

PHILOSOPHY AND THE SCIENTIFIC IMAGE OF MAN*

Wilfrid Sellars

August 24, 2012

1 THE PHILOSOPHICAL QUEST

The aim of philosophy, abstractly formulated, is to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term. Under 'things in the broadest possible sense' I include such radically different items as not only 'cabbages and kings', but numbers and duties, possibilities and finger snaps, aesthetic experience and death. To achieve success in philosophy would be, to use a contemporary turn of phrase, to 'know one's way around' with respect to all these things, not in that unreflective way in which the centipede of the story knew its way around before it faced the question, 'how do I walk?', but in that reflective way which means that no intellectual holds are barred.

Knowing one's way around is, to use a current distinction, a form of 'knowing how' as contrasted with 'knowing that'. There is all the difference in the world between knowing how to ride a bicycle and knowing that a steady pressure by the legs of a balanced person on the pedals would result in forward motion. Again, to use an example somewhat closer to our subject, there is all the difference in the world between

*Published in *Frontiers of Science and Philosophy*, edited by Robert Colodny (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1962): 35–78. Reprinted in *Science, Perception and Reality* (1963).

knowing that each step of a given proof in mathematics follows from the preceding steps, and knowing how to find a proof. Sometimes being able to find a proof is a matter of being able to follow a set procedure; more often it is not. It can be argued that anything which can be properly called 'knowing how to do something' presupposes a body of knowledge that; or, to put it differently, knowledge of truth or facts. If this were so, then the statement that 'ducks know how to swim' would be as metaphorical as the statement that they know that water supports them. However this may be, knowing how to do something at the level of characteristically human activity presupposes a great deal of knowledge that, and it is obvious that the reflective knowing one's way around in the scheme of things, which is the aim of philosophy, presupposes a great deal of reflective knowledge of truths.

Now the subject-matter of this knowledge of truths which is presupposed by philosophical 'know-how', falls, in a sense, completely within the scope of the special disciplines. Philosophy in an important sense has no special subject-matter which stands to it as other subject matters stand to other special disciplines. If philosophers did have such a special subject-matter, they could turn it over to a new group of specialists as they have turned other special subject-matters to non-philosophers over the past 2500 years, first with mathematics, more recently psychology and sociology, and, currently, certain aspects of theoretical linguistics. What is characteristic of philosophy is not a special subject-matter, but the aim of knowing one's way around with respect to the subject-matters of all the special disciplines.

Now the special disciplines know their way around in their subject matters, and each learns to do so in the process of discovering truths about its own subject-matter. But each special discipline must also have a sense of how its bailiwick fits into the countryside as a whole. This sense in many cases amounts to a little more than the unreflective 'knowing one's way around' which is a common possession of us all. Again, the specialist must have a sense of how not only his subject matter, but also the methods and principles of his thinking about it fit into the intellectual landscape. Thus, the historian reflects not only on historical events themselves, but on what it is to think his-

torically. It is part of his business to reflect on his own thinking-its aims, its criteria, its pitfalls. In dealing with historical questions, he must face and answer questions which are not, themselves, in a primary sense historical questions. But he deals with these questions as they arise in the attempt to answer specifically historical questions.

Reflection on any special discipline can soon lead one to the conclusion that the ideal practitioner of that discipline would see his special subject-matter and his thinking about it in the light of a reflective insight into the intellectual landscape as a whole. There is much truth in the Platonic conception that the special disciplines are perfected by philosophy, but the companion conception that the philosopher must know his way around in each discipline as does the specialist, has been an ever more elusive ideal since the scientific revolution began. Yet if the philosopher cannot hope to know his way around in each discipline as does the specialist, there is a sense in which he can know his way around with respect to the subject matter of that discipline, and must do so if he is to approximate to the philosophic aim.

The multiplication of sciences and disciplines is a familiar feature of the intellectual scene. Scarcely less familiar is the unification of this manifold which is taking place by the building of scientific bridges between them. I shall have something to say about this unification later in this chapter. What is not so obvious to the layman is that the task of 'seeing all things together' has itself been (paradoxically) broken down into specialities. And there is a place for specialization in philosophy. For just as one cannot come to know one's way around in the highway system as a whole without knowing one's way around in the parts, so one can't hope to know one's way around in 'things in general, without knowing one's way around in the major groupings of things.

It is therefore, the 'eye on the whole' which distinguishes the philosophical enterprise. Otherwise, there is little to distinguish the philosopher from the persistently reflective specialist; the philosopher of history from the persistently reflective historian. To the extent that a specialist is more concerned to reflect on how his work as a specialist joins up with other intellectual pursuits, than in asking and answering questions within his speciality, he is said, properly, to be philosophically-minded. And, indeed,

one can 'have one's eye on the whole' without staring at it all the time. The latter would be a fruitless enterprise. Furthermore, like other specialists, the philosopher who specializes may derive much of his sense of the whole from the pre-reflective orientation which is our common heritage. On the other hand, a philosopher could scarcely be said to have his eye on the whole in the relevant sense, unless he has reflected on the nature of philosophical thinking. It is this reflection on the place of philosophy itself, in the scheme of things which is the distinctive trait of the philosopher as contrasted with the reflective specialist; and in the absence of this critical reflection on the philosophical enterprise, one is at best but a potential philosopher.

It has often been said in recent years that the aim of the philosopher is not to discover new truths, but to 'analyse' what we already know. But while the term 'analysis' was helpful in its implication that philosophy as such makes no substantive contribution to what we know and is concerned in some way to improve the manner in which we know it, it is most misleading by its contrast to 'synthesis'. For by virtue of this contrast these statements suggest that philosophy is ever more myopic, tracing parts within parts, losing each in turn from sight as new parts come into view. One is tempted, therefore, to contrast the analytic conception of philosophy as myopia with the synoptic vision of true philosophy. And it must be admitted that if the contrast between 'analysis' and 'synthesis' were the operative connotation in the metaphor, then a purely analytic philosophy would be a contradiction in terms. Even if we construe 'analysis' on the analogy of making ever smaller scale maps of the same overall terrain, which does more justice to the synoptic element, the analogy disturbs because we would have to compare philosophy to the making of small-scale maps from an original large-scale map; and a smaller scale map in this sense is a triviality.

Even if the analogy is changed to that of bringing a picture into focus, which preserves the synoptic element and the theme of working within the framework of what is already known while adding a dimension of gain, the analogy is disturbing in two respects. (a) It suggests that the special disciplines are confused; as though the scientist had to wait for the philosopher to clarify his subject-matter, bring it into focus. To

account for the creative role of philosophy, it is not necessary to say that the scientist doesn't know his way around in his own area. What we must rather say is that the specialist knows his way around in his own neighbourhood, as his neighbourhood, but doesn't know his way around in it in the same way as a part of the landscape as a whole.

(b) It implies that the essential change brought about by philosophy is the standing out of detail within a picture which is grasped as a whole from the start. But, of course, to the extent that there is one picture to be grasped reflectively as a whole, the unity of the reflective vision is a task rather than an initial datum. The search for this unity at the reflective level is therefore more appropriately compared to the contemplation of a large and complex painting which is not seen as a unity without a prior exploration of its parts. The analogy, however, is not complete until we take into account a second way in which unity is lacking in the original datum of the contemporary philosopher. For he is confronted not by one picture, but, in principle, by two and, in fact, by many. The plurality I have in mind is not that which concerns the distinction between the fact finding, the ethical, the aesthetic, the logical, the religious, and other aspects of experience, for these are but aspects of one complex picture which is to be grasped reflectively as a whole. As such, it constitutes one term of a crucial duality which confronts the contemporary philosopher at the very beginning of his enterprise. Here the most appropriate analogy is stereoscopic vision, where two differing perspectives on a landscape are fused into one coherent experience.

For the philosopher is confronted not by one complex many dimensional picture, the unity of which, such as it is, he must come to appreciate; but by two pictures of essentially the same order of complexity, each of which purports to be a complete picture of man-in-the-world, and which, after separate scrutiny, he must fuse into one vision. Let me refer to these two perspectives, respectively, as the manifest and the scientific images of man-in-the-world. And let me explain my terms. First, by calling them images I do not mean to deny to either or both of them the status of 'reality'. I am, to use Husserl's term, 'bracketing' them, transforming them from ways of experiencing the world into objects of philosophical reflection and evaluation. The term 'image' is

usefully ambiguous. On the one hand it suggests the contrast between an object, e.g. a tree, and a projection of the object on a plane, or its shadow on a wall. In this sense, an image is as much an existent as the object imaged, though, of course, it has a dependent status.

In the other sense, an ‘image’ is something imagined, and that which is imagined may well not exist, although the imagining of it does—in which case we can speak of the image as merely imaginary or unreal. But the imagined can exist; as when one imagines that someone is dancing in the next room, and someone is. This ambiguity enables me to imply that the philosopher is confronted by two projections of man-in-the-world on the human understanding. One of these projections I will call the manifest image, the other the scientific image. These images exist and are as much a part and parcel of the world as this platform or the Constitution of the United States. But in addition to being confronted by these images as existents, he is confronted by them as images in the sense of ‘things imagined’—or, as I had better say at once, conceived; for I am using ‘image’ in this sense as a metaphor for conception, and it is a familiar fact that not everything that can be conceived can, in the ordinary sense, be imagined. The philosopher, then, is confronted by two conceptions, equally public, equally non-arbitrary, of man-in-the-world and he cannot shirk the attempt to see how they fall together in one stereoscopic view.

Before I begin to explain the contrast between ‘manifest’ and ‘scientific’ as I shall use these terms, let me make it clear that they are both ‘idealizations’ in something like the sense in which a frictionless body or an ideal gas is an idealization. They are designed to illuminate the inner dynamics of the development of philosophical ideas, as scientific idealizations illuminate the development of physical systems. From a somewhat different point of view they can be compared to the ‘ideal types’ of Max Weber’s sociology. The story is complicated by the fact that each image has a history, and while the main outlines of what I shall call the manifest image took shape in the mists of pre-history, the scientific image, promissory notes apart, has taken shape before our very eyes.

2 THE MANIFEST IMAGE

The 'manifest' image of man-in-the-world can be characterized in two ways, which are supplementary rather than alternative. It is, first, the framework in terms of which man came to be aware of himself as man-in-the-world. It is the framework in terms of which, to use an existentialist turn of phrase, man first encountered himself-which is, of course, when he came to be man. For it is no merely incidental feature of man that he has a conception of himself as man-in-the-world, just as it is obvious, on reflection, that 'if man had a radically different conception of himself he would be a radically different kind of man'.

I have given this quasi-historical dimension of our construct pride of place, because 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. It is this paradox which supports the last stand of Special Creation. 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 criticized, supported, refuted, in short, evaluated. To be able to think is to be able to measure one's thoughts by standards of correctness, of relevance, of evidence. In this sense a diversified conceptual framework is a whole which, however sketchy, is prior to its parts, and cannot be construed as a coming together of parts which are already conceptual in character. The conclusion is difficult to avoid that the transition from pre-conceptual patterns of behaviour to conceptual thinking was a holistic one, a jump to a level of awareness which is irreducibly new, a jump which was the coming into being of man.

There is a profound truth in this conception of a radical difference in level between man and his precursors. The attempt to understand this difference 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.

I have characterized the manifest image of man-in-the-world as the framework in terms of which man encountered himself. And this, I believe, is a useful way of characterizing it. But it is also misleading, for it suggests that the contrast I am drawing between the manifest and the scientific images, is that between a pre-scientific, uncritical, naive conception of man-in-the-world, and a reflected, disciplined, critical—in short a scientific—conception. This is not at all what I have in mind. For what I mean by the manifest image is a refinement or sophistication of what might be called the ‘original’ image; a refinement to a degree which makes it relevant to the contemporary intellectual scene. This refinement or sophistication can be construed under two headings; (a) empirical; (b) categorial.

By empirical refinement, I mean the sort of refinement which operates within the broad framework of the image and which, by approaching the world in terms of something like the canons of inductive inference defined by John Stuart Mill, supplemented by canons of statistical inference, adds to and subtracts from the contents of the world as experienced in terms of this framework and from the correlations which are believed to obtain between them. Thus, the conceptual framework which I am calling the manifest image is, in an appropriate sense, itself a scientific image. It is not only disciplined and critical; it also makes use of those aspects of scientific method which might be lumped together under the heading ‘correlational induction’. There is, however, one type of scientific reasoning which it, by stipulation, does not include, namely that which involves the postulation of imperceptible entities, and principles pertaining to them, to explain the behaviour of perceptible things.

This makes it clear that the concept of the manifest image of man-in-the-world is not that of an historical and bygone stage in the development of man’s conception of the world and his place in it. For it is a familiar fact that correlational and postulational methods have gone hand in hand in the evolution of science, and, indeed, have been dialectically related; postulational hypotheses presupposing correlations to be explained, and suggesting possible correlations to be investigated. The notion of a purely

correlational scientific view of things is both an historical and a methodological fiction. It involves abstracting correlational fruits from the conditions of their discovery, and the theories in terms of which they are explained. Yet it is a useful fiction (and hence no mere fiction), for it will enable us to define a way of looking at the world which, though disciplined and, in a limited sense, scientific, contrasts sharply with an image of man-in-the-world which is implicit in and can be constructed from the postulational aspects of contemporary scientific theory. And, indeed, what I have referred to as the ‘scientific’ image of man-in-the-world and contrasted with the ‘manifest’ image, might better be called the ‘postulational’ or ‘theoretical’ image. But, I believe, it will not be too misleading if I continue, for the most part, to use the former term.

Now the manifest image is important for our purpose, because it defines one of the poles to which philosophical reflection has been drawn. It is not only the great speculative systems of ancient and medieval philosophy which are built around the manifest image, but also many systems and quasi-systems in recent and contemporary thought, some of which seem at first sight to have little if anything in common with the great classical systems. That I include the major schools of contemporary Continental thought might be expected. That I lump in with these the trends of contemporary British and American philosophy which emphasize the analysis of ‘common sense’ and ‘ordinary usage’, may be somewhat more surprising. Yet this kinship is becoming increasingly apparent in recent years and I believe that the distinctions that I am drawing in this chapter will make possible an understanding and interpretation of this kinship. For all these philosophies can, I believe, be fruitfully construed as more or less adequate accounts of the manifest image of man-in-the-world, which accounts are then taken to be an adequate and full description in general terms of what man and the world really are.

Let me elaborate on this theme by introducing another construct which I shall call—borrowing a term with a not unrelated meaning—the perennial philosophy of man-in-the-world. This construct, which is the ‘ideal type’ around which philosophies in what might be called, in a suitably broad sense, the Platonic tradition cluster, is simply the

manifest image endorsed as real, and its outline taken to be the large scale map of reality to which science brings a needle-point of detail and an elaborate technique of map-reading.

It will probably have occurred to you by now that there are negative over-tones to both constructs: the ‘manifest image’ and the ‘perennial philosophy’. And, in a certain sense, this is indeed the case. I am implying that the perennial philosophy is analogous to what one gets when one looks through a stereoscope with one eye dominating. The manifest image dominates and Dislocates the scientific image. But if the perennial philosophy of man-in-the-world is in this sense distorted, an important consequence lurks in the offing. For I have also implied that man is essentially that being which conceives of itself in terms of the image which the perennial philosophy refines and endorses. I seem, therefore, to be saying that man’s conception of himself in the world does not easily accommodate the scientific image; that there is a genuine tension between them; that man is not the sort of thing he conceives himself to be; that his existence is in some measure built around error. If this were what I wished to say, I would be in distinguished company. One thinks, for example, of Spinoza, who contrasted man as he falsely conceives himself to be with man as he discovers himself to be in the scientific enterprise. It might well be said that Spinoza drew a distinction between a ‘manifest’ and a ‘scientific’ image of man, rejecting the former as false and accepting the latter as true.

But if in Spinoza’s account, the scientific image, as he interprets it, dominates the stereoscopic view (the manifest image appearing as a tracery of explainable error), 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.

But before there can be any point to these comparisons, I must characterize these images in more detail, adding flesh and blood to the bare bones I have laid before you. I shall devote the remainder of this section and section III to developing the manifest image. In the concluding sections I shall characterize the scientific image, and attempt to describe certain key features of how the two images blend together in a

true stereoscopic view.

I distinguished above between two dimensions of the refinement which turned the ‘original’ image into the ‘manifest’ image: the empirical and the categorial. Nothing has been said so far about the latter. Yet it is here that the most important things are to be said. It is in this connection that I will be able to describe the general structure of the manifest image.

A fundamental question with respect to any conceptual framework is ‘of what sort are the basic objects of the framework?’ This question involves, on the one hand, the contrast between an object and what can be true of it in the way of properties, relations, and activities; and, on the other, a contrast between the basic objects of the framework and the various kinds of groups they can compose. The basic objects of a framework need not be things in the restricted sense of perceptible physical objects. Thus, the basic objects of current theoretical physics are notoriously imperceptible and unimaginable. Their basic-ness consists in the fact that they are not properties or groupings of anything more basic (at least until further notice). The questions, ‘are the basic objects of the framework of physical theory thing-like? and if so, to what extent?’ are meaningful ones.

Now to ask, ‘what are the basic objects of a (given) framework?’ is to ask not for a list, but a classification. And the classification will be more or less ‘abstract’ depending on what the purpose of the inquiry is. The philosopher is interested in a classification which is abstract enough to provide a synoptic view of the contents of the framework but which falls short of simply referring to them as objects or entities. Thus we are approaching an answer to the question, ‘what are the basic objects of the manifest image?’ when we say that it includes persons, animals, lower forms of life and ‘merely material’ things, like rivers and stones. The list is not intended to be complete, although it is intended to echo the lower stages of the ‘great chain of being’ of the Platonic tradition.

The first point I wish to make is that there is an important sense in which the primary objects of the manifest image are persons. And to understand how this is

so, is to understand central and, indeed crucial themes in the history of philosophy. Perhaps the best way to make the point is to refer back to the construct which we called the 'original' image of man-in-the-world, and characterize it as a framework in which all the 'objects' are persons. From this point of view the refinement of the 'original' image into the manifest image, is the gradual depersonalization' of objects other than persons. That something like this has occurred with the advance of civilization is a familiar fact. Even persons, it is said (mistakenly, I believe), are being 'depersonalized' by the advance of the scientific point of view.

The point I now wish to make is that although this gradual depersonalization of the original image is a familiar idea, it is radically misunderstood, if it is assimilated to the gradual abandonment of a superstitious belief. A primitive man did not believe that the tree in front of him was a person, in the sense that he thought of it both as a tree and as a person, as I might think that this brick in front of me is a doorstep. If this were so, then when he abandoned the idea that trees were persons, his concept of a tree could remain unchanged although his beliefs about trees would be changed. The truth is, rather, that originally to be a tree was a way or being a person, as, to use a close analogy, to be a woman is a way of being a person, or to be a triangle is a way of being a plane figure. That a woman is a person is not something that one can be said to believe; though there's enough historical bounce to this example to make it worth-while to use the different example that one cannot be said to believe that a triangle is a plane figure. When primitive man ceased to think of what we called trees as persons, the change was more radical than a change in belief; it was a change in category.

Now, the human mind is not limited in its categories to what it has been able to refine out of the world view of primitive man, any more than the limits of what we can conceive are set by what we can imagine. The categories of theoretical Physics are not essences distilled from the framework of perceptual experiences yet, if the human mind can conceive of new categories, it can also refine the old; and it is just as important not to over-estimate the role of creativity in the development of the framework in terms of which you and I experience the world, as it is not to under-estimate its role in the

scientific enterprise.

I indicated above that in the construct which I have called the 'original' image of man-in-the-world, all 'objects' are persons, and all kinds of objects ways of being persons. This means that the sort of things that are said of objects in this framework are the sort of things that are said of persons. And let me make it clear that by 'persons', I do not mean 'spirit' or 'mind'. The idea that a man is a team of two to things, a mind and a body, is one for which many reasons of different kinds and weights have been given in the course of human intellectual development. But it is obvious, on reflection, that whatever philosophers have made of the idea of a mind, the pre-philosophical conception of a 'spirit', where it is found, is that of a ghostly person, something analogous to flesh and blood persons which 'inhabits' them, or is otherwise intimately connected with them. It is, therefore, a development within the framework of persons, and it would be incorrect to construe the manifest image in such a way that persons are composite objects. On the other hand, if it is to do its work, the manifest framework must be such as to make meaningful the assertion that what we ordinarily call persons are composites of a person proper and a body—and, by doing so, make meaningful the contrary view that although men have many different types of ability, ranging from those he has in common with the lowest of things, to his ability to engage in scientific and philosophical reflection, he nevertheless is one object and not a team. For we shall see that the essential dualism in the manifest image is not that between mind and body as substances, but between two radically different ways in which the human individual is related to the world. Yet it must be admitted that most of the philosophical theories which are dominated by the manifest image are dualistic in the substantive sense. There are many factors which account for this, most of which fall outside the scope of this essay. Of the factors which concern us, one is a matter of the influence of the developing scientific image of man, and will be discussed in the following section. The other arises in the attempt to make sense of the manifest image in its own terms.

Now to understand the manifest image as a refinement or depersonalization of the 'original' image, we must remind ourselves of the range of activities which are char-

acteristic of persons. For when I say that the objects of the manifest image are primarily persons, I am implying that what the objects of this framework, primarily are and do, is what persons are and do. Thus persons are 'impetuous' or 'set in their ways'. They apply old policies or adopt new ones. They do things from habit or ponder alternatives. They are immature or have an established character. For my present purposes, the most important contrasts are those between actions which are expressions of character and actions which are not expressions of character, on the one hand, and between habitual actions and deliberate actions, on the other. The first point that I want to make is that only a being capable of deliberation can properly be said to act, either impulsively or from habit. For in the full and non-metaphorical sense an action is the sort of thing that can be done deliberately. We speak of actions as becoming habitual, and this is no accident. It is important to realize that the use of the term 'habit' in speaking of an earthworm as acquiring the habit of turning to the right in a T-maze, is a metaphorical extension of the term. There is nothing dangerous in the metaphor until the mistake is made of assuming that the habits of persons are the same sort of thing as the (metaphorical) 'habits' of earthworms and white rats.

Again, when we say that something a person did was an expression of his character, we mean that it is 'in character'—that it was to be expected. We do not mean that it was a matter of habit. To be habitual is to be 'in character', but the converse is not true. To say of an action that it is 'in character', that it was to be expected, is to say that it was predictable—not, however, predictable 'no holds barred', but predictable with respect to evidence pertaining to what the person in question has done in the past, and the circumstances as he saw them in which he did it. Thus, a person cannot, logically cannot, begin by acting 'in character', any more than he can begin by acting from habit.

It is particularly important to see that while to be 'in character' is to be predictable, the converse is not true. It does not follow from the fact that a piece of human behaviour is predictable, that it is an expression of character. Thus the behaviour of a burnt child with respect to the fire is predictable, but not an expression of character. If we use the phrase, 'the nature of a person', to sum up the predictabilities no holds barred

pertaining to that person, then we must be careful not to equate the nature of a person with his character, although his character will be a 'part' of his nature in the broad sense. Thus, if everything a person did were predictable (in principle), given sufficient knowledge about the person and the circumstances in which he was placed, and was, therefore, an 'expression of his nature', it would not follow that everything the person did was an expression of his character. Obviously, to say of a person that everything that he does is an expression of his character is to say that his life is simply a carrying out of formed habits and policies. Such a person is a type only approximated to in real life. Not even a mature person always acts in character. And as we have seen, it cannot possibly be true that he has always acted in character. Yet, if determinism is true, everything he has done has been an expression of his 'nature'.

I am now in a position to explain what I mean when I say that the primary objects of the manifest image are persons. I mean that it is the modification of an image in which all the objects are capable of the full range of personal activity, the modification consisting of a gradual pruning of the implications of saying with respect to what we would call an inanimate object, that it did something. Thus, in the original image to say of the wind that it blew down one's house would imply that the wind either decided to do so with an end in view, and might, perhaps, have been persuaded not to do it, or that it acted thoughtlessly (either from habit or impulse), or, perhaps, inadvertently, in which case other appropriate action on one's part might have awakened it to the enormity of what it was about to do.

In the early stages of the development of the manifest image, the wind was no longer conceived as acting deliberately, with an end in view- but rather from habit or impulse. Nature became the locus of 'truncated persons'; that which things could be expected to do, its habits; that which exhibits no order, its impulses. Inanimate things no longer 'did' things in the sense in which persons do them-not, however, because a new category of impersonal things and impersonal processes has been achieved, but because the category of person is now applied to these things in a pruned or truncated form. It is a striking exaggeration to say of a person, that he is a 'mere creature of

habit and impulse', but in the early stages of the development of manifest image, the world includes truncated persons which are mere creatures of habit, acting out routines, broken by impulses, in a life which never rises above what ours is like in our most unreflective moments. Finally, the sense in which the wind 'did' things was pruned, save for poetic and expressive purposes—and, one is tempted to add, for philosophical purposes—of implications pertaining to 'knowing what one is doing' and 'knowing what the circumstances are'.

Just as it is important not to confuse between the 'character' and the 'nature' of a person, that is to say, between an action's being predictable with respect to evidence pertaining to prior action, and its being predictable no holds barred, so it is important not to confuse between an action's being predictable and its being caused. These terms are often treated as synonyms, but only confusion can arise from doing so. Thus, in the 'original' image, one person causes another person to do something he otherwise would not have done. But most of the things people do are not things they are caused to do, even if what they do is highly predictable. For example: when a person has well-established habits, what he does in certain circumstances is highly predictable, but it is not for that reason caused. Thus the category of causation (as contrasted with the more inclusive category of predictability) betrays its origin in the 'original' image. When all things were persons it was certainly not a framework conception that everything a person did was caused; nor, of course, was it a framework principle that everything a person did was predictable. To the extent that relationships between the truncated 'persons' of the manifest framework were analogous to the causal relationships between persons, the category itself continued to be used, although pruned of its implications with respect to plans purposes, and policies. The most obvious analogue at the inanimate level of causation in the original sense is one billiard ball causing another to change its course, but it is important to note that no one who distinguishes between causation and predictability would ask, 'what caused the billiard ball on a smooth table to continue in a straight line?' The distinctive trait of the scientific revolution was the conviction that all events are predictable from relevant information about the context

in which they occur, not that they are all, in any ordinary sense, caused.

3 CLASSICAL PHILOSOPHY AND THE MANIFEST IMAGE

...

4 THE SCIENTIFIC IMAGE

...

5 THE CLASH OF THE IMAGES

...

6 THE PRIMACY OF THE SCIENTIFIC IMAGE: A PROLEGOMENON

...

7 PUTTING MAN INTO THE SCIENTIFIC IMAGE

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. To this suggestion there is, in the first place, the familiar objection that persons as responsible agents who make genuine choices between genuine alternatives, and who could on many occasions have done what in point of fact they did not do, simply can't be construed as physical systems (even broadly interpreted to include sensations and feelings) which evolve in accordance with laws of nature (statistical or non-statistical). Those who make the above move can be expected to reply (drawing on distinctions developed in section I) that the concepts in terms of which we think of a person's 'character', or the fact that 'he could have done otherwise', or that 'his actions are predictable' would appear in the reconstruction as extraordinarily complex defined concepts not to be confused with the concepts in terms of which we think of the 'nature' of NaCl, or the fact that 'system X would have failed to be in state S given the same initial conditions' or that 'it is predictable that system X will assume state S given these initial conditions'. And I think that a reply along these lines could be elaborated which would answer this objection to the proposed reconstruction of categories pertaining to persons.

But even if the proposed reconstruction could meet what might be called the 'free will' objection, it fails decisively on another count. For it can, I believe, be conclusively shown that such a reconstruction is in principle impossible, the impossibility in question being a strictly logical one. (I shall not argue the point explicitly, but the following remarks contain the essential clues.) If so, that would seem to be the end of the matter. Must we not return to a choice between (a) a dualism in which men as scientific objects are contrasted with the 'minds' which are the source and principle of their existence as persons; (b) abandoning the reality of persons as well as manifest Physical objects in

favour of the exclusive reality of scientific objects; (c) returning once and for all to the thesis of the merely 'calculational' or 'auxiliary' status of theoretical frameworks and to the affirmation of the primacy of the manifest image?

Assuming, in accordance with the drift of the argument of this Chapter, that none of these alternatives is satisfactory, is there a way out? I believe there is, and that while a proper exposition and defence would require at least the space of this whole volume, the gist can be dated in short compass. 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? First, a relatively superficial point which will guide the way. 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'. But even more basic than this (though ultimately, as we shall see, the two points coincide), is the fact that to think of a featherless biped as a person is to construe its behaviour in terms of actual or potential membership in an embracing group each member of which thinks of itself as a member of the group. Let us call such a group a 'community'. Once the primitive tribe, it is currently (almost) the 'brotherhood' of man, and is potentially the 'republic' of rational beings (cf. Kant's 'Kingdom of Ends'). An individual may belong to many communities, some of which overlap, some of which are arranged like Chinese boxes. The most embracing community to which he belongs consists of those with whom he can enter into meaningful discourse. The scope of the embracing community is the scope of 'we' in its most embracing non-metaphorical use. 'We', in this fundamental sense (in which it is equivalent to the French 'on' or English 'one') is no less basic than the other 'persons' in which verbs are conjugated. Thus, to recognize a featherless biped or dolphin or Martian as a person is to think of oneself and it as belonging to a community.

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 members of the group. It follows that to 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 intentions.¹

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. We can, of course, as matters now stand, realize this direct incorporation of the scientific image into our way of life only in imagination. But to do so is, if only in imagination, to transcend the dualism of the manifest and scientific images of man-of-the-world.

¹Community intentions ('One shall . . .') are not just private intentions (I shall . . .') which everybody has. (This is another way of putting the above-mentioned irreducibility of 'we'.) There is, however, a logical connection between community and private intentions. For one does not really share a community intention unless, however often one may rehearse it, it is reflected, where relevant, in the corresponding private intention.

manifest image, the scientific image, conception, persons, person, scientific enterprise, irreducibility, conceptual framework, scientific method, expression, community, Spinoza, featherless biped, the perennial philosophy, perennial philosophy, meaningful discourse
Philosophy and the scientific image of man