

## Sellars's Scientific Naturalism in "Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man"

1. In *PSIM*, Sellars just talks about "the primacy of the scientific image." But the best statement of his view remains the *scientia mensura* passage from §42 of "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind" [bolding added]. Here it is, with the sentences leading up to it:

In short, 'Physical objects are not really coloured' makes sense only as a clumsy expression of the idea that there are no such things as the coloured physical objects of the **common sense world**, where this is interpreted, not as an empirical proposition—like 'there are no nonhuman featherless bipeds'—**within the common sense frame**, but as the expression of a rejection (in *some* sense) of this very framework itself, in favour of another, built around different, if not unrelated, categories. This rejection need not, of course, be a *practical* rejection. It need not, that is, carry with it a proposal to brain-wash existing populations and train them to speak differently. And, of course, as long as the existing framework is **used** it will be *incorrect* to say—otherwise than to make a philosophical point *about the framework*—that no object is really coloured, or is located in Space, or endures through Time. 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. Or, to put it less paradoxically, that **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 it is not.**

2. *PSIM* (last sentence of Section IV):

[I]t *does* prove helpful in human behaviouristics to postulate an inner sequence of events...But...the postulated episodes are not postulated on neurophysiological grounds...but because of our background knowledge that something analogous to speech goes on while people are sitting 'like bumps on a log'...

I shall, therefore, provisionally assume that although behaviouristics and neurophysiology remain distinctive sciences, the correlational content of behaviouristics points to a structure of postulated processes and principles which telescope together with those of neurophysiological theory, with all the consequences which this entails. On this assumption, if we trace out these consequences, the scientific image of man turns out to be that of a complex physical system.

3. *PSIM* (Section VI):

Thus our concept of 'what thoughts are' might, like our concept of what a castling is in chess, be abstract in the sense that it does not concern itself with the *intrinsic* character of thoughts, *save as items which can occur in patterns of relationships which are analogous to the way in which sentences are related to one another and to the contexts in which they are used*.

Now if thoughts are items which are conceived in terms of the roles they play, then there is no barrier *in principle* to the identification of conceptual thinking with neurophysiological process.

4. The *space of reasons* passage, from From EPM §36 [bolding added]:

The essential point is that in characterizing an episode or state as that of *knowing*, we are not giving an empirical **description** of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical **space of reasons**, of **justifying** and being able to justify what one says.

5. *PSIM* (end of essay) [bolding added]:

Even if the constructive suggestion of the preceding section were capable of being elaborated into an adequate account of the way in which the scientific image could recreate in its own terms the sensations, images, and feelings of the manifest image, the thesis of the primacy of the scientific image would scarcely be off the ground. There would remain 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 conform, can be reconciled with the idea that man is what science says he is.

At first sight there would seem to be only one way of recapturing the specifically human within the framework of the scientific image. The categories of the person might be reconstructed without loss in terms of the fundamental concepts of the scientific image in a way analogous to that in which the concepts of biochemistry are (in principle) reconstructed in terms of sub-atomic physics...

[I]t can, I believe, be conclusively shown that such a reconstruction is *in principle* impossible, the impossibility in question being a strictly logical one...

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 of **the framework of persons**.

In what does this something more consist?...To think of a featherless biped as a person is to think of it as a being with which one is bound up in a network of rights and duties. From this point of view, **the irreducibility of the personal is the irreducibility of the 'ought' to the 'is'**...

[T]o **recognize** 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*.

Thus 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.