Emotion and affect in the space of reasons

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Abstract: Wilfrid Sellars's conception of "the space of reasons" makes critical assumptions about what constitutes persons and human uniqueness. Specifically, Sellars assumes that being human is defined through rationality. Although unique to Sellars, defining humans through rationality is an assumption not without its problems. I trace historical and contemporary issues with ignoring emotion and affect in our definition of persons and attempt to reconcile Sellars's commitment to behaviorism with a seeming conflict between rationality and emotion.

Keywords: Wilfrid Sellars; behaviorism; rationality; emotion; affect.

1. *Introduction*

Although known for a conception of persons defined through the space of reasons, Wilfrid Sellars was not the only mid-20th century philosopher to locate rationality as the defining characteristic of humanity. Grace de Laguna, Susanne Langer, and others denied the immediacy of awareness, endorsed versions of behaviorism, and argued that rationality was a (if not the) mark of the mental. Where these philosophers depart from Sellars, though, concerns what, exactly, picks out the essence of persons. For Sellars, the game of giving and asking for reasons is foundational for understanding the concept of personhood. To be a person is to be caught up in a web of practical and theoretical reasoning, moral and behavioral commitments, and "common sense" categories through which we experience the world. Characterizing persons without these categories fails to capture something crucial about what it is to be human. We just are the kinds of creatures that use these categories to experience and understand our world. And this characterization is not an individualistic account of persons; our role as members of a community (subject to the norms and conceptual inheritance of the group) is defining. The ability to see oneself through a uniquely human lens presupposes a sense in which we can see our-

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selves in the same light as others. To be a person is not to be a solitary reasoner, but to be a part of a community, one where members offer both collective and individual reasons for their behavior.

Failed accounts of human uniqueness are not exactly rare. Linguistic capacity, religious connotations, and morality have fallen to the wayside when characterizing ourselves as part of, yet somehow apart from, nature. Defining ourselves through reason seems like the last bastion for human uniqueness. Sellars's space of reasons is not a move against naturalism, yet there is a resistance to characterizing human practices as anything but rational. For creatures so strongly defined by our relationship to reason, we clearly do a poor job acting on, or for, reasons. Nonetheless, Sellars's account of persons requires a sense of rationality at both the individual and social level.

In what follows I explore neglected alternatives to Sellars's anchoring of persons to rationality. My contention is that the focus on reason or reason-giving as *the* defining characteristic of human experience has blinded us to alternative characterizations. This blind spot becomes most apparent when looking at notions of emotion, affect, collective reasoning, and group membership. Instead of characterizing the defining aspect of individuals and groups in terms of reason, the emotional and affective element should be seen as a key part of who we are. Sellars's depiction of persons, while leaving room for notions of emotion and affect, is largely silent on the issue. I am not suggesting that a Sellarsian account of persons is incapable of accounting for emotion or affect, but that current scholarship has ignored these aspects of experience in favor of rationality. More so, we have overlooked what was then-contemporary alternatives to Sellars's views (alternatives that also endorsed the importance of rationality, groups, and behaviorism when defining persons).

de Laguna functions as a historical alternative to Sellars because both philosophers were faced with the same cluster of intellectual developments, yet drew different conclusions from them: attempts to combine behaviorism, an emphasis on the social, and a naturalistic picture of persons led both philosophers down different roads. This historical connection supports my contention that Sellars's conception of persons is not an inevitable conclusion based on his endorsement of behaviorism, naturalism, and the social. de Laguna's shift in perspective might bring something valuable, yet overlooked, to a discussion of persons on both an individual and collective level.

2. *Human uniqueness and the space of reasons*

Although Sellars's conception of the space of reasons is primarily discussed in relation to his essay "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind",

his early distinction between human and non-human animals defines persons through rationality. Sellars is clear we should see a difference between non-human animal responses to environmental stimuli and the kind of rational choices made by human agents. Sellars draws a distinction between tied behavior ("learned responses to environmental stimuli") and free behavior that tracks the difference between humans and other creatures (Sellars 1949/2005: 122). While both human and non-human animals are conditioned to respond to environmental stimuli (either through brute habituation or social enculturation), only persons make use of symbol-laden activity, which constitutes the intellectual vision of our world. It is rule-regulated behavior that dominates Sellars's conception of persons: "To say that man is a rational animal, is to say that man is a creature not of *habits*, but of *rules*" (Sellars 1949/2005: 123).

There is a clear difference between emotional and rational characterization of animals. Emotion is reactive and involuntary. Insofar as I am emotional about something, I do not choose to be so (although I can choose to endorse my reactions to some experience and, with suitable practice, temper them). Reason, on the other hand, is at least partially intentional. In Sellars's philosophy this can be seen in the distinction between tied and free behavior. Though not his motivation for drawing the distinction, this distinction easily cleaves between emotional and rational characterizations of non-human animals and persons. Emotions are tied to stimuli and reactive.[1] Reasoning concerns my *choice* to think about things in a certain way (a choice I tend not to have when it comes to *feeling* angry or joyous). The characterization of persons as free and rational commits us to an intimate connection between both concepts. My ability to act because of reasons, instead of in accordance with them, signals a kind of humanity over nature.

Sellars's conception of persons in the manifest image is shot through with the idea that giving and asking for reasons is the hallmark of human practices. Insofar as we are concerned with articulating a conception of persons *from within* our "common sense"[2] image of the world, the categories and concepts through which we recognize others as rational are pivotal for human experi-

[1] Being reactive, though, does not mean being free of constraint by social and moral norms. Diaz and Reuter (2021) argue for the inherently normative character of emotions. Barrett (2018) argues viewing emotions as purely reactive misconstrues a sense of control we have over our emotions.

[2] As exhaustively noted by those writing on Sellars, the manifest image is not just an articulation of common sense, but a sophisticated, idealized image of the categories and practices through which we navigate the world. More helpfully juxtaposed against a purely scientific view of persons, the manifest image (in this instance) is being used as the sole perspective from which to discuss persons.

ence.[3] Given this, Sellars's analysis of practical engagement with the world does not really address any sense of emotional episodes, affective engagement, or embodiment.[4] It is not that emotion is completely absent; pains, desires, and feelings all make minor appearances, but only as ancillary considerations. One might think of sensations as covering emotions (as any emotional or affective element is felt, and said feeling is a sensation of something), but classifying emotions as sensations does not clarify the issue. Sellars's discussion of sensation is based on a perceptual model of the senses: sensations are caused by, or connected to, external stimuli in ways substantially different than emotions. While both visual sensations of objects and facial expressions involve becoming perceptually aware of external stimuli, the visual sensation of perceiving objects is drastically different from experiencing nostalgia or anxiety. We might see sensations as components of emotion, but they do not exhaust the concept.

The space of reasons need not be characterized as always containing explicit reason-giving practices. Sellars's characterization of humans *qua* the space of reasons turns on our *ability* to offer reasons for our behavior and to act *because* of them, but this does not mean all behavior involves an explicit practice of reason-giving. In the epistemic dimension of human practices, the role of reason is clear enough: insofar as we're making claims about what we know, what others know, what's true and what's false, prescribing a central role for reason-giving is a hallmark of epistemic practices.[5] Even if we take epistemic behavior as only a matter of reasoning, this does not disqualify emotional and affective considerations from our understanding of human cognition. Recent empirical research[6] has pointed out that the traditional, perceptual model of the relationship between reasoning, judgement, and emotion gets the order of

[3] Or at least one assumes so. Sellars say nothing about why we ought to privilege reason over all other options. The ease of which this assumption is accepted in Sellars's philosophy could be explained by the previous (and perhaps current) preoccupation with language. Given that Sellars's philosophy is mainly (if not exclusively) concerned with articulating an academic, and somewhat myopic, conception of persons, this doesn't mean other concepts or experiences do not play a major role in our lives.

[4] For example, Sellars's long discussion of moral and practical reasoning in the concluding chapter of Sellars 1967 says nothing about these issues. An extended and complex discussion of practical reason supports the very notion of what is it to be a person here, but little is said of emotional or affective states themselves.

[5] Rationality as the defining characteristic of persons is not only found in Sellars's work, but is pervasive throughout his intellectual descendants. John McDowell (1994), Robert Brandom (1994), and Joseph Rouse (2015) all emphasize the normative, rationally-constrained dimension of human cognition as defining for persons. There is little to no discussion of emotion and affect in their central works. Although de Laguna does not disagree with this view, she does provide a more robust role for emotion and affect in her work.

[6] For a summary of research surrounding affective realism see Barrett 2018, chapter four.

explanation wrong: it is not that reasoning and perception shape emotion and affect, but vice versa. Our emotional and affective states inherently shape our reasoning and judgment about issues. While there may be some conceptual room in Sellars's philosophy for this view, it seems unlikely to find a home.

Morality is traditionally the clearest place in human agency where emotion plays a central role. One finds Sellars's most robust (albeit still thin) discussion of emotion in his moral writings. Yet, Sellars relegates emotion to a causal or phenomenological role: emotion or affect boil down to aspects of motivation, they're part of the causal story behind our actions, or they're used in descriptions of moral experience. What is really doing the work, one imagines, is the "logic" behind one being caused to behave in specific ways. While emotion is a relevant consideration for Sellars (insofar as it plays some role in moving individuals to act), it is not the primary consideration when discussing morality.

Notice how the centrality of moral *reasoning* is already presupposed in Sellars's account of morality. This assumption makes sense if we are *starting* from the idea that moral reasoning is the primary concept in play for morality, but this serves as an unjustified starting point. There is a quasi-historical explanation available to us: Sellars frames morality as juxtaposed between intuitionist and emotivist conceptions of morality. These theories address emotion and affect, but fail to capture anything unique about morality through such concepts. This, in part, seems to be Sellars's motivation for thinking feeling isn't an adequate identifier for human morality. In addition, Sellars's adoption and modification of a Kantian conception of morality essentially guarantees the marginalization of emotion and affect. Take Sellars's discussion of obligation and motivation: there is a clear bifurcation between moral reasoning about obligation and any felt sense of responsibility. What is doing the work in his account of obligation is the "logical" structure of emotions and their role in rule-following (Sellars 1951). "Feeling obligated" is mentioned as a subject of empirical psychology, but this seems to badly misconstrue how ethical practices function within the manifest image. How emotion and affect shape moral experiences, guide and inform our actions, allow for and maintain relationships that constitute our ethical lives, and shape what it is to be contextually and rationally sensitive to morally salient considerations are all missing.

As another example, take Sellars's conception of materially valid inferences.[7] When thinking about moral experience, why start from the premise

[7] See Koons 2019, chapters 10 and 11 for an excellent exploration of this issue in relation to moral reasoning. Insofar as McDowell's solution to the "Humean problem" of moral motivation allows for a combination of emotion and reasoning, his solution is much closer to what I am proposing here. That being said, relegating emotion to a motivational role minimizes the far-reaching consequences of taking emotion and affect as human categories seriously.

that our actions arise as a result of some form of reasoning in isolation from emotional or affective elements? Insofar as I feel strongly compelled to intervene in a moral situation, I act. The phenomenology is instructive; even if my actions are guided by moral reasoning, it is unclear how, why, or when it comes into play. What moves me, in a literal and figurative sense, is the affective nature of being compelled to act. In experience, these aren't separate impulses, but simply what is found in human experience. It is, at best, a historical mistake to think reason-giving is separable from emotion and dominant within us. But even a discussion of emotion and affect in these cases is not simplistic. What caused me to intervene? The spectrum of emotional states and affective experiences is broad, perhaps guilt, perhaps anxiety or obligation. Infrequently, one imagines, it is moral reasoning or actions explicitly guided by principles that move us. Following Barrett, how the emotional and affective coloring of our experiences impacts reasoning is both absent in a reason-centric picture of persons and largely unexplored.

One objection might be that an emphasis on the role of emotions overlooks the rational nature of moral behavior. This is to reject my suggestions about emotion on the grounds that such seemingly immediate, non-deliberative action cannot be rational and, therefore, cannot be moral.[8] But this conflates acting for reasons with what picks out specifically moral behavior. As virtue theorist have argued since Aristotle, much moral behavior demands sensitivity to others and morally salient features of our experience, neither of which requires us to reason about issues. Frequently, doing the right thing is found in being sensitive to the right phenomena (which are not necessarily *considerations*). We can reconstruct this issues along reason-giving lines, but why should we?

The concept of persons present within this picture is, for the lack of better phrase, *hollow*. While Sellars's account of obligation may capture structural issues of morality, it fails to account for the lived, affective element that makes morality itself possible. We can, somewhat obviously, have abstract conceptions of morality that capture some dimension of moral reasoning. One's theory need not cover *all* aspects of morality. The problem is that a vision of morality that fails to include emotional elements risks creating a kind of fiction. To act as if one can explore the structural or logical aspects of morality without considering the role emotion plays in shaping our reasoning overlooks a crucial part of our experience (moral or otherwise). The conception of persons one gets out of this account perpetuates the idea that the moral or percep-

[8] Various moral psychologists have pushed back against the idea that rationality is the "mark of the mental". See Hindrinks and Sauer 2020 for summaries and arguments surrounding psychological rationalism.

tual dimensions of persons can be articulated without substantive reference to emotions and their impact on our conceptual capacities.

A Sellarsian response to this might be that affective states are simply folded into causal explanations of agency. *Of course* we feel something when reasoning about our obligations, but this felt state of awareness is both conceptually-laden and simply part of the causal story behind knowing. What is "really" doing the work is the reason-giving (though some felt state of awareness constitutes a necessary, though not sufficient condition for experience). Yet, this doesn't work as a defense of Sellars. Emotional states cannot simply be folded into a causal story without completely ignoring advances in conceptions of reasoning and emotion, as well as an important dimension of what marks human experience as uniquely human. Getting away from a traditional construal of emotions, one that not only places them in the backseat of knowing but ignores their constitutive role in reasoning itself, suggests that emotion cannot be put to the wayside.

Defining our conception of persons through the bifurcation of reason and emotion mistakenly drains all emotional and affective elements from morality. This can be seen clearly in Robert Binkley's discussion of how we ought to think of practical reasoning:

> The conception of logic as the science of reason needs perhaps a further comment. Reason exists only in reasoning, reasoning exists only in thinking, and only souls think, so logic in this sense is a kind of psychology. But it is a special kind of psychology for which some such special name as "rational psychology" had better be employed. This is to emphasize that while this logic is concerned with the forms of thought, it is concerned with them not as they reveal themselves to introspection, nor as they are manifested in behavior, nor even as they are related to physio-logical processes, but rather as they are reconstructed when we seek to represent our thought as rational. (Binkley 1965: 424)

Binkley's description of practical reasoning is instructive.[9] When held against Sellars's conception of moral and practical reasoning, Binkley's description provides an explicit methodological statement that is reflected in Sellars's philosophy. If we are constructing what moral and practical reason look like, not as actually practiced but as *imagined* as rational, then such an ideal-

[9] Why is Binkley's approach to practical reason important for understanding Sellars's view? As is clear in drafts of his "Imperatives, Intentions, and the Logic of 'Ought'", Sellars's discussion of practical reasoning – especially the sense in which it functions as a kind of rational reconstruction – is inspired by Binkley's work on the issue. See an early draft of Sellars's article at <https://digital.library.pitt.edu/islandora/object/pitt%3A31735062219211>

ized form of theorizing can be cut loose from emotional and affective bonds. This gives us an utterly rational depiction of persons, one that frames morality as an issue of acting from principles.[10] But notice, this is an *assumption* found in Sellars's philosophy. And this assumption is grounded in the notion that our primary engagement with morality is through reasoning. This doesn't preclude the inclusion of emotion and affect, but it denies the importance of such concepts. This is not done from an argumentative or evidential standpoint but is problematically assumed from the start – it is baked directly into Sellars's conception of persons.

The blind spot in Sellarsian accounts of persons just is the assumption that we can adequately describe or explain moral experience, meaningful experience, intentional thought, or any variety of uniquely human experiences as somehow devoid or absent of emotion and affect. Sellars's discussion of sensations is robust, but it is unlikely one could just extend that model to cover emotions and affect. The larger issue is that giving our emotional and affective experiences a more prominent place in characterizing human experience impacts our understanding of persons. There are more specific arguments that cast doubt on a traditional understanding of reason-giving as the primary explainer of specifically human behavior, but there is also the metaphysical issue of how we see ourselves. If constructivist accounts of emotion are correct, such as the ones found in Barrett's work, then we cannot make sense of an account of perception that is devoid of such supplementation. While Sellars leaves room for the inclusion of emotional and affective states in his picture of cognition, there is less room for a view of persons that is redefined by this change.

3. *Historical interlude*

The issue we are concerned with is not how reason became a defining feature of persons, per se; reason plays a central role throughout western philosophy's history. Our question is: *does this centrality create a blind spot in our characterization of persons?* Far from conclusive, there is nonetheless a historical narrative that begins to explain the move from 19th century science and philosophy to the position Sellars's found himself in during the mid-20th century. This historical setting matters because it provides *prima facie* evidence for the viability of conceptual and historical alternatives to Sellars's views, but also helps explain why there is a blind spot in Sellars's philosophy. A combination of developments in psychology (the move from introspective to behavioristic psychology) and the naturalization of social concepts (in the recognition of the

[10] See Sellars 1967: 203-205.

importance of collective groups) serve as historical guideposts. The argument here is that while behaviorism's mid-20th century prominence helps explain why Sellars's solely focuses on persons *qua* reasoners, this is by no means an automatic conclusion under behaviorism's momentary ascendancy.[11]

The behavioristic revolution in American psychology shifted emotions away from internal states *qua* intrinsically characterized episodes to a variety of thin and thick accounts of emotion. Some of the earliest behaviorist accounts of emotion can be found in simplistic descriptions of physiological or stimulus-response reactions (e.g. Watson 1919). More complex accounts of emotion, such as found in Edward Tolman (1923; 1932), take into consideration the "meaning" that might be entertained between felt, affective states and external stimuli, but they nonetheless depend on physical or physiological characterizations of emotional states and "unique 'directions' of behavior" to characterize different emotions (Tolman 1932: 268). Although these views entail different conceptions of emotion (albeit by seemingly minor degrees), they are unified against an introspective, intrinsically characterized conception of emotion and affect.[12] While affect is paid some lip service, it is still characterized in brute physical or behavioral terms.[13]

One way the emergence of behaviorism can be characterized is as a move from internal to external characterization of mental states. By "inner characterization" I mean something akin to introspective or "common sense" characterizations of human experience. Classically, insofar as I have an emotional experience, such experiences can be explained or characterized from my first-person standpoint. Physiological and behavioral terms could play some role in individuating emotions, but it is the *experience* of those emotions that defines them. A classic view (perhaps more indicative of philosophy than psychology) of inner episodes is the idea that thoughts and experiences *begin* in my immediate experience and (eventually) work outward to be expressed through language. Given the conceptual shift under behaviorist psychology, mental episodes characterized *from within* become intellectually suspect.

This change is perfectly encapsulated in Sellars's characterization of men-

[11] I am skeptical behaviorism's ascendancy can be classified as "momentary" for Sellars and Sellarsians. See Olen 2018 for an argument about the indispensability of behaviorism to Sellars's philosophy.

[12] For an explicit rejection of introspective accounts of emotion and affect, see Tolman 1932: 266-267.

[13] The history of psychological accounts of emotion is, of course, much more complex than this. One finds arguments about behavioral conditioning versus instinct, the order of physiological causes (i.e., do emotions cause physiological changes or do physiological changes cause emotions), and drastically different uses of "emotion", "feeling", and "affect". As to the latter point, see Dixon 2012 and Russell 2021 for explorations of these semantic differences.

tal episodes through his Rylean myth. Here, we find Sellars characterizing inner episodes through the use of external concepts. Specifically, the idea is that one can account for the introduction and "logic" of our private, inner episodes through public concepts used to describe language, overt behavior, and objects. In the Rylean myth, members of Sellars's mythical community are able to construct notions of inner episodes as modeled on the semantical categories applicable to overt behavior and language (Sellars 1956/2000: 267). This view of characterizing mental states turns on the idea that even states that seem to be intrinsically characterized can be given a public, intersubjective basis that is then internalized to play a reporting role for our experiences. Sellars is not rejecting the idea that we do introspect, but modifying such a notion to be consistent with behaviorism (Sellars 1956/2000: 264). Instead of starting from immediate, ostensibly unmediated, experiences and moving outward, Sellars's insight is that external concepts become internalized in order to classify and report our experiences. Behaviorism has no issue with introspection and internal episodes insofar as their occurrence is evidenced on behavioral grounds (Sellars 1962/1963: 22).

In light of psychology's conceptual shift, Sellars's modeling of inner episodes on external speech and behavior leads directly to a characterization of persons *qua* reasoners.[14] Insofar as we are modeling thought on speech, there is a unified structure and rationality behind the norm-governed use and intersubjective exchange of language. If thought is modeled on such an exchange, it stands to reason thought embodies the same structure found in natural language (or, at least, our explanation of thought invokes the same structural features). Given this line of reasoning, it is clear why Sellars and many of his contemporaries could be convinced of both the unified nature of practical reasoning and the second-class status of emotion.

Why think an intersubjective characterization of persons accurately depicts our experience of the world? This is a fairly complex question within Sellars's philosophy, as the accuracy of one's view will partially depend on the framework from within which we're discussing persons. There is no doubt Sellars thinks such concepts belong within the manifest image conception of "persons-in-the-world". Understanding behaviorism as a methodological restriction on concept formation helps explain any move away from internal characterizations of mental states.

Behavioristic commitments do not automatically entail the enshrining of

[14] With its emphasis on habit, one might think behaviorism is not an ideal candidate to embody persons *qua* reasoning. But it is the potent combination of behaviorism and Sellars's emphasis on language as *the* model for inner episodes that creates a conceptual blind spot.

reason or intentional thought over emotional states. de Laguna, for example, entertained both behaviorism and a complex conception of emotion and affect.[15] While earlier behavioristic treatments of emotion were somewhat simplistic, de Laguna (1919) offers a more complex explanation of emotional life rooted in behavioristic psychology. It is not that de Laguna initially tells a different story about emotion than most behaviorists; emotion and affect are still characterized in physiological and behavioral terms (de Laguna 1919: 418). What is different in de Laguna's case (and what functions as an entry point for a different behavioristic perspective) concerns the role emotion would play in characterizing human actions. Specifically, de Laguna makes an extended case for emotion and affect as a kind of unifying experience between human and non-human animals. Most forcefully seen in its role in collective integration and obligation (discussed below), emotion and affect drive our decision-making, motivation, and reasoning.

de Laguna does not ignore cognition or rationality as integral aspects of humanity. Despite emphasizing affect's role in cognition and obligation, de Laguna's view is still indicative of a traditional emphasis on rationality; she is clear that reason is the defining characteristic of persons (de Laguna 1927: 138). That being said, to juxtapose our choices between emotion and rationality as an exclusive disjunction presents us with a false dilemma. The point I am making by briefly mentioning de Laguna's position is that one can characterize persons as driven and characterized by emotion and affect, and *then* articulate a role for rationality.[16] Such an account does not contradict the use of external concepts for internal reporting roles nor an adherence to behaviorism. Even though rationality played an outsized role in characterizing persons, *it need not*.

Does this amount to a blind spot in Sellars's work? Despite the view of persons embodied in behaviorism, there are historical alternatives that create a more robust role for emotion in characterizations of persons. While Sellars's use of external speech and behavior as a model for inner episodes helps explain the move away from considering emotion as a dominant category for human experience, such explanations lose a bit of luster when considering alternative possibilities. The shift from introspective to behavioristic psychology

[15] Both de Laguna and Sellars insisted on the methodological character of behaviorism in strikingly similar terms. See Sellars 1956/2000: 263-266 and de Laguna 1927: 123-126.

[16] de Laguna's views are being presented as a "historical" alternative in the sense that her views were live options during Sellars's lifetime. This matters because one might think Sellars's views are, in some sense, an inevitability giving his cluster of commitments and historical epoch (e.g., to a Kantian sense of morality, to a form of behaviorism). This is simply not true, as de Laguna's philosophy exhibits.

does not require abandoning emotion in favor of reason when classifying persons. But once we decide that intrinsic characterization of mental states is out of play, combined with using overt behavior as the model for inner episodes, one begins to see why emotion plays such a minor role in Sellars's philosophy.

I say all of this not to offer a conclusive historical lens through which to see Sellars's conception of persons. Sellars, perhaps more than most, is resistant to being understood from just one perspective. Instead, I am arguing that the currents of intellectual history align in such a way that to overlook this conceptual development is all but impossible. The potent combination of behaviorism's movement from inner to outer characterization of concepts and the abstraction from actual human practices blinds us to alternatives.[17] This occurs not just on the level of individuals but can be seen even in broad conceptions of collective membership and obligation – both crucial notions for Sellars's conception of persons.

4. *Individuals and groups*

Sellars's conception of persons presupposes a normative framework of group membership. In Kantian fashion, Sellars's depiction of individuals rests upon a foundation of collective reasoning that supports moral, social, and epistemic practices. The principles and claims of practical reason, which both characterize human agency and account for our actions and obligations, arise out of the relationship between individuals and their communities. From Sellars's standpoint, insofar as I am interested in explaining the "logic" behind "I ought to do x", one cannot do so without some reference to "We ought to do x". Individual statements of obligation presuppose collective statements of obligation, while collective statements of obligation entail individual obligations.

What is important for our purposes is that Sellars defines group membership not just as thinking of oneself as part of a group, but in *reasoning as part of a group*.[18] Although Sellars does mention individual attitudes potentially being dependent on group attitudes, the primary way to think about being a member of a group comes from intentional thought: "I wish to emphasize that when the concept of a group is "internalized" as the concept of *us, it becomes a form of consciousness* and, in particular, a form of intending" (Sellars 1965: 203). This idea of a collective consciousness avoids being a naturalistically suspect group mind by internalizing the concept of a group. The metaphysical status of a collective,

[17] I've made similar arguments when it comes to Sellars's conception of language as well (see Olen 2016, especially chapters five and six).

[18] See Sellars 1962/1963: 39.

then, plays less of a problematic role in characterizing individual thought. Being part of a group means thinking and intending in a particular way.

As is the case with individual thought, we should question exactly why the focus is on reasoning, thinking, or intending when it comes to the relationship between individuals and their communities. Collective emotions, at least on the surface, are no more naturalistically suspect than collective intentions. There are a number of different ways in which we can think of collective emotions. There is the simple experience of being with others; a sense of togetherness that can foster collective feelings of comfort, relief, and safety. There is a sense of shared history or trauma that can dictate actions and reasoning about a variety of issues. All of these examples are largely emotional experiences with strong affective components. While reasoning or intending are a part of them, it would be odd to reduce traumatic experiences to "thinking of trauma as one of us".[19]

There are various ways of feeling like part of a community. Feeling pride in the idea that "we won the World Series" when the Tampa Bay Rays finally pull it off is a by-product of being part of a specific group. Red Sox's fans being angry – as a community – about their bitter loss can be embodied in individuals. But it isn't just the individual Red Sox fan being angry; it makes a substantial difference that *we* are angry about the Red Sox's loss. And, following Sellars's reasoning about disagreement within a group, one could paradoxically be part of a group, yet feel different from the group itself. The salient feature of collective emotions *qua* a shared, affective sense is (much like Sellars's idea of collective consciousness) the idea that *we* feel angry, happy, or prideful about a certain experience or event.

Representing these experiences as instances of reasoning or intending completely misunderstands the nature of those experiences. We *could* represent the process that leads to the exclamation "We won the pennant!" as the culmination of formally or materially valid inferences, as well as an intimate connection between intention and action, but that fails to capture both the emotional and affective dimensions of those experiences. More so, those experience simply would not be those experiences without the emotional and affective dimension. Reasoning alone cannot capture the salient features of our experiences as persons and members of a community.

One can see the same kind of difference within morality as well. Much like in the case of reasoning, there is all the difference in the world between whether I find something wrong and when we find something wrong. In the latter case, the *feeling* of general disagreement entails a number of different factors: it might make me more susceptible to agree or disagree with others,

[19] Helm (2014) does an excellent job of discussing the various models of collective emotion.

the fear of public shame might stifle my opinions or even cause me to speak up. Although reasoning can be an important component in these cases, it is unclear that reasoning is my primary reaction to these scenarios.

My point is not that collective intentionality fails to capture an important part of human cognition. Nor am I arguing that we should favor collective emotion over collective intentionality. In similar fashion to my discussion of reason and emotion, collective emotions should play a supplemental role in Sellars's philosophy and our understanding of persons. Sellars's views are not incompatible with a notion of collective emotion. Margaret Gilbert's approach to collective emotions (Gilbert 2014), for example, presupposes a normative framework of commitments and obligations in order to make sense of a non-summative account of collective emotions.[20] This framework depicts collective emotions as immersed within a network of social commitments and entitlements. So, there is a sense in which collective emotions fit easily into a Sellarsian framework. If we accept the idea collective emotions would be normatively-guided (i.e., that there is an important sense in which there is a right and wrong way to collectively feel in various instances), then the notion of collective emotion is no more problematic in Sellars's framework than the idea of collection intentionality.

One might argue that since Sellars is concerned with the rational articulation of human experience, emotion (what, as previously mentioned, is taken as a category for empirical psychology) need not play a role in their discussion of collective reasoning or intending. Aside from the fact that this functions exactly as the blind spot I discuss in sections II and III, this overlooks another salient feature of collective emotions: their *non-accidental* nature. To insist on a conception of collective emotion is not to claim some kind of accidental feature, such that you and I just happen to feel the same way about the Red Sox (disgusted by them; perhaps annoyed at their cheating ways). As a fan of the Tampa Bay Rays, I feel a *shared* sense of joy or pride in our crushing of the Red Sox. What marks such an experience is not any sort of collective reasoning about our victory, but *the emotional experience of being part of a group*. Just like reasoning, one expects collective emotions to share certain structural properties in common between individuals, too. Even if we think of collective emotions as found at the group level (i.e., as a kind of emotion that is somehow ascribable to the group itself instead of individuals), one imagines such concepts must be concretely instantiated in individuals at some point. But it would be experiencing or reacting as a member of the group that allows for this emotions to be manifested as collective in individual members of a community.

[20] Tuomela 2013 also contains a brief discussion of collective emotion.

Taking collective emotion as a supplemental, yet important, part of human experience does impact how we view persons. The problem, much like with Sellars's conception of reasoning, is that his initial conception of "group minds" and collective membership is simply devoid of emotional and affective content. We can keep the normative framework encapsulated in Sellars's talk of a "space of reasons", but we cannot do so in isolation from the role emotions play in cognition, behaviorism and our conception of persons.[21]

5. *Historical interlude, part two*

While de Laguna and Sellars wrote during different, yet overlapping, times (de Laguna being a contemporary of Sellars's father more than his peer), both philosophers found their way to the notion of collective intentions and the importance of the community through Emile Durkheim's work. While Stephen Turner and I have discussed Sellars's pathway to an idea of collective consciousness through Durkheim and Celestin Bougle, de Laguna's unique combination of behavioristic psychology and Durkheimian sociology has never been discussed.[22] Although not a mainstay of her work, there is a key passage that makes this connection:

> Behaviorism has interesting points of contact with the doctrine of the sociological school of Durkheim. The thinkers of that school are, to be sure, indifferent to any theoretical consideration of individual psychology, since it is a corner stone of their system that social phenomena are the subject-matter of a wholly independent science. But they are one with the behaviorists in insisting on the necessity of a thoroughly objective treatment of the phenomena in question. Social phenomena are, they admit, psychical and not physical or biological; but this does not imply that they are mental states or processes taking place in 'minds'. So far as '*representations collectives*' are open to scientific study, it is as objectively observable rites and instructions and formulated beliefs. Hence our own claim that the successful treatment of language depends on envisaging it as an objective phenomenon and in the light of its own objective relationships, instead of as a manifestation of inner mental states, is as much in accord with the spirit of Durkheim's sociology as it is with behaviorism.

[21] One assumes such a framework is necessary for any sense of emotion as non-accidental and collective. Stipulating certain connections and structural features of collective emotions only makes sense in the context of some form of normative framework. So, the argument throughout this essay is not that said framework should go away, but that – again – such a framework can only make sense when supplemented by a robust conception of individual and collective emotion.

[22] See Olen and Turner 2015.

> The influence of Durkheim's school on recent writers on linguistics is a significant symptom of a widespread trend of contemporary thought. The essential social character of language is more and more acknowledged and even insisted on in recent contributions to philological and psychological journals. What is lacking so far is the conception of the social *function* of speech. Speech continues to be referred to as the communication of ideas, which is still implicitly regarded as inner processes in individual minds. It would be far more in accord with Durkheim's general theory to regard the *function* of speech equally with the structure of language, as an objective social phenomenon. It is not the least merit of behaviorism that it provides a new view of the phenomena both of society and of the individual and of their interrelations. This does not mean 'reduction' of the one to the other, any more than the general program of behaviorism means a reduction of psychology to biology. (de Laguna 1927: 123-124)

de Laguna saw behaviorism as not only consistent, but adaptable to the notion of a collective consciousness. Both behaviorism and Durkheimian sociology insisted on an objective understanding of persons, one that flipped the traditional order of depending on internal explanations of our mental lives. Moving away from a view of language as an internal mechanism towards the idea of objective characterizations of language and thought is made possible through a combination of behaviorism's externalization of concepts and sociology's explications of the social basis of persons.

Combining behaviorism and the notion of a group mind might initially sound odd. Even in behaviorism's non-reductionist moods, the idea of a shared mind seems to push back against conceptual externalization. But the oddity of this combination makes more sense than it initially appears if one keeps in mind that de Laguna and Sellars 1) saw the chief virtues of behaviorism and social notions in their objective depiction of inner mental life and that 2) As explicitly stated in Sellars (and seemingly implicit in de Laguna's work), the notion of a group mind is simply not naturalistically-suspect under behaviorism's externalization of concept. Insofar as we internalize a notion of what "experiencing as one of us" is from publicly available resources, there is nothing naturalistically alarming.

The philosophical ramifications of these different paths sprouting from behaviorism and Durkheim are significant: despite the linguistic status of persons in a community, de Laguna argues emotion and affect shaped our reciprocal, felt sense of group membership and obligation (de Laguna 1927: 207). It is the *feeling* of compulsion, one potentially cashed out in behavioral terms, which gets the job done of naturalizing a seemingly ethereal entity like the group mind. Sellars, on the other hand, saw reason as amenable to naturalization and consistent with Durkheim's framing. Philosophically speaking, the

important question concerns whether affect or reason should play the central role in understanding a notion of collective agency is fundamentally the issue that falls out of this historical comparison. Sellars, for his part, says very little about affective states that live outside of sensory consciousness.

This conception of felt obligation morphs over de Laguna's career.[23] While she remained consistent about the importance of the affective dimension of our experiences, de Laguna shifted away from discussing these issues through the lens of behaviorism. Instead, one finds her offering broadly metaphysical speculations of human nature and enculturation. Here, one finds de Laguna offering similar arguments about the importance of affect, albeit under slightly different constraints. Affect shows up as an idealized concept under the guide of rationality (one imagines something similar to Gilbert's discussion of emotion), but the role remains the same: one of the most important aspects of group membership is feeling obligated (de Laguna 1963: 174-5). Regardless of these changes, the consistent message of the importance of affective senses of obligation play an important role in who we are. It is not just responding differential or thinking the right way about something, but also feeling "the right away" in response to others.

To be fair to Sellars, de Laguna does not have a substantially developed theory about the relationship between affect, the group, and the individual. Affect plays an intermediate role when moving from the newborn to encultured person. While an affective basis may play as similar role in non-human animals as ourselves, we eventually behaviorally and linguistically respond to social cues that move beyond emotion and affect (de Laguna 1927: 214-215). This is not to say that emotion and affect drop out of the picture once we have become fully socialized creatures, but that we can be conditioned to respond to a variety of stimuli, in a variety of different ways, as mediated through the group. The alternative theory to Sellars, then, is not to replace reason with affect (or to ignore the way in which we become conditioned to respond to different perceptual and linguistic cues where emotion or affect may play a minimal role), but to acknowledge and explore the role emotion and affect play in shaping our socially cultivated form of human cognition.

More so, de Laguna's discussion of emotion and affect does not turn on a conception of collective emotions. While de Laguna is happy to discuss individual experiences of reasoning and emotion, her focus is general on the social basis of individual development. So, much like Sellars, a notion of collective emotion is consistent with de Laguna's understanding of emotion, behaviorism, and the social basis of our world.

[23] I have addressed this point in response to Joel Katzav's work on de Laguna in Olen $2$1.

6. *Conclusion*

In addition to highlighting a neglected alternative, my point has been to explore what we are overlooking when reason-giving takes center-stage. This is not to reject reasoning as *a* characteristic of persons in the manifest image but to show how focusing on reasoning alone overlooks essential aspects of human existence that define who we are. What these objections require is not an abonnement of the space of reasons or complex models of practical inference, but in true Sellarsian fashion, but supplementation from the additional categories of emotion and affect. I have not developed a theory about emotion or affect here, nor have I provided concrete evidence that de Laguna's position would have been a better choice. I have simply pointed out what is a meaningful and problematic oversight in Sellars's approach to persons.

Much of what Sellars is concerned with is the reconstruction of what *rational* human practices might look like. Such projects may find a useful home in both theoretical and practical concerns, but why think we should privilege this concern over phenomenology? Or why think that such an analysis must focus on reason to the detriment of all else? It is the presumption that reason plays a, if not *the*, central role in our experience that anchors such an assumption. More so, it is the conceptual space made by eliminating the connection between analysis and actual practices that makes room for a notion of reason devoid of emotion and affect.

But the empirical and conceptual points are only part of the picture. The fact that historical alternatives are present in mid-20 century philosophy, the fact that one could see a different path that would have offered a vital role for emotion to play in cognition and agency, is telling about our understanding of persons and their histories. Sections III and V, perhaps seeming disjointed with the conceptual arguments that run throughout the rest of the article, serve the purpose of showing how we can accept some of the best parts of Sellars's theories without giving in to a conception of persons that is hollow. Within their historical context, Sellars and de Laguna represent a set of shared premises – behavioristic commitments with a social twist – that led in different directions. These alternatives help show that we can keep the best parts of Sellars's theories while expanding his conception of persons to more fully account for the emotional elements of our experiences.

How we characterize persons does not carve nature at its joints, but it does substantially more than offer a socially constructed classification of individuals. Metaphysical concerns aside, the moral, political, and existential implications of this definition – while not fully realized within Sellars's philosophy – are pernicious. Holding a model of persons that focuses on theoretical and

practical reasoning misconstrues how we experience the world. Even if complex models of practical reason explain or characterize human behavior, it is unclear how such models graph onto our actual practices. The hope is that this paper functions more like a challenge than a full-blown argument. As Jeremy Koons and others have shown, Sellars's account of persons, practical reason, and ethics have much to contribute to the greater philosophical conversation – a contribution that is still overlooked. But Sellars's conception of persons needs supplementation; the emotional and affective elements at play in our experiences (or, better yet, that partially constitute those experiences) are simply absent in Sellars's philosophy, which leaves us with a diminished conception of persons.

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