel's speculative metaphysical mortgages, Sellars could claim that Adorno is guilty of approaching the subject of unity in *exactly* the sort of way rendered unviable by and running counter to the logic of *Aufhebung*: Adorno is attacking crude and crass positivism; but Sellars is not a crude and crass positivist. Therefore, Adorno's salvo misfires. Only UIHUST involves a commitment to a false *epistemic* totality.

Unlike false epistemic totalities, expressive epistemic totalities involve a conception of a unified whole in which heterogeneous (but not inconsistent) epistemic needs and interests are expressed and also fully developed at no cost to the stability of the whole; if anything, the expression and development of heterogeneous (but not inconsistent) epistemic needs and interests is required to avoid epistemic anomie. The consequence of a false epistemic totality, a crystallisation into well-ordered homogeneous complexes under the steering mechanism of UIHUST, is a crisis situation in our epistemic form of life. This is because the subjective and objective conditions for sense-making risk erosion by increasing patterns of discursive hegemonisation and homogenisation.

Just as *governmental* discipline is directed towards homogenising bodies and sexualities, producing “subjected and practised bodies, ‘docile’ bodies,” (Foucault 1997: 138) the *epistemic* disciplinarity of UIHUST is directed towards homogenising vocabulary and inquiry, producing “disciplinary monotony,” subjected and practised minds, ‘docile’ minds (Foucault 1997: 141).²⁴

The Adornian critique of Sellars, then, not only mistakes its target, but, worryingly, also gives rise to debilitating anxieties, stemming from its misdirected allegation, that embedded in Sellars’s (Hegelian) commitment to unity is a homogenising drive: fusing the normative category of persons to Peirceish neither represents a sort of “blithely decreed disappearances of individualities” (1973: 325), nor a surrender of the MI. As Christias (2019a: 521) notes, “the normative valence of manifest-image concepts, far from completely disappearing from view, is in fact fully preserved (albeit, with a different – i.e., ‘scientific-image’-‘contentual’ aspect)”.

Far from involving epistemic serfdom, the Sellarsian *Aufhebung* of the tension between the MI and SI points to a clear commitment to a more polychromatic, republican pluralism, rather than a monochromatic, imperialist monism. For, “[t]he normative core of the manifest image (the individual and community intentions of persons) is preserved yet completely purged of its ontological-explanatory content, which is now fully accounted for in scientific-image terms” (Christias 2019b: 463-464):

[w]hen I talk about the in principle replaceability of the manifest image by the scientific image, I do so with respect to the *content* of the world, its material and not with respect to those forms which concern the normative, the obligatory, the correct, the incorrect, the valuable. (WSNDL: 169)

The *Aufhebung* in no way threatens to swamp persons and the language of community and individual intentions, not least because Sellars’s functional classification distinction between normative discourse and descriptive-explanatory discourse anchors his Kantian commitment to a ‘no-competition,’ ‘never-the-twain-shall-meet’ view of the SI and the conceptual framework of

²⁴ I think it is important to note here that worries about scientism ought not to use science as a scapegoat for the pathological features of capitalism. Once one sees that pragmatic realism in philosophy of science does not entail – and in fact, strictly speaking, undermines – UIHUST, ‘scientism’ just becomes a chimera. Given this, the following pertinent question arises: ‘why, from a diagnostic perspective, does scientism still persist?’ Scientism is, therefore, peculiar, because it persists *despite* resting on implausible grounds, since “the omnipresent neo-Pythagoreanism of contemporary science is surely not adequately justified by its empirical successes” (Dupré 1995: 224). I think a particularly compelling answer to this question involves explaining scientism’s persistence in terms of *scientism’s* status – not science’s status – as the theoretical concomitant of the kind of social pathologies caused by the ideological exercise of formal reason in capitalist modes of production.

persons. The SI and the conceptual framework of persons have different discursive functions and operate in different discursive domains. MI-discourse is individuated by prescriptive, expressive language that is logically irreducible to descriptive-explanatory vocabulary, even though at the level of ontology, the MI is causally reducible to the descriptive-explanatory categories of natural science. Therefore, to quote deVries (2016a: 58), “[g]iven the structured holism of Sellarsian semantics, the right way to think of the relation between the manifest image and the scientific image is as a matter of mutual accommodation, not one-way dominance” *pace* the Adornian critique.

4.

4.1. The Adornian strikes back: Sellars’s Ramsifying slip?

As things currently stand, Adorno *appears* to view Sellars’s naturalism through the prism of bad faith: at worst, Sellars is a perfidious pluralist who surreptitiously smuggles scientism through customs;²⁵ at best, Sellars is naïve, non-wilfully ignorant of the ways in which he reproduces ideology in Western metaphysics and philosophy of mind. Suffice to say that the Sellarsian would view the Adornian critique not necessarily through the prism of bad faith, but at least with a qualified incredulity: the Adornian fails to acknowledge the functional classification distinction and its *Aufhebung* role, and the Adornian conflates Sellarsian naturalism with exactly the sort of naturalism Sellars rejects. However, I think this apparent stalemate is breakable. Specifically, I think the stalemate can be broken in the Adornian’s favour, thereby putting significant pressure on the idea that the synoptic vision is an expressive epistemic totality.

I previously claimed that Sellars’s functional classification distinction between normative discourse and descriptive-explanatory discourse anchors his Kantian commitment to a ‘no-competition,’ ‘never-the-twain-shall-meet’ view of the SI and the conceptual framework of persons. The SI and the conceptual framework of persons have different discursive functions and operate in different discursive domains. MI-discourse is individuated by prescriptive, expressive language that is logically irreducible to descriptive-explanatory vocabulary, even though at the level of ontology, the MI is causally reducible to the descriptive-explanatory categories of natural science. Sellars, as I have argued, maintains that causal reducibility is categorically distinguished from logical

²⁵ As Adorno puts this in terms of a hermeneutical principle: “what these works say, is not what their words say” (2013: 184).

reducibility, insofar as causal reducibility is solely concerned with descriptive-explanatory power, which is functionally orthogonal to logical irreducibility. The primacy of the SI, therefore, consists in how the SI, rather than the MI, instructs *only* on ontological matters. Understood in this manner, so the story goes, the MI will ‘wither away’ *only* on the ontological side of sense-making. There is a significant amount riding on just how strict the functional classification distinction is for Sellars, not least because if he Ramsifies across all functional classifications, and moves away from the Kantian functional classification strictures, he runs the real risk of vindicating the Adornian critique.

In PSIM, Sellars was committed to the claim that the SI has primacy over the MI, with respect to instructing the MI on ontological matters. However, to avoid the total colonisation of the MI by scientific varieties of naturalism, one acts as a conceptual border-patroller, erecting a protective hermeneutic barrier, whose structural integrity one maintains as best as one reasonably can. The functional classification distinction played this very specific epistemic(-political) role, preserving the conceptual autonomy of the MI, thereby keeping the barbarians at the gate (so to speak).

As far as I can tell, there is no textual evidence of Sellars Ramsifying in PSIM or in EPM. *Science and Metaphysics* (S&M) might seem a different story. This is because, at one crucial point, Sellars appears to Ramsify across all functional classifications, and by doing so, moves away from the Kantian functional classification strictures:

...the Scientific Realist need only argue that a correct account of concepts and concept formation is compatible with the idea that the “language entry” role could be played by statements in the language of physical theory, i.e. that in principle this language could *replace* the common-sense framework in *all* its roles, with the result that the idea that scientific theory enables a more adequate picturing of the world could be taken at its face value. (S&M: V.90)

In writing “that in principle [the language of physical theory] could *replace* the common-sense framework in *all* its roles,” Sellars *seems* to Ramsify across all functional classifications. He seems no longer committed to the idea that, with respect to the MI’s *expressive* function, the MI is logically irreducible to the descriptive-explanatory categories of postulational science. To use a phrase from Davidson (2001: 207), it now seems that the conceptual framework of persons no longer, at the logical level, resists “capture in the nomological net of physical theory”. Sellars’s *scientia mensura* doctrine no longer seems to hold for *only* the domain of description and explanation. The Adornian has good reason to feel vindicated now, as this Ramsifying ‘slip’ appears to confirm their long-standing

suspicion that Sellars's 'eye on the whole' and the synoptic vision reproduce the imperialist modes of thinking embedded in scientific naturalism. The 'eye on the whole' is now revealed as discursively oppressive. The synoptic vision is now revealed as a false epistemic totality. As Jürgen Habermas writes,

[w]hen stripped of their ideological veils, the imperatives of autonomous subsystems make their way into the lifeworld from the outside – like colonial masters coming into a tribal society – and force a process of assimilation upon it. (1987b: II, 355)

Buoyed by the spectacular and rapid expansions in modern scientific knowledge, scientific naturalism moves from *explanatory* superiority to "regulatory hegemony" (Butler 2009: 5), so much so that inquiries paradigmatically defined by the operation of formal rationality began to *epistemically manage* the MI with a view to seeing it wither away in terms of its ontological *content* and its normative *form*. The synoptic vision, given Sellars's apparent Ramsifying slip in S&M that *all* roles of MI-talk can in principle be replaced by SI-talk, involves the domination of MI discursive forms of life. The conceptual framework of persons and the language of individual and community intentions are, in fact, no longer conceptually autonomous, not so much because they are embedded within the impersonal framework of Peirceish, but because Peirceish ultimately forces the collapse of Sellars's functional classification distinction in favour of descriptive-explanatory categories: central folk psychological concepts no longer remain logically intact in the ideal SI. "The dominance of physics in Sellars's picture, the need to telescope the special sciences into the microphysical sciences, is here disabling" (Levine 2019: 266).

However, it would be premature for the Adornian to proclaim victory. For, Sellars's point is that the language of physical theory replaces the language of the "proper sensibles" (S&M: V.16), in *language-entry* moves. Such a claim does *not* undermine Sellars's commitment to the essentially normative character of material inferences once we are in the space of reasons, because "completely determinate "basic" perceptual this-suches" (S&M: V.16) do not have an epistemic function to begin with *once we give up the Myth of the Given*:²⁶ proper sensibles do not play an epistemic role in observation reports, following Davidson, and that in turn allows the scientific realist to claim that at least in

²⁶ The Myth of the Given can be explicated in the following manner: it refers to the traditional empiricist claim that perceptual judgments are epistemically justified by non-conceptual sense contents. At the *base* of our perceptual experience, there are things which do not have propositional content that immediately provide us with epistemic relations, particularly relations of justification. But, perceptual judgments, for Sellars, can only be justified to the extent that they have epistemic relations with cognitive states, things with propositional content. Cf. Sobstyl 2004: 133; O'Shea 2016: 2; Kukla 2006: 85-86.

principle the proper sensibles *could* be replaced by terms from some suitably enlarged language of physical theory. One would talk about light frequencies instead of ‘colour;’ audio frequencies instead of ‘sound;’ atoms arranged table-wise instead of ‘tables.’ *Unless it is essential to the framework of persons that persons see colours, hear sounds, and experience tables*, there is no problem for Sellars here.

In what follows, I argue that rather than resolve the clash between the MI and the SI by joining the ‘lifeworldly’ conceptual framework of persons to the SI for the purpose of enriching and completing the SI, what Sellars ought to have done is adopt a negative dialectical ‘resolution’ of the clash between the images. This strategy invites one to dismantle the Placement Problem²⁷ *qua* “a logic of disintegration” (Adorno 2008: 6). I take Sellars to have curiously hinted at – but not follow through – this Adornian intellectual orientation in EPM.

4.2. Disintegration: “an *arché* beyond discourse”

What can Sellars do now (at least from a left-wing Sellarsian perspective)? There are several paths open to him. I wish, though, to focus on one path which, were Sellars to take it, would not cause any kind of reputational embarrassment for him:²⁸ Sellars can perform a conceptual about-turn, and he can disavow his claim in *Science and Metaphysics* that *all* roles of MI-talk can in principle be replaced by SI-talk; he can return to his original position in PSIM, namely that the way to resolve the clash between the MI and the SI is to *integrate* the conceptual framework of persons with the ‘doggedly naturalistic’ language of postulational science. By joining the language of individual and community intentions to Peirceish, such a discursive activity enriches and completes the SI. To repeat Christias’s characterisation of the Sellarsian *Aufhebung*, the idea here is ‘a smooth incorporation of normativity within the scientific image.’

Should this be the path Sellars takes, I think the Adornian can up the ante in the high-stakes game here precisely because Sellars seems so Hegelian: why should we even seek to *join* the conceptual framework of persons to Peir-

²⁷ The Placement Problem can be formulated in this manner: (1) All reality is ultimately natural reality. (2) Whatever one wishes to admit into natural reality must be placed in natural reality. (3) Modality, meaning, norms, consciousness, self-consciousness, and intentionality, and so on do not seem admissible into natural reality. (4) Therefore, if they are to be placed in nature, they must be forced into a category that does not seem appropriate for their specific characters; and if they cannot be placed in nature, then they must be either dismissed as non-genuine phenomena, or at best regarded as parasitic second-rate phenomena.

²⁸ If anything, it might exemplify a Putnam-esque self-critical turn, and re-confirm Sellars’s pragmatist disposition.

ceish? Furthermore, why think the dialectical aspiration ought to be *smooth* incorporation? And, even more basically, why think the *telos* of our cognitive endeavours, why contend that the goal of inquiry is to *end the internal tension* between the two images?

My Adornian line of thought principally involves construing the discourse of joining the conceptual framework of persons to the SI for the purpose of enriching and completing it as, what I would term, ‘axiologically corrosive.’ For, to construe the MI’s value ultimately in terms of how it benefits the SI, to the extent that affixing the language of individual and community intentions to Peirceish enriches and completes the SI, seems invariably committed to the idea that the model of rationality in Peirceish – “our more straitlaced” cousin (N&O: 6) – occupies the centre of our sense-making web. Specifically, the idea that the model of rationality in Peirceish occupies the centre of our sense-making web means that the conceptual framework of persons has to *serve* Peirceish (precisely by the unidirectionality of enriching and completing the SI). This reinforces the ideological-regulatory structural features of the Placement Problem, as well as revealing how such disciplinary features bleed into those long-standing liberal naturalist responses to it.²⁹ Perhaps more polemically, the axiological corrosiveness of the joining-discourse involves, to quote Max Weber, the ‘mechanised petrification’ of our sense-making itself – the extirpation of person-practices.

The Placement Problem aims to level out the heterogeneous dimensions of the MI, by framing the legitimacy of scientifically recalcitrant phenomena in terms of whether they can be placed/located in the world described by the natural sciences: anything that resists placeability/locatability is labelled ‘odd.’ By being *visibly marked*, ‘odd’ phenomena become ‘queer’ phenomena, which then become ‘problematic’ and ‘punishable’ phenomena. There is compelling reason to think that nomothetic structure of placeability/locatability operate *juridically*. Paraphrasing Judith Butler on juridical operationality, “the subjects regulated by such structures are, by virtue of being subjected to them, formed, defined, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures” (Butler 1999: 4).

Regulatory-juridical logical structures and their corresponding axiological commitments are operative in the allegedly capacious discourse of ‘accommo-

²⁹ The broad tradition of liberal naturalism as an *intellectual orientation for coordinating non-eliminativist, non-reductionist discourse about normative kinds* often claims to have significant advantages over its more conservative (or scientific naturalist) cousin. Importantly, liberal naturalists *explicitly* maintain their naturalist credentials, but do so in such a way that aims to make a clear demarcation between them, supernaturalists, and scientific naturalists. Viz. Giladi 2019b, De Caro and Macarthur 2010: 9.

dition': expressions such as 'finding a place for mind in the world described by the natural sciences' and 'making elbow room for intentionality' both presuppose that one ought to accept from the very outset the vocabulary and general *Weltanschauung* of the natural sciences, and then find some meaningful and coherent way of fitting/affixing intentionality into that nomothetic picture. This is axiologically corrosive of our sense-making itself, because the language of individual and community intentions and the conceptual framework of persons, where it is essential to *this* framework that persons see *colours*, hear *sounds*, experience *tables*, have principally intrinsic, not relational, value: they are expressive of the lifeworldly practices we engage in to make sense of *Erlebnis* as an intentional, communicative, socially invested agent (cf. Bernstein 1966: 15). In this way, the task at hand is not to find ways of accommodating intentionality. Rather, the task is to combat the circulation of *epistemic power*. This way of thinking here, to quote Michel Foucault,

should be seen as a kind of attempt to emancipate historical knowledges from that subjection, to render them, that is, capable of opposition and of struggle against the coercion of a theoretical, unitary, formal and scientific discourse. It is based on a re-activation of local knowledges – of minor knowledges, as [Gilles] Deleuze might call them – in opposition to the scientific hierarchisation of knowledges and the effects intrinsic to their power. (1980: 85)

Interestingly, while not laced in critical theoretic terms, Sellars's own normative pragmatism about knowledge, where epistemic kinds are made sense of not *qua* conceptual analysis, but *qua* a recognisable standing in the space of reasons, is *allied* to Foucault's point: in not giving an empirical description of epistemic kinds, Sellars offers a revisionary epistemology, to the extent that normative pragmatism about knowledge is a 'reactivation of local knowledges.'

These local knowledges include 'knowing one's way around (the space of reasons)' and 'rehearsing intentions,' which comprise those practices involved in the intersubjectively constituted 'ought-to-do's' and 'ought-to-be's.' They are 'local' in the sense of localised in the full-range of practices only performable by *persons*. As Sellars makes it clear, the pragmatically salient features of sensitivity to a normative *community*, particularly the sensitivity to rules of criticism, is something only predicable of *persons*. The reactivation of local knowledges, such as deontic scorekeeping and its concomitant processes of agonistic constitution of 'ought-to-be's' and 'ought-to-do's,' reveals the normative lustre of the space of reasons and the conceptual framework of persons: as persons, we are not just rule-governed; we are also normatively self-constituting as *persons*. In other words, we construe our practical identity/our practical relation-to-self

as agents whose speech acts and actions in general are structured by reasons in accordance with rules. By having our speech acts and actions in general structured by reasons in accordance with rules, all of which are moulded in the crucible of the space of reasons, *we constitute ourselves as persons*.

Applying conceptual analysis to this kind of discourse is a category error, because conceptual analysis is “too buttoned-up and white-chokered and clean-shaven a thing” (EIRE: 146) to adequately make sense of, for example, the norms governing knowledge-attribution and the agonistic constitution of rules of criticism. Sellars, as a pragmatist, is decidedly uninterested in finding any features/states/properties serving as *formal* conditions of knowledge. The norms governing knowledge-attribution, the agonistic constitution of rules of criticism, etc. all involve deliberative discourse in order to be authoritative, legitimate, and valid for those engaging in such discourse. By conceptualising knowledge in terms of a recognisable standing in the logical space of reasons, the “network of discursive holdings” (Kukla and Lance 2009: 192), Sellars’s pragmatism is decidedly interested in the *informal, flexible, and humanistic* norm-constituting practices of language-using agents.

I think that for all of Sellars’s emphasis on the rule-governed features of human language and action, the informal, flexible, and humanistic norm-constituting practices of persons, crucially, involve *opposition* and *struggle*, so much so that, as Joseph Margolis writes,

[y]ou must bear in mind that “*to place an item* in a normative space” (as Sellars has it) *is* to place *it* (consulting doxastic or cognitive attributions that characteristically trigger nonmonotonic complications) in a decidedly uncertain – possibly unmanageable – inferential space. (2016: 20)

A ‘decidedly uncertain – possibly unmanageable –’ inferential space is decidedly uncertain and possibly unmanageable – precisely because *the space of reasons is an arena invariably comprising opposition and struggle, contestation and challenge, disruption and disturbance*. Significantly, for the Adornian, opposition and struggle, contestation and challenge, disruption and disturbance are the effects of the ineliminable presence of *non-identity* in the conceptual framework of persons: most importantly, this category *eo ipso* puts the brakes on the Sellarsian idea of “an ever-expanding range of homeostatic equilibrium” (Christias 2019b: 465). If anything, this very notion of an ever-expanding range of homeostatic equilibrium or allostatic regulation – the smooth incorporation of normativity within the SI – is *precisely* what concerns the Adornian, and makes Sellars vulnerable to the Adornian critique of Hegel, given how deeply Hegelian Sellars himself was:

contradiction cannot be brought under any unity without manipulation, without the insertion of some wretched cover concepts that will make the crucial differences vanish. (1973: 152)

The ineliminable presence of non-identity means that the dialectical aspiration never ought to be an incorporation of the conceptual framework of persons to Peirceish (let alone a ‘smooth’ one); the *telos* of our cognitive endeavours never ought to end the internal tension between the two images. The ineliminable presence of non-identity means that the dialectical aspiration always ought to *bathe in the clash* between the MI and the SI; the *telos* of our cognitive endeavours always ought to *emphasise internal tension* between the two images.

Construed in the manner I have articulated, I think it is plausible to argue that just as Adorno himself wished to *rescue* Hegel (viz. Adorno 1993 [1963]: 83), the Adornian wishes to *rescue* Sellars, so that the Sellarsian *Aufhebung* can overcome its fear of non-identical thinking. In this way, much of the following by Hammer, which focuses on, but risks underplaying the *force* of, Adorno’s deployment of negative dialectics in social theory against ideological integration, carries over to my Adornian worry about smoothly incorporating the conceptual framework of persons within Peirceish:

[s]ince the *modern* social systems within which we find ourselves so strongly ideologically (and hence ‘misleadingly’) encourage us to believe that a successful and meaningful integration [...] has indeed taken place, the reconciliatory step towards *Aufhebung* should be resisted in favour of a focus on the *distance* between notional constraint and our ways of knowing and relating to the world (Hammer 2020: 40).

The function of negative dialectics is not to offer *resistance* to the totalising dispositions of modern social organisation and scientific hierarchisation of knowledges. Rather, the function of negative dialectics is to *reverse* the direction of discursive power and dismantle the Placement Problem³⁰ through the

³⁰ In recent years, the Placement Problem has been critiqued by philosophers of either (i) a Hegelian inclination, who try to dissolve the Placement Problem by articulating how it rests on the non-dialectical framework of *Verstand* (as opposed to the dialectical framework of *Vernunft*) – see Giladi 2014; 2019a; or (ii) a (neo-)Kantian inclination, who try to dissolve the Placement Problem by showing how it is based on presuppositions that fail to underpin different forms of experience and (therefore) different ways of knowing – see D’Oro 2018; 2019 and Papazoglou 2019; or (iii) a Husserlian inclination, who try to dissolve the Placement Problem using the perspective of transcendental phenomenology – see Moran 2008; 2012; 2013 and Hanna 2014; or (iv) a Wittgensteinian inclination, who try to dissolve the Placement Problem by showing how it distorts the relationship between grammar and experience, conflating saying and showing – see Beale and Kidd 2017; or (vi) a broadly pluralist realist inclination, who try to dissolve the Placement Problem by relaxing the notion of nature in such a way

exercise of a logic of disintegration. There are, I think, at least two ways the Sellarsian can respond here.

In the first instance, they might reply that the Adornian, ironically, wishes to maintain hierarchisation and domination by now forcing the SI to conform to the MI. This merely reproduces the Placement Problem in a reverse form: the conceptual framework of the natural sciences has to be placed/located in the messy normative space of reasons on pain of humanistic (rather than naturalistic) Ramsification. The Adornian position, then, is, at best, hypocritical; at worst, absurd.

In the second instance, which I think is the much better dialectical path to take here, the Sellarsian may point to the concluding sentence of EPM:

Or does the reader not recognise Jones as Man himself in the middle of his journey from the grunts and groans of the cave to the subtle and polydimensional discourse of the drawing room, the laboratory, and the study, the language of Henry and William James, of Einstein and of the philosophers who, in their efforts to break out of discourse to an *arché* beyond discourse, have provided the most curious dimension of all. (SPR: 196; emphasis added)

The ‘efforts to break out of discourse to an *arché* beyond discourse’ curiously hints at Adorno’s negative dialectical orientation. This is because the logic of Sellars’s expression here bears noticeable resemblance to Adorno’s logic of disintegration, whose aim is “[t]o use the strength of the subject to break through the fallacy of constitutive subjectivity” (1973: 10). To achieve success in philosophy would be, then, to ‘know one’s way around’ *with respect to internal tension*, rather than with respect to welding into one unified, coherent image. Putting Sellars and Adorno into conversation with one another provides this most curious dimension, namely that our discursive forms of life require multiple images, multiple pictures, which are in conflict with one another, because conflict, rather than a transcending *Aufhebung*, is emblematic of cognitive life itself (cf. Christias 2018b: 128).

However, if what I have claimed here is correct, then one may legitimately wonder what is holding Sellars back from following through the Adornian intellectual disposition here. To put the point more bluntly, why does the concluding sentence of EPM ‘hint at’ rather than ‘explicitly articulate’ a negative

that removes the spectre of reduction or elimination – see Baker 2013; 2017; McDowell 1994; Putnam 1990; 1994; 1995; 2002; 2004; 2012; 2015; De Caro 2015; 2019; or (vii) a Rortian neopragmatist inclination, who try to dissolve the Placement Problem by revealing how it is produced by representationalist, rather than expressivist, grammar, namely the idea that semantics and our discursive vocabulary involve a mirroring word-object relationship – see Rorty 2010; Price 2004; Macarthur and Price 2007; Macarthur 2008.

dialectical orientation? I think a particularly helpful way to answer this question involves re-emphasising how Hegelian Sellars is, and therefore creatively (in a non-Rortian way) reanimating (i) some of Adorno's critique of Hegel in *Hegel: Three Studies* (1993 [1963]) and some of Habermas's critique of Hegel in the *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1987a).

Adorno and Habermas respectively write that

[a]s though the dialectic had become frightened of itself, in the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel broke off such thoughts by abruptly absolutising one category – the state. This is due to the fact that while his experience did indeed ascertain the limits of bourgeois society, limits contained in its own tendencies, as a bourgeois idealist he stopped at that boundary because he saw no real historical force on the other side of it. He could not resolve the contradiction between his dialectic and his experience: it was this alone that forced Hegel the critic to maintain the affirmative. (Adorno 1993 [1963]: 80)

The point of the intuitions from the days of his youth that Hegel wanted to conceptualise was that in the modern world emancipation became transformed into unfreedom because the unshackling power of reflection had become autonomous and now achieved unification only through the violence of a subjugating subjectivity (1987a: 32-33).

As we have seen, in Hegel's youthful writings the option of explicating the ethical totality as a communicative reason embodied in intersubjective life-contexts was still open. Along this line, a democratic self-organisation of society could have taken the place of the monarchical apparatus of the state. By way of contrast, the logic of a subject conceiving itself makes the institutionalism of a strong state necessary ... Hegel had hardly conceptualised the diremption of modernity before the unrest and movement of modernity was ready to explode this concept. The reason for this is that he could carry out his critique of subjectivity only within the framework of the philosophy of the subject (1987a: 40-41).

For Adorno, there is a clear distinction between Hegel and Hegelianism, where 'Hegelianism' refers not so much to Hegel's actual philosophical commitments and arguments, but principally to a very specific constellation of conceptual frameworks, methodologies, and discursive resources. True to the spirit of the Young Hegelians, Adorno sees Hegelianism as comprising the necessary methodological principles as well as the materialist discursive tools for sustained and progressive *social critique*. More directly put, Hegelianism unshackles Hegel's dialectic from ideology and *Begriffsbildung*, so that Hegel's dialectic can overcome its long-standing fear of non-identical thinking. And Habermas lambasts the mature Hegel on the grounds that he "did not pursue

any further the traces of communicative reason that are clearly to be found in his early writings” (1987a: 31). Instead, according to Habermas, using Dieter Henrich’s expression, Hegel articulated an aloof “emphatic institutionalism” (1987a: 41) in the *Philosophy of Right*, leaving the critical concepts of intersubjectivity and communicative action underdeveloped and their emancipatory potential in stasis.

How exactly does this bear on Sellars, though? The critique of Hegel partly revolves around the contention that Hegel is intoxicated by manageability, by the monistic vision of a dialectically integrated Absolute, to the point where the dialectical process mythopoetically presses the *need* for a unified and coherent whole. However, as Adorno remarks,

but hidden in it is also the true moment of ideology, the pledge that there should be no contradiction, no antagonism. (1973: 149)

In this way, the charm of the monistic vision’s dialectically integrated Absolute is unmasked as pathologically bewitching. Similarly, the critique of Sellars partly revolves around the contention that Sellars is smitten by manageability, by the monistic vision of a dialectically integrated naturalistic image of the world, to the point where the dialectical process here mythopoetically presses the *need* for a unified and coherent naturalistic vision.

There is something almost irresistible to naturalism. Crucially, what makes naturalism so appealing is that its charming qualities deeply resonate with our psychological architecture and cognitive make-up: as human beings, we are sense-making creatures. We inquire to render the world around us rationally intelligible. From an anthropological perspective, then, naturalism’s “charm” (see Stroud 1996) consists in appealing to our basic cognitive drive to render reality discursively manageable. Under such a conception of naturalism, the idea of bringing into question such an orientation of thinking, one which taps into our need as a species to rationally make sense of things, seemingly countenances blocking the way of inquiry. This would be anathematic to the very function of philosophical reflection, leaving *reality* not only discursively inaccessible, but also leaving us radically alienated from our *own* nature. Furthermore, naturalism is not just charming at the primitive anthropological-psychological level; naturalism is also appealing because of just how successful and emancipatory the natural sciences have undeniably been. Questioning naturalism, then, would be tantamount to disputing the remarkable epistemic successes of physicists, chemists, and biologists. As C.S. Peirce famously wrote, “[a] man must be downright crazy to deny that science has made many true discoveries” (Pierce 1992: II, 217).

However, the charm of the monistic vision's dialectically integrated single, unified, coherent naturalistic image is unmasked as pathologically bewitching: Peirceish – “our more straitlaced” cousin – occupies the centre here, and its naturalistic categories are the products of the domination, not revelation, of nature. The enriched and completed naturalism of the ideal SI is not as innocent as Sellars makes it out to be.

Sellars is held back from following through his Adornian intellectual disposition at the conclusion of EPM by valorising manageability, by his advocacy of “[t]he primacy of totality over phenomenality” (1973: 303). In disfavouring paradox, seeking fairly neat solutions, and glorifying smooth integration, one is not discursively protected against the damage to forms of cognitive life. Disfavouring paradox, seeking fairly neat solutions, and glorifying smooth integration comprises “the defamation of alternative modes of thought which contradict the established universe of discourse” (Marcuse 2002: 178).

That Sellars holds himself back reveals some type of anxiety, perhaps even a fear of “radically new forms of sense-making” (Moore 2012: 192), a fear of creativity, a fear of the unmanageable, a reactionary disposition to genuinely challenging and even overcoming the discursive *status quo*.³¹ The ‘efforts to break out of discourse to an *arché* beyond discourse’ “would be the concept of an open dialectic – in contrast to the closed dialectic of idealism” (ID: 21). Taken this way, when Christias (2018a: 1317) asks if it is “plausible to suggest that our conception of what we really are is bound to be *necessarily* fragmented?”, from the Adornian perspective I have advocated, the answer is not just that it is plausible, but that it is *true*. As Jerry Fodor (1997: 162) writes, “[y]ou may find that perplexing; you certainly aren’t obliged to like it. But I do think we had all better learn to live with it”. If the Sellarsian stereoscopic vision involves bottling Hegelian wine in naturalistic bottles, the idealist longing for totality results in corking the wine.

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