

Introduction

Danilo Manca, Giacomo Turbanti

At the end of his essay *Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man*, Wilfrid Sellars famously insists on the need to integrate the categorial framework of contemporary sciences with the conceptual framework of persons. The former is characterized by the languages of scientific theories, whose objects are theoretical and whose explanations are postulational. The latter is characterized by the language of community and individual intentions, whose objects are manifest and whose explanations are normative.

Since Sellars' original diagnosis, the clash of the two conceptual frameworks has grown more and more dramatic. On the one hand, the very legitimacy of the manifest image of common sense through which individuals share their intentions and project their actions is threatened by the reductionist claim of objectivity of the scientific image. On the other hand, by obliterating the normativity of the framework of persons, the scientific image risks offering a representation of the world devoid of the reasons and justifications that could be incorporated into our everyday life.

This Focus proposes looking at this problem from a metaphilosophical point of view, and embarking on an investigation of the different metaphysics, epistemologies and logics that characterize the two different conceptual frameworks. Such an investigation will hopefully unveil the peculiarity of the conceptual framework of persons for other views of the world and illuminate to what extent the acknowledgement of this peculiarity contributes to the reflection the philosophical inquiry dedicates to its specific practice and conditions.

The word “metaphilosophy” is often criticized, even by those who launched it. Timothy Williamson (2007: IX) rejected it because “metaphilosophy sounds as though it might try to look down on philosophy from above or beyond”, while the philosophical reflection on the activity of philosophizing is “automatically part of philosophy”. Richard Rorty (1992: 374) already pointed out that “questions about the method of philosophy”, or “the nature

of philosophical problems” are “likely to prove unprofitable”. Equally skeptical, Bernard Williams (2006: 169) radically excluded that philosophy is “at its most interesting when it is talking about itself”. More generally, going back to the original meaning of the term “philosophy”, one could legitimately assert that philosophy is always accompanied by reflection on itself precisely insofar as it is intent on seeking truth, wisdom, virtue. And yet, as McGinn (2002: 199) emphasized, the inquiry into the nature of philosophy is “perhaps the most undeveloped part of philosophy”.

By explicitly adopting a metaphilosophical approach to the investigation of the conceptual frameworks of persons, we aim to show that the act of positing itself as the subject of investigation is not self-referential, not a moment in which philosophy suspends any investigation of the world; on the contrary, we intend to show that any investigation philosophy develops, is also, inevitably a stance on what philosophy is. Metaphilosophy is therefore an approach that pays attention to a practice that is always at stake in the act of philosophizing, but often remains unexpressed: that of defining oneself to be able to tackle the problems that arise from time to time.

The metaphilosophical investigation on the conceptual framework of the person can be addressed from different points of view and different philosophical traditions. This collection alone features authors and contributions variously linked to pragmatism, phenomenology, the analytic philosophy and critical theory. Quite interestingly, this sort of investigation favors the merging of diverse approaches and the development of more comprehensive and conscious perspectives.

In the first contribution, Giacomo Turbanti describes the semantic implications of the clash between the images as a metaphilosophical problem. He argues that while the clash has often been discussed with regard to its ontological impingements, it should be seen instead as generated by the incompatibility between the two different collections of categories that articulate the conceptual frameworks of what Sellars called the manifest image and the scientific image. As a consequence, he suggests, the clash can be understood as raising two important questions. The first one is about what categories should be adopted for representing the world. The second one is whether philosophy is entitled to those categories or should better give up on the task of representing the world entirely. The latter question is particularly problematic in the context of Sellars’ characterization of the “perennial” tradition in philosophy as endorsing the manifest image as real and the concept of a person as the foundation of the normativity of the space of reasons.

Sellars however also thought that the concept of a person as a subject of ought-to-do-rules could be integrated in the scientific image by undergoing a

semantic process of recategorization. David Landy's paper is devoted to the analysis of how Sellars developed his notion of person by confronting Kant and the problems of the Transcendental Deduction. Landy draws a parallel between the Kantian recognition of the analytic unity of apperception and the Sellarsian view that rule-governed practical reasoning depends on the unity of the subject of such reasoning. However, Kant also maintained that the analytic unity of apperception is possible only under the presupposition of a certain synthetic unity, which in turn requires the definition of a collection of categories as the fundamental rules of synthesis. While Landy argues that Sellars ultimately follows Kant also in accepting the synthetic unity of apperception as the condition of any representation of an object, the question remains whether the categories of the scientific image are suitable to provide the rules for the appropriate synthesis.

In his paper, Carl Sachs explores the extent in which behavioristic psychology and cybernetics could have inspired Sellars in envisioning a path for the recategorization of the concept of a person in the scientific image. Sachs describes Sellars in his early work as searching for a non-psychological (or, better, a psychologically correct) way to naturalize Kant's idea of epistemology as a synthetic *a priori* enterprise. His methodological adoption of pragmatism and behaviorism should be read in alignment with this strategy. The mature conception of this strategy hinges on the notion of "picturing", which is a key element of the Sellarsian account of intentionality in the scientific image. Sachs argues that Sellars would have developed this notion by reflecting on the cybernetic theory. According to what he calls "cybernetic behaviorism", how a cognitive system produces representations of the world is determined and cannot be understood independently of the complex material dynamic of feedback interactions between the system and its environment. Sachs suggests that a naturalization of normativity could be pursued by integrating this cybernetic analysis of intentionality with an account of how multiple systems could triangulate their behavior and coordinate with each other. According to this account a person could be recategorized in the scientific image as a cybernetic system that can reciprocally triangulate its behavior with other such systems.

The determination of the appropriate collection of categories with which representations of the world are produced in the scientific image is not the only subject that generates metaphilosophical problems about the conceptual framework of persons. This is obviously because persons are not simply representational systems. The next couple of essays discuss the emotional dimension of persons and the problem of investigating affectivity from a metaphilosophical perspective.

Peter Olen draws an interesting parallel between Sellars' mostly rationalistic characterization of human behavior as being governed by conceptual norms in the space of reasons and de Laguna's alternative conception that, while sharing relevant thematic and historical connections with the Sellarsian enterprise, reevaluates the roles of emotions and affects in the definition of persons. Olen focuses on moral actions and notices that Sellars ultimately provides an account of morality in which emotions are only considered as states that contribute to a causal explanation of agency. What is interesting of de Laguna's approach, in Olen's view, is that he managed to ground an account of the emotional dimension in the same behavioristic psychology that Sellars exploited instead as a methodology for a more comprehensive account of the intentionality of inner states. Behaviorism allowed him to work with the concept of a group mind in a naturalistic framework and describe the impact of emotions on those felt obligations that shape our social cognition.

Ingrid Vendrell Ferran explores Max Scheler's metaphilosophical view, by focusing on his thesis according to which philosophical knowledge presupposes a moral attitude. Scheler sees the philosophical attitude as determined by an act of upsurge that invests the entire personality of who she wants to be, or means herself as, a philosopher. At first, Vendrell Ferran focuses on Scheler's conviction that focusing on the type of person a philosopher will allow us to find out the nature of the object of philosophy itself. After emphasizing the sharp difference that, by contrast to Husserl, Scheler considers to exist between sciences (rigorously in the plural) and philosophy, understood as the capacity of intuiting essences, Vendrell Ferran deals with love, self-humbling, and self-mastery as the moral preconditions of philosophical knowledge. She criticized Scheler's essentialism insofar as it presupposes the adhesion to controversial metaphysical claims and proposed a reinterpretation of this affective categories in the terms of the debate on virtue epistemology.

The last two articles tackles the metaphilosophical issues underlying the essay *Philosophy and Scientific Image of Man*, i.e. the idea that "the aim of philosophy, abstractly formulated, is to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hand together in the broadest possible sense of the term" (Sellars 1963: 1). The attempt at elaborating a stereoscopic view of both the conceptual framework of persons and that of sciences, without reconciling the manifest and the scientific image of man, is rooted in this thesis.

Daniilo Manca takes part in the thriving debate on the match and mismatch between Sellars and Husserl with a metaphilosophical aim: to assess whether the Husserlian notion of "life-world" could be helpful for a philosophical theory that assigns a primacy to the scientific view of the world (as

Sellars did) when it comes to establish what exists, and accordingly, what “reality means”. After excluding that the elaboration of a theory of the life-world necessarily entails the endorsement of the primacy of the manifest over the scientific image of the human being in the world, Manca introduces the standard Copenhagen version of the quantum physics to defend a pragmatic conception of realism. This allows Manca to contest two assumptions made by Sellars: the first is that reality cannot be conceived as stratified, the second is that the term “phenomenon” has to be understood exclusively in the supposedly Kantian sense of “illusory appearance”. Danilo Manca shows that an abandonment of these two assumptions by a postulational attitude brings Sellars’ and Husserl’s perspective closer together, provided that we challenge Husserl’s conviction that the “technization” of scientific inquiry entails a philosophical regress of the image of nature.

In the last essay of this Focus Paul Giladi argues that in his attempt at integrating stereoscopically in one unified and coherent image the conceptual framework of persons with a “Perceish” discourse, which construes everything in a purely naturalistic descriptive terms, what Sellars has carried out is to adopt a “*negative* dialectical resolution” of the clash between the manifest and the scientific images of man in the world. Following O’Shea and Christias, Giladi holds that Sellars’ stereoscopic vision is construed as a functionalist naturalism integrated by a normative approach, insofar as persons are seen as logically irreducible but causally reducible to the descriptive categories of science. After reconstructing the peculiarity of Adorno’s conception of dialectics in his reversal of Hegel, and hypothesising Adorno’s criticism of Sellars’s physicalist ontology, Giladi tries to envisage a left-wing Sellarsian response, by emphasizing that, in a curiously Hegelian fashion, Sellars explains that when he uses the analogy of the stereoscopic vision, he sees the manifest image as not overwhelmed in the synthesis. To Giladi, this means that Sellars’s *Aufhebung* of the tension between the manifest and the scientific image points to a polychromatic, republican pluralism, rather than a monochromatic, imperialist monism. In other words, as deVries suggests, the relation between the two frameworks is a matter of mutual accommodation, not a mere dominance of one over the other. And yet, by so doing, according to Giladi, Sellars somehow, surreptitiously, overcome its fear of non-identical thinking, and leaves that the conceptual framework of persons corrosively and latently works on the tendency of the scientific image to assert its primacy over the manifest.

Danilo Manca, Giacomo Turbanti
University of Pisa

References

- McGinn, Colin, 2002, *The Making of a Philosopher*, Harper-Collins, New York.
- Rorty, Richard, 1992, "Twenty-five Years After" in Rorty, ed., *The Linguistic Turn: Essays in Philosophical Method*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 371-4
- Sellars, Wilfrid, 1963, "Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man" in *Science, Perception and Reality*, Ridgeview Publishing Company, Atascadero, 1-40.
- Williams, Bernard, 2006, *Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Williamson, Timothy, 2007, *The Philosophy of Philosophy*, Blackwell, Oxford.