

Factualism and Anti-Descriptivism: A Challenge to the Materialist Criterion of Fundamentality

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Abstract: Inspired by the work of Sellars, Cumpa (2014, 2018) and Buonomo (2021) have argued that we can evaluate our metaphysical proposals on fundamental categories in terms of their capacity for reconciling the scientific and the manifest image of the world. This criterion of fundamentality would allow us to settle the question of which categories among those proposed in the debate—e.g., substance, structure or facts—have a better explanatory value. The aim of this essay is to argue against a central assumption of the criterion: semantic descriptivism. Specifically, I aim at showing that the criterion rests on the idea that the manifest picture is mostly a description of the world, and thus, it commits us with certain realism. Instead, I argue that at least some of the vocabulary we use to construct our manifest picture of the world, mental vocabulary, is evaluative rather than descriptive and thus creates problems in reconcile the manifest picture with scientific psychology and neurosciences. I conclude with some remarks on alternatives that could provide a way out of the fundamentality criterion.

Keywords: Descriptivism; factualism; fundamental categories; mental vocabulary.

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1. Introduction

In “Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man” Wilfrid Sellars proposes, as the fundamental task of the philosophical endeavor, to reconcile the scientific image of the world with the manifest image, that is, the image produced by our scientific theories of natural sciences with the image we all take for granted. The difference between these two images turns to be especially evident when contrasting the common-sense perspective of humans as autonomous persons, responsible of their actions and motivated by thoughts and feelings, with a scientific perspective describing humans as biological systems without free will whose behavior is caused by physical processes and mechanisms.

Following in the footsteps of Sellars, Cumpa (2014, 2018) and Buonomo (2021) have proposed a scientific turn in metaphysics according to which we must assess our ontological theories regarding the fundamentality of the world on the basis of the contribution they can make to the reconciliation between the two images: *the materialist criterion of fundamentality*. As Buonomo (2021) puts it, “the scientific turn in metaphysics takes the fundamental categories to be the ones that play an essential role in the explanation of the relation between the ordinary world and the physical universe, providing us with a unified image of the world as a whole” (p. 795).

The aim of this article is to question an assumption of the materialist criterion of fundamentality which claims that the analysis of linguistic behavior necessarily produces, as a manifest image, a common-sense realism. This assumption, we argue, is based on a Cumpa’s commitment to a form of semantic descriptivism (Chrisman 2007; Frapolli and Villanueva 2012; Gibbard 2003). Given that, we present a challenge to the criterion in conditional terms: If semantic descriptivism turns to be wrong about certain areas of discourse, and thus, the analysis of linguistic behavior cannot produce a manifest image that allow reconciliation, then the materialist criterion cannot be applied. In section 2, we present Cumpa’s materialist criterion of fundamentality and how it works. In section 3, we present the central conditional argument and how it jeopardizes the criterion. Further, we argue that such argument puts defenders of the materialist criterion of fundamentality in a difficult situation. In section 4, we present several

arguments from non-descriptivism regarding mental vocabulary to emphasize the impossibility of reconcile folk mentalism and psychology/neurosciences in metaphysical terms.

2. The materialist criterion of fundamentality

According to the traditional Aristotelian characterization of metaphysics, ontology is concerned with the study of being *qua being*, i.e., the identification of the most general and fundamental categories under which things fall and to characterize the relations between these categories. As such, ontology aims at seeking to understand the concept of being and existence and the properties and features that existence things exhibit as beings and existents. In this sense, a central function of metaphysics is to provide a map of the structure of all things. Now the question is what is the most fundamental of category of the world? Several contemporary authors (Heil 2013, Lowe 2011) have followed Aristotle in claiming that “substance” is the most fundamental category, while other authors have supported other categories like “structure” (French 2014, Ladyman and Ross 2007) or “facts” (Buonomo 2021, Cumpa 2014, 2018) as the fundamental category of the world.

The debate around the fundamentality of categories leads us to the question of how to decide between the different competing views (Cumpa 2020). Aristotle defended substantialism on the basis that the category of substance is prior, simpler and independent of other categories. For instance, substance is simpler than other categories because it cannot be divided in other categories and it is independent because it does not require other categories to exist. Those criteria are still object of debate in contemporary metaphysics (see Heil 2012, 2-5, 15; Armstrong 1997, 139-149). However, recently, Cumpa (2014) and Buonomo (2021) have proposed a different criterion, what they call the materialist criterion of world-fundamentality. According to this criterion, we must assess our ontological theories regarding the fundamentality of categories on the basis of the contribution they can make to the reconciliation between the scientific images of the world and the perceived or manifested image of the world. In other words, the explanatory power of our theories about categories must be evaluated in terms of

how the given categories can contribute to a better understanding of how the resulting image of how the world is according to our better scientific theories is compatible with the picture resulting from our ordinary experience.

Now, how should we understand such reconciliation? to see how, consider how Cumpa constructs his argument supporting the idea that factualism is better positioned for the reconciling task than other theories like substantialism. According to the criterion, a category must make sense of propositions of the type “A is F” where the two relata of the categorical scheme belong to different images. For a given proposition “the tomato is red”, the categorial structure allows, for instance, the tomato to be located in the manifest image (“Tomato”) and being red in the scientific image (“X is able to reflect a dominant wavelength measures between 618 and 780 nm”). According to Cumpa, factualism allows these type of propositions because being red is not a property of the tomato but a constituent of the fact, while substantialism does not make sense of such ‘cross-sectional’ propositions because the substance and its accident must be at the same level (Cumpa 2014, 321), that is, the categorial structure does not make the job as far as the structure ‘S is P’ corresponds either to the level of things (Gracia 1987) or to the elementary particles of physics (see Heil 2012, 52).

In brief, Buonomo and Cumpa argue that our disputes regarding the fundamentality of categories must be arbitrated by an alternative criterion to those classically recognized in the debate like priority, simplicity or independency. According to this alternative criterion, a particular theory of categories is better than other when it can accommodate or make sense of propositions of the form “A is F” where the two relata can belong to different images. As a result, our better theories metaphysical theories will reconcile our scientific understanding of the world with our everyday experience to the extent that our metaphysical categories can be compatible with propositions like “The tomato is able to reflect a dominant wavelength measures between 618 and 780 nm”.

3. The challenge

As Heil (1998) said, “science does not speak with a single voice”. There is no such thing as science, but sciences (physics, chemistry, meteorology,

geology, etc.) which focus on a strictly circumscribed domain. In this sense, it is inevitable that each science delimits the type of questions that are relevant, and that when certain limits are reached, the buck is passed to another science. However, even if each sciences were completely successful in accounting for its limits, it would still remain to evaluate how each science is pronounced in relation to each other, and of course, to our ordinary experience. In this sense, even if one doubts the value of pursuing a fundamental categorical scheme and embrace metaphysical pluralism, one can still find a certain value in the criterion of fundamentality as it would allow us to evaluate the relation of the metaphysical categories involved in a particular theory or science in relation to our everyday experience. Now, the fundamentality criterion requires that one of the stories belongs to the scientific sphere which is delimited by the particular science applied in the given domain. However, how can we define the area of application that belongs to the manifest image? What criterion do we use to decide what falls under the “ordinary level of thinghood with which ordinary people are acquainted in their commonsensical and practical experience” (Cumpa 2014, 319)?

Cumpa considers that the source of knowledge we must take into account in order to specify the ordinary world is not phenomenology, but rather the analysis of ordinary linguistic behavior. This analysis, he holds, leads us to what he calls ‘common-sense realism’. Similarly, Buonomo claims that:

“[c]ommonsense realism and scientific materialism represent the two methodological assumptions of the scientific turn in metaphysics. On the one hand, common sense realism accepts the ordinary level of thinghood we are acquainted with in our everyday lives and that we speak about in ordinary discourse. On the other hand, scientific materialism considers the scientific level of thinghood that scientists study through experimental research and represent with scientific theories.” (Buonomo 2021, 796)

The analysis of linguistic behavior results into a manifest image that commits us with realism about the entities that populate our world. In this sense, the materialist criterion of fundamentality presupposes that the analysis of

our ordinary vocabulary will produce a common-sense image populated with objects, relations, and properties.

Notice that the scientific turn is undertaking an important semantic commitment to the idea that our everyday discourse is necessary descriptive. So, the materialist criterion, as specified by Cumpa and Buonomo, is based on semantic descriptivism. Descriptivism is the stance “whereby it's assumed that since semantic content of indicative sentences is standardly given in terms of their truth-conditions, the characteristic function of all indicative sentences is to describe worldly objects, properties, and relations” (Chrisman 2007, 227). In other words, the idea behind the characterization of the ordinary world relies on the assumption that the function of linguistic expressions is mainly descriptive. Certainly, this would seem obvious in the areas of discourse Cumpa and Buonomo are thinking of; for instance, ordinary objects (tables, chairs) and their properties (brown, rigid). However, this is not necessarily the case for all areas of discourse. In philosophical literature, we can find a set of views that share the denial of the descriptivist reading of a certain type of expressions or sentences. For instance, several views in metaethics like ethical expressivism (Gibbard 2003) or quasi-realism (Blackburn 1998) deny that sentences such as ‘eating meat is wrong’ describe a fact, namely, that a piece of behavior has a value property (being wrong). Similar positions are maintained about expressions such as epistemic attributions (Chrisman 2007, Field 2009), logical concepts (Brandon 2001), attribution of rationality (Gibbard 1990, Frapolli and Villanueva 2018) or modal expressions (Blackburn 1986, Thomasson 2014). The analysis of linguistic behavior, these authors suggest, can result in discovering that certain vocabulary is non-descriptive, and thus, its use does not commit us to any particular metaphysical counterpart.

The descriptive assumption of Cumpa and Buonomo have two important negative consequences for the criterion of fundamentality when seen from the perspective of the anti-descriptivist analysis. First, as several authors have argued (Chrisman 2008, Horgan and Timmons 1992, Mackie 1977), assuming descriptivism entails strong metaphysical commitments to the existence of nonnatural facts or entities like, for example, evil or goodness. These kinds of metaphysical entities, however, do not seem to be the kind of objects, properties and relationships that are part of a common-sense realism. In this sense,

the descriptive commitments of Cumpa and Buonomo do not seem compatible with the idea of the manifest image that they themselves promulgate. The descriptivist assumption produces an untenable manifest image that does not correspond with common-sense realism.

Second, if the anti-descriptivist analysis is right, the semantic analysis of natural languages that Cumpa endorses does not seem to produce even an image that is reconcilable with the scientific image when understood from the right metaphysical category. That is because if certain areas of discourse do not refer or state worldly aspects, then worldly metaphysical categories do not seem to apply to them. It is precisely this last consequence which seems especially challenging for Cumpa and Buonomo when we attempt to apply their criteria to certain areas of discourse that must be reconcilable with a scientific image but that are subject to an anti-descriptivist analysis like, for instance, mental vocabulary in relation with neurosciences or cognitive psychology.

To see how, consider that, according to Cumpa and Buonomo, the materialist criterion of fundamentality requires our categories to be able to explain how propositions involving the given terms can have their components in different images. The basic assumption is that propositions like “Pablo believes that the toy is on the table” must be understood from the a categorial structure that allows understand the two component of the proposition from common-sense realism: “a person named Pablo”, “a particular mental state”, and from the perspective of the scientific image like “A biological organism P”, “a neuronal state M”. Then, the Sellarsian question of ontology is to reconcile the tension that, for instance, “a mental state” and “a neural state M” does not seem to have the same properties but are really the same object (Cumpa 2018). The tension, Cumpa and Buonomo argue, is resolved when a particular category like “facts” allow to say that the propositions “A person named Pablo is in a particular mental state M” and “A biological organism P is in a neuronal state M” represent the same fact. Factualism can claim that both propositions represent the same fact precisely because we can exchange the relata to form two different propositions with one relata in each image but referring to the same fact: “A biological organism P is in a mental state M” and “A person named Pablo is in a particular neuronal state M”. Now, the problem is that anti-descriptivist analysis of mental vocabulary does

not result into a common-sense realism. According to anti-descriptivism, the sentence “Pablo believes that the toy is on the table” does not describe or represent a particular object, property or relation. In particular, the expression “X Believes that the toy is on the table” cannot be substituted for an expression like “x is in a mental state M” where the expression represents or state for a property or a worldly aspect because the expression “believes” does not have descriptive meaning.

In a nutshell, metaphysical categories cannot help to reconcile the two images because the linguistic analysis of the manifest image does not necessarily result into a picture where those categories apply. Now, such a claim just holds if anti-descriptivism of mental vocabulary turns to be right. But, what exactly mental vocabulary does if it does not describe? Do we have compelling arguments for supporting anti-descriptivism?

4. Anti-descriptivism and psychology

The point of contention raised in this paper is not straightforwardly tied to anti-descriptivism regarding modality or other metaphysical expressions (Blackburn 1986, Thomasson 2014). The key point is not whether expressions like “possibly, p” or “it is a fact that p” describe or not. On the contrary, the idea is that the criterion of fundamentality presupposes that the manifest image as produced by a linguistic analysis must be grounded in the reality in a way that every predicate or expression that compound a judgment of the manifest image is somehow anchored in the world; and thus, subject to be reconcile with the scientific image¹. However, we argue, if a descriptivism regarding mental vocabulary is right, and mental states predicates are not anchored in the world, the reconciliation is not possible, and thus, the criterion is useless, at least, for the domain of psychology and neurosciences in connection with the manifest image regarding our minds. In this section, we recapitulate some arguments supporting a non-descriptivist analysis of mental predicates.

¹ Thanks to an anonymous referee for pointing out the possibility that these two different projects could be confused.

Anti-descriptivism regarding mental states is a position that can be associated to different families of theories that goes from classical dispositionalism² of Wittgenstein (1953) and Ryle (1949) or the parentheticallism of Urmson (1952) to more contemporary theories like expressivism (Fernandez Castro 2017, Frapolli and Villanueva 2012, Perez-Navarro et al. 2019; Pinedo-García 2020), communicative conceptions of attribution (Fernandez Castro (2020), Tooming (2016), Van Cleave and Gauker 2010) or radical socio-cultural constructivism of mindreading (Almagro-Holgado and Fernandez Castro 2019; Fenici and Zawidzki 2020). Although they radically differ in the details, these views share the basic claim that mental states vocabulary serve for a different function than describing or tracking each other psychological states. For instance, Ryle (1949) understands dispositional terms³ as inferential tickets: “an inference ticket (a season ticket)

² Although the work of Wittgenstein and Ryle is usually presented in contraposition to theories about the nature of the mind, like dualism or functionalism (see Ravenscroft, 2005), Ryle and Wittgenstein present their views as positions about the use of psychological concepts, rather than views about the ontology of the mind. Moreover, Ryle and Wittgenstein do not have a realist interpretation of dispositional vocabulary, that is, they did not understand dispositional ascriptions as describing psychological states (Acero and Villanueva 2012, Freitag 2017, Glock 1996; Hacker 2010, Ter Hark 2001, Heras-Escribano and Pinedo-García 2018. Tanney 2007, 2009)

³ Wittgenstein and Ryle systematically emphasize the idea that their research is not ontological but logical or conceptual. His philosophical enterprise is not to describe human psychological processes or to propose scientific theories concerning the mind: “The book does not profess to be a contribution to any science, not even to psychology. If any actual assertions are made in it, they are there through the author’s confusion of mind” (1962, 196). On this account, the philosophical purpose of Ryle is to provide a conceptual clarification of how mental concepts are used, rather than elucidating what ‘knowing’, ‘feeling’ or ‘remembering’ is. Similar ideas can be found in Wittgenstein’s work (1953, §89-90, 127, 199, 232, 392, 496, 574; 1974, 60). For instance, he claims: “Our investigation is therefore a grammatical one. Such an investigation sheds light on our problem by clearing misunderstandings away. Misunderstandings concerning the use of words, caused, among other things, by certain analogies between the forms of expression in different regions of language—Some of them can be removed by substituting one form of expression for another; this may be called an “analysis” of our forms of expression, for the process is sometimes like one of taking a thing apart” (Wittgenstein 1953, §90).

which licenses its possessors... to move from one assertion to another, to provide explanations of given facts, and to bring about desired states of affairs by manipulating what is found existing or happening” (p. 117). Expressions such as ‘Sara believes that Riga is the capital of Latvia’ function to make inferential moves: ‘Sara believes that Latvia has a capital’, ‘If Sara wants to move to the capital of Latvia, she will take a flight to Riga’ and so on. However, understanding dispositional terms as inferential tickets goes against considering them factual psychological states. As Tanney (2007, 2009; see also Heras-Escribano and Pinedo-García 2018) has emphasized, Ryle insists systematically in abandoning: “the preposterous assumption that every true or false statement either asserts or denies that a mentioned object or set of objects possesses a specified attribute” (Ryle 1949, 115).

Another example of how to understand non-descriptivism regarding psychological states is through their pragmatic function. Several authors argue that first person ascriptions of mental states do not serve for describing one’s mental states but for indicating certain degree of uncertainty or how to understand a particular proposition (Fenici & Zawidzki, 2020, Urmson 1952, Wierzbicka 2006). This means that, in sentences such as “I believe that the Indian restaurant is closed”, the verb “believe” is not describing a mental state properly but merely indicating a low degree of commitment to the proposition “the Indian restaurant is closed”. As Wierzbicka (2006) points out, verbs in this use serve to modulate the interpretation of the proposition that falls under the scope of the verb. The verb “believe” serves to deny our knowledge of something, but not by saying “I don’t know”, but by saying “I don’t say: I know”. Similar analyses have been extended to third-person ascriptions (Fernandez Castro 2019, van Cleave and Gauker 2010, Geurt 2021), for instance, van Cleave and Gauker (2010) argue that third person ascriptions of desire, for instance, are used to carry out vicarious speech acts, so sentences like “Mom wants us to clean the room” serve to make a command (clean your room!) on the behalf of another person (the mother).

Be that as it may, the key point is that we have different analysis to motivate a non-descriptivist understanding of mental states predicates. Now, do we have arguments to support them? Ryle and Wittgenstein developed different argument to support non-descriptivism. For instance, Ryle

argues that mental dispositions, as skills, cannot be witnessed or captured, and thus, they are not metaphysically grounded in the world:

Now a skill is not an act. It is therefore neither a witnessable nor an unwitnessable act. To recognise that a performance is an exercise of a skill is indeed to appreciate it in the light of a factor which could not be separately recorded by a camera. But the reason why the skill exercised in a performance cannot be separately recorded by a camera is not that it is an occult or ghostly happening, but that it is not a happening at all. (Ryle, 1949/2009, 22)

Skills, as other mental states, cannot be recorded with a camera, they are not witnessable (or unwitnessable), not because they are hidden, but because they are not the type of mental phenomena we can point out or describe. In a similar vein, Wittgenstein (1967) presented the argument of duration, according to which, contrary to descriptive states, it does not make sense to say that a dispositional state (belief, desire, hope) takes time:

Is “I hope ...” a description of a state of mind? A state of mind has duration. So “I have been hoping for the whole day” is such a description; but suppose I say to someone: “I hope you come”- what if he asks me “For how long have you been hoping that?” Is the answer “For as long as I've been saying so”? Supposing I had some answer or other to that question, would it not be quite irrelevant to the purpose of the words “I hope you'll come”? (Wittgenstein 1967, §78)

While it makes sense to ask for how long a state of affairs has been the case, it is unusual to ask for the duration of propositional attitude. Thus, the type of condition criteria of a propositional attitude ascription differs from those of a description. Another argument in that direction has to do with the grammatical or logical connection between a propositional attitude verb and its propositional object. When we say, ‘Sara hopes that Beyoncé will record a new album’, Wittgenstein argues, the established connection between the propositional object and the subject ‘Sara’ is not empirical, but logical (Wittgenstein 1967, 1974), and this type of connections cannot be described. The meaning of an expression is given by its connection with other expressions

(Wittgenstein 1974, §7). Thus, the connection between Sara's hope and its fulfillment is not empirical, and as such, is not descriptive. If Sara behaves in accordance with her hopes, we would say our attribution is right, and we would say is wrong otherwise; but this depends on the logical behavior of the concept 'hope' and not on an independent empirical connection between Sara and the proposition 'Beyoncé will record a new album'.

For the current purpose, another important argument lies on the impossibility of linking the vocabulary of sciences and the mental and appears on the work Donald Davidson (1970, 1991). Davidson presents different arguments supporting the claim that we cannot draw strict laws connecting the mental vocabulary and the vocabulary of physics. For instance, Davidson (1970, 172) suggests that we cannot establish strict laws between the mental discourse and the discourse of the physical sciences without changing the subject because the features of the two different vocabularies are unique to each one. As Ramberg (2000) has convincingly argued, this criterion does not apply uniquely to the distinction between the mental and the sciences, but also, to the distinction between physics and the special sciences. As he puts it: "Davidson grants that the relevant kind of law—that is, the strict kind—is no more likely to link special sciences to physics than it is to link psychology to physics" (p. 359). But, Davidson (1991) presents a distinctive reason for emphasizing the peculiarity of the mental vocabulary, i.e., the normative elements of mental states attributions. The critical question is not only that the vocabulary of agency involves the application of norms, but that the norms provide structure to the vocabulary (Ramberg 2000, 359). When we interpret others' actions, we are trying to find patterns by finding descriptions of what the other is doing. Finding such patterns depends on normative criteria of application of the concepts. In this sense, mental vocabulary may not differ from the vocabulary of sciences. However, Davidson's argue, finding such patterns requires taking a normative standpoint invoked by the charity principle, that is, we must assume that our interpretee meets the norms of rationality in order to find such patterns. Mental vocabulary does not only require norms of application but making claims about what sort of patterns count or not as mental. Thus, our interpretation of other creatures as mental are so intrinsically connected to a normative attitude that "If we were to drop the normative aspect from psychological explanations, they would no longer

serve the purposes they do. We have such a keen interest in the reasons for actions and other psychological phenomena that we are willing to settle for explanations that cannot be made to fit perfectly with the laws of physics” (Davidson 1991, 163). In Davidson’s view, mental vocabulary serves a distinctive purpose than the vocabulary of sciences, a purpose that is not merely picking up objects for prediction and control. Mental vocabulary serves us to reveal the traits that allow us to recognize ourselves as creatures subject to moral and rational considerations, who can be burden with duties, commitments and rights (Ramberg 2000, 366).

Finally, several contemporary defenders of expressivism have defended that disagreement involving normative concepts also manifest an evaluative (and non-descriptive) function of those concepts (Chrisman 2007; Field 2009, Perez Navarro et al. 2019). According to those authors, disagreements involving normative concepts cannot be resolved by appealing to fact. In order to see the move, consider the following examples of disagreement:

- [1] Shaq: The earth is flat
 Kyrie: The earth is not flat
- [2] Chris: Waterboarding is wrong
 Hitch: Waterboarding is not wrong

Notice that the disagreement between Shaq and Kyrie can be solved by clearing up the relevant facts, viz. determining whether the earth is flat. Instead, the disagreement between Chris and Hitch does not necessarily dissolve after determining the relevant facts. We can imagine a situation where Chris and Hitch agree on all factual matters and still disagree about whether waterboarding is wrong. Moreover, the disagreement in question does not necessarily dissolve when the normative standards are made explicit, removing the possibility that description is dependent of norms:

- [2]’ Chris: According to the Human Rights Declaration, waterboarding is wrong
- Hitch: According to the Eight Amendment, waterboarding is not wrong

We can conceive situations where Chris and Hitch do not necessarily resolve their dispute after making the norms explicit. Now, Perez-Navarro et al.

(2019) have elaborated upon this argument to defend that we can identify evaluative disagreements involving belief attributions. They illustrate the point with an example by Dennett (1978) where he invites to consider the case of Sam, an art critic who has promoted the paintings of his son. There are two possible interpretations of this situation: “a) Sam does not believe the paintings are any good, but out of loyalty and love he does this to help his son, or (b) Sam’s love for his son has blinded him to the faults of the paintings, and he actually believes they are good” (Dennett 1978, 39). Now, suppose for the sake of the argument that there exists a reliable way of determining the cause of someone’s actions. Imagine, as Dennett does, that we have the technology to write a specific judgment in Sam’s brain. Imagine that we write ‘my son’s paintings are great’ at the moment he is promoting his son’s paintings. In fact, we can suppose that this was the occurrent cause of the action (promoting his son) at that moment. Dennett’s point is that, even in this extreme case, there are no deep facts we can appeal to in order to decide whether the ascription of this belief is certainly explanatory of the situation. Someone could examine the past and future circumstances of Sam and suspend the interpretation that Sam believes that his son’s paintings are good. The interpreter could examine Sam’s past behavior and realize that he systematically avoided assessing his son’s paintings using the same aesthetics standards that he used for other artists, or that his subsequent behavior is incoherent with the decision of promoting his son’s paintings. These circumstances would provide the interpreter with reasons to change his verdict. At the same time, the other interpreter could insist that the accurate ascription is the one that identifies the real cause of the behavior. However, it is dubious whether we can decide which belief ascription is right by appealing to the mere facts. Both interpreters could agree on all the relevant facts and differ on their ascriptions. Moreover, even when if both interpreters would make their norms of interpretation explicit—e.g., appealing to the Sam’s incoherence or sincerity—the disagreement would not necessarily disappear.

As a result, we have reasons to believe that mental states attributions and predicates do not describe entities of any type. Acknowledging the possibility that linguistic expressions might not identify a particular object, relation or property may jeopardize the idea of a manifest image in common sense realist terms or a manifest image at all, and thus, the applicability of the materialist

criterion of fundamentality may be severely restricted. Certainly, this conclusion is dependent on the persuasion of non-descriptivist arguments. However, to the extent that the materialist criterion depends on a descriptive semantics, one should, at least, critically face the arguments and motivations behind non-descriptive semantics to save the applicability of the criterion.

5. Concluding Remarks

Where does this leave the scientific turn in metaphysics? one possible way to save the criteria is by finding an alternative possibility to ground the ordinary level of thinghood other than linguistic analysis. After all, it seems plausible to maintain that, even if the use of certain expressions is not aimed to describe or represent the world, ordinary people could have some common-realist intuitions concerning the status of our mental life. Now, the question is whether we could find a way to rescue these intuitions. Certainly, one possible alternative is to appeal to phenomenology as a way of constructing the manifest image but Cumpa seems inclined to resist such a strategy (Cumpa 2014, 320). Although he does not specify why, one may speculate that the reason is related to the possible problems one may encounter when trusting one's own experience or intuitions regarding mental states; for instance, the possibility that our own experience dramatically differs from each other's. A plausible middle path could try to exploit Dennett's (1991) *hetero-phenomenology*. In this view, we could create a profile of the people's reports about their own experiences and intuitions regarding other's and their own mental states (Dennett 1991, 76-77). So, the ordinary level of thinghood could be grounded in people's reports about their own experience. We can control the problems emerging with phenomenology by testing only the intuitions that are statistically significant inside of a given population. Be that as it may, this alternative implies abandoning the analysis of linguistic behavior as the procedure to construct our manifest image.

Leaving aside the alternative in (hetero)phenomenological terms, there seems to be a deeper problem with Cumpa and Buonomo's reconciliatory project. In principle, as the history of science has demonstrated, it seems

likely that some important aspects of our manifest image do not lend themselves to a metaphysical reconciliation of some kind with science, but to another kind of assimilation such as the elimination or, like the case of the mind, a more complex assimilation than mere metaphysical mapping. Perhaps, the response can be found in the work of Sellars himself. Sellars (1956) seems to defend certain type of non-descriptivism when he says ‘in characterizing an episode or a 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’ (§36). Such a claim, along with his complaint that such descriptive treatment of knowledge would be ‘a mistake of a piece with so-called ‘naturalistic fallacy’ in ethics” (§5), must be regarded as an indicator of the limits of the reconciling metaphysical enterprise; at least, if we understand the enterprise as establishing metaphysical connections between two types of images that serve radically different objectives and interests. The alternative may not be necessarily the skepticism, but simply seeking reconciliation beyond the metaphysical enterprise of categories, for example, understanding that the scientific picture must give us an adequate picture of how we humans, as natural beings, are able to create for ourselves a picture of the world that is presented to us in such and such a way. To try to assimilate one image to the other in terms of worldly categories is perhaps only a metaphysical dream.

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