

CAN THE HUMAN PERSON BE NATURALISED?

JESÚS CONILL SANCHO

University of Valencia

ABSTRACT: The article attempts to clear up what naturalising means in the present context and to show that the naturalistic approach is not sufficiently justified. It proposes the alternative of a hermeneutical approach based on the world of life in which we find ourselves as historical and social participants. To overcome neuroscientific naturalisation and reach a non-naturalistic concept of the person, the Heideggerian approach of the facticity of the *Dasein* is nevertheless insufficient and Zubirian philosophy is more fruitful.

KEY WORDS: Naturalisation; Person; Hermeneutics; Neuroscience.

¿Puede la persona humana ser naturalizada?

RESUMEN: El artículo intenta aclarar qué significa naturalizar en el actual contexto y mostrar que el enfoque naturalista no está suficientemente justificado. Se propone la alternativa de un enfoque hermenéutico basado en el mundo de la vida en que nos encontramos en tanto que participantes históricos y sociales. No obstante, para superar la naturalización neurocientífica y lograr un concepto no-naturalista de persona no es suficiente el enfoque heideggeriano de la facticidad del *Dasein* y es más provechosa la filosofía zubiriana.

PALABRAS CLAVE: naturalización; persona; hermenéutica; neurociencia.

1. WHAT «NATURALISING» MEANS IN TODAY'S CONTEXT

There have been several kinds of naturalism over history, including metaphysical naturalisms (Aristotle), psychological naturalisms (Hume) and scientific naturalisms (natural sciences explaining the emergence of the moral realm). It should be remembered that natural law has been defended as the foundation of the moral realm since ancient times and ethics has been naturalised by explaining moral predicates by means of natural predicates. The prevailing form in the present context is nevertheless evolutionary naturalism, according to which the main evolutionary achievements are survival and well-being.

Naturalising means restricting oneself to what is contributed by natural sciences in the framework of the Darwinist approach in order to—in our own case—determine what the human person is. Naturalising means justifying ethical principles in terms of evolutionary advantage (evolutionary success), by explaining their genesis in the light of the human being's biological-evolutionary structure (in the neuroscientific field, for instance). This naturalisation entails a denial of universally valid moral principles and a presumed explanation of morality as a product of evolutionary accomplishment, reduced to a useful fiction.

Although the term «*naturalism*» is now ubiquitous, it is hard to define. Michael Friedman distinguishes two basic ideas characterising naturalism¹: 1) Any claim to knowledge has the same status as that of empirical natural

¹ MÜLLER, A., «Pragmatismo y naturalismo eliminativista», in: GALÁN, F., XOLOCATZI, A. (eds.), *El futuro de la filosofía*, Mexico, Universidad Iberoamericana, 2004, pp. 80-96.

sciences; and 2) Philosophy must be understood as merely a part of empirical sciences; to which the following must be added: 3) That a good deal of naturalism comes from Quinean epistemology, describing naturalism as Quine does in «Five Milestones of Empiricism»² as the height of empiricist philosophy with three properties: a) «Naturalism: abandonment of the goal of a first philosophy prior to natural science»; b) «It sees natural science as an inquiry into reality, fallible and corrigible but not answerable to any supra-scientific tribunal, and not in need of any justification beyond observation and the hypothetico-deductive method»; and c) «[Naturalism] assimilates it [epistemology] to empirical psychology»³.

Bearing such ideas in mind, Pedro Teruel's proposal⁴ to distinguish between ontological and epistemological naturalism also fails to solve the basic problem implied by naturalism, because the fact that there is a connection between the biological bases of the human being and the development of his or her specific abilities, proper to the human person, does not justify a naturalistic interpretation, however «weak» this may be characterised as being, even in its epistemological version. There are, furthermore, other philosophical approaches that prove more appropriate for understanding the complex innovation of personalised life in relation to its biological bases.

«Weak naturalism» might not appear to have reductionist intentions, but with its terminological concession it starts out as reductive in the very title of its proposal, and without seeking to do so, favours a disqualifying interpretation of philosophy. Even the most immediate connotation of the term «naturalism» endorses the eliminativist sense, since it conveys the idea that only the empirical knowledge obtained by natural sciences can be valid⁵. The most distinctive aspect of contemporary naturalism ends up as this reductionist doctrine, which denies philosophy any objectiveness and advocates dedication to neurology or the new cognitive sciences rather than sterile philosophy⁶.

Since the defenders of what is known as «weak naturalism» wish to uphold fallibilism and holism, it should be pointed out that the eliminativist doctrine of naturalism does not follow on from these. This doctrine, which sets out to replace philosophy with natural sciences, instead falls into a new form of dogmatism, by attempting to include the traditional functions acting as foundations for philosophy, but without any self-critical sense. It would be better to propose a hermeneutical-critical transformation of philosophy, capable of providing a new interpretation while making use of natural, social, historical and human sciences.

² QUINE, W. V., *Theories and Things*, 1981, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge/London, 1981, pp. 67-72.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁴ TERUEL, P., «Critical Naturalism» (in this issue).

⁵ GOLDMAN, A. I., «Naturalistic Epistemology», in: R. AUDI (ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1995, pp. 518-519.

⁶ MÜLLER, A., «Pragmatismo y naturalismo eliminativista», pp. 89 and 93.

2. SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY: TWO IMAGES OF THE WORLD?

Science has plunged us into a new conceptual world, which is not easy to align with the meanings used in the traditional conceptions of life. For this reason Wilfrid Sellars distinguishes between two images of the «man-in-the-world»: everyday life and scientific life, «the *manifest* and the *scientific* images of man-in-the-world»⁷. The former gives us the vital meaning and refuses to be reduced to the image provided by sciences, leading to tension between the two images of the world. In particular, some are afraid that the scientific standpoint might destroy something valuable and irreplaceable in our traditional conception, subverting the ultimate assumptions of human specialness which underpin our moral world.

The naturalistic approach leads to renewed examination of the relationship between science and philosophy, as there are some who propose a scientific-naturalistic image of the world and of man. But is there a scientific image of man, in which the human mind has been naturalised and which has been universally established? According to Habermas, this claim of a scientific naturalism is based on a «scientific belief» and ends up in «bad philosophy»: «The scientific belief in a science which will one day not only supplement, but *replace* the self-understanding of actors as persons by an objectivating self-description is not science, but bad philosophy»⁸.

The most sensible approach is instead to start from the world of life in which we find ourselves: as historical and social beings we are now and always in a world of life, which constitutes a field of vital and historical meaning, a horizon of experience, in which we are confronted by the power of the intersubjective. In my opinion, the most appropriate access to that vital world of meaning is the hermeneutic and pragmatic approach with a critical sense. One unavoidable component is the unconditionedness of truth and freedom, which forms part of «our» form of life and of our ethical self-understanding⁹.

The processes of the higher evolutionary stages should not be described with the same concepts applied to processes of lower evolutionary stages, if what we are attempting to do is to describe the complexity of the properties of organic and mental life that appear in the higher evolutionary stages¹⁰. Both the background knowledge and the «factum transcendental» of moral law and the feeling of unconditioned obligation can only be dealt with «in the mode of accomplishment» (*im Vollzugsmodus*)¹¹. For the awareness of obligation as knowledge of duty, the observer's perspective is not appropriate

⁷ SELLARS, W., «Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man», in: *Science, Perception, and Reality*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963, pp. 1-40.

⁸ HABERMAS, J., *The Future of Human Nature*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2003, p. 108.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 107, note 8 (p. 127).

¹¹ HABERMAS, J., *Philosophische Texte*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M., 2009, Bd. 5, Chap. 8, p. 233.

since it requires the participant's standpoint: «the participant's perspective of our everyday consciousness [...] can neither be easily integrated nor simply subordinated to the perspective of the observer»¹². Objectification constitutes a reifying abstraction, by means of which the mind is naturalised, reducing it to operations of the brain. One thing is bonding the world of the mind to the organic substrate, but such a bond does not imply its reduction. There are limits to naturalistic objectification: the brain does not think. The most appropriate stance is to maintain an epistemic dualism and take advantage of the hermeneutic access to the world of life, which cannot be replaced¹³.

Hence, in my opinion, there is no reason whatsoever to use, as Habermas does, the term «weak naturalism», nor to resort to an «ontological monism» (in the framework of an allegedly «critical naturalism», according to Pedro Teruel), because the naturalising approach must be overcome by the hermeneutic one. What Habermas considers as being the evolutionary origin and the historical-natural (*naturgeschichtlich*) genesis of the mind—that is, the natural history of the mind—is not a mere natural evolution, but a process of cognitive, technical and moral learning, based on emerging properties, thus irreducible to natural biological-evolutionary processes, because they are open to trans-biological and trans-evolutionary possibilities, for example, in the post-conventional development of the moral conscience.

So, for instance, it is not the same thing to claim the naturalisation of the psyche as it is to claim that of moral autonomy. Neither is it the same thing to seek to naturalise the conventional level of morality (which in the Apel–Habermasian context would be equivalent to a natural order) as it is to naturalise the post-conventional level, because on this level morality opens up to the universal and unconditioned sphere, which cannot be explained in naturalist terms, in spite of the Habermasian concession in the term «weak naturalism», which proves fairly incoherent in his philosophical thought taken as a whole. The natural level (naturalisable) of morality should therefore be distinguished from the post-natural level (not naturalisable) of morality¹⁴.

Naturalisation, furthermore, acts as a basis for the instrumentalisation of reason, which means reducing it to one of its possible uses, but reason is also open to the unconditioned, a moment felt and/or reasoned which cannot be naturalised.

In spite of the terminological concession referred to above, the approach found in Habermas—from some of his significant earlier writings such as

¹² HABERMAS, J., *The Future of Human Nature*, p. 107.

¹³ HABERMAS, J., *Philosophische Texte*, p. 262-263; *Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie*, Suhrkamp, Berlin, 2019.

¹⁴ See for example the criticism of the attempt to naturalise moral conscience and justice in the respective articles of Adela CORTINA, «La conciencia moral desde una perspectiva neuroética. De Darwin a Kant» and César ORTEGA, «¿Naturalizar la idea de justicia? Una respuesta crítica desde la teoría moral de Jürgen Habermas», in the monograph of the journal *Pensamiento*, vol. 72, no. 273 (2016), pp. 771-788 and 827-848, respectively.

the chapter devoted to Arnold Gehlen¹⁵, through to more recent books such as *Truth and Justification* and *Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie*— is not the naturalising approach, but the genuinely hermeneutic approach. In his criticism of Gehlen he insists precisely on the need to offer a universalising and interiorised perspective of intersubjectivity which reaches beyond the biologisation of the human *ethos* of reciprocity: the root of human ethics is not a biological root and the identity of the human individual must be anchored outside the organic system¹⁶. «Morality does not have a biological root» [keine biologische Wurzel]¹⁷, according to Habermas, and for this reason his stance resists the biologisation upheld by Gehlen, who placed the root of ethics in instinctive regulations. So although these can become social motivations, they are not ethically relevant, because what is decisive in the ethical order is not the «potential handed down by natural history» [das naturgeschichtliche Potential], but «the form of its symbolical structuring» [die Form seiner symbolischen Strukturierung], with Habermas going as far as to compare that «anthropological distinction» [anthropologische Unterscheidung] with the Kantian distinction between «inclination» [Neigung] and «duty» [Pflicht]¹⁸.

In *Truth and Justification* he pursues his hermeneutic-pragmatic approach as opposed to the naturalising one, albeit terminologically qualified in the version of what is (in my opinion, inappropriately) called «weak naturalism» and of a Kantian-type pragmatic transcendentalism¹⁹. He does indeed change the notion of what is transcendental, but this does not completely disappear: «Although pragmatism retains the transcendental framing of the issue, it defuses the tension between the transcendental and the empirical»²⁰. It is undeniable that «communicative language use still commits participants to strong idealizations. By orienting themselves to unconditional validity claims and presupposing each other's accountability, interlocutors aim beyond contingent and merely local contexts. But these counterfactual presuppositions are rooted in the facticity of everyday practices»²¹. In this philosophical context Habermas wishes to bring in an alternative to the contrast between «Quine's strong naturalism» and «Heidegger's idealism of the history of Being», in a variety of forms, by means of what he calls a «weak naturalism», which as I see it would be better grasped in terms of a critical hermeneutics, not unaware of scientific contributions. This is because naturalism applies the objectifying approach of the observer, whereas hermeneutic understanding incorporates

¹⁵ HABERMAS, J., *Philosophisch-politische Profile*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M., 1971, Chap. 9, pp. 200-221.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 212 and 213.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 214-215.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

¹⁹ HABERMAS, J., *Truth and Justification*, The MIT Press, Cambridge (Mass.), 2003, Introduction, pp. 1-49.

²⁰ HABERMAS, J., *Truth and Justification*, p. 17.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17-18

the practical perspective of the participant in communication, who cannot but orient their thinking and doing by norms and be affected by reasons²².

Habermas clearly rejects the naturalism that he calls «strong», that is, the sort that «aims to *replace* the conceptual analysis of practices of the lifeworld with a scientific neurological or biogenetic explanation of the achievements of the human brain»²³. But on the other hand, there is no reason to call what he describes as «weak naturalism» «naturalism», nor even «weak», because, specifically going by Habermasian criteria, this only consists in taking into account the «natural» origin (in the perspective of the theory of evolution) of the biological endowment and of the cultural way of life of *Homo sapiens*²⁴; that is, making use of scientific knowledge. But opting for the term «naturalism» implies a philosophical conception that is not neutral and does not properly represent Habermas's own conception, which continues to remain open to the issue in transcendental terms from the hermeneutical sphere. In this more typically Habermasian perspective, one must «distinguish sharply between the hermeneutic approach of a rational reconstruction of the structures of the lifeworld, which we undertake from the perspective of participants, and the observation-based causal analysis of how these structures naturally evolve»²⁵.

Based on Habermas's own text, why should we call his position «naturalism» and not «hermeneutics»? Does it not seem to be a concession to current trends? For this presumed weak naturalism is said: a) to prevent subjection or subordination of the «internal point of view» of the lifeworld to the «external point of view» of the objective world; that is, to overcome the objectivism of scientificism and positivism, which are features of naturalistic standpoints; b) to involve processes of «learning» that arise over «natural history», which cannot be interpreted from the concepts of Neo-Darwinism; c) to maintain «the *epistemic* priority of the horizon of the lifeworld». Talking of naturalism thus leads to philosophical confusion in spite of its appeal in the present setting, generally predisposed towards naturalisation.

3. WHAT HUMAN PERSON MEANS

It has been common practice in philosophy and everyday life in contemporary western societies to identify the human being with the person and attribute dignity to this person. But one should reflect firstly on what it means to be human and to be a person, on why the human being is considered as a person; secondly, on whether every human being is a person; and thirdly, after possibly

²² *Ibid.*, p. 24.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 28. And HABERMAS, J., *Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie*, Suhrkamp, Berlin, 2019, Bd. 1, p. 169; Bd. 2, p. 14, 208 passim. Vid. CORTINA, A., *La Escuela de Fráncfort. Crítica y utopía*, Síntesis, Madrid, 2008 y ORTEGA, C., *Habermas ante el siglo XXI*, Tecnos, Madrid, 2021.

making human equivalent to person, to analyse what dignity means and why the special qualification of dignity is attributed to the human being. This reflection reveals the dual approach by means of which one can understand what the notion of person means, referring to the human being: the dimension constituting the real entity that we call «person» and the special value that we accord to this (the value of dignity).

Throughout the history of thought, different characteristic traits and abilities have been used to distinguish the human person, such as self-awareness, moral conscience, intelligence, intimacy, freedom and the ability to plan a moral life, dignity as unconditioned value, etc. Can these characteristics and abilities attributed to the person be naturalised? Are they to be considered natural because they have biological and evolutionary roots? Or are they instead irreducible emerging qualities which constitute an innovative qualitative leap? Is hominisation the same thing as humanisation and personalisation? It may be possible to naturalise the process of hominisation, but it is not easy to naturalise the process of humanisation by personalisation.

Attempts to naturalise self-awareness²⁶, the moral conscience²⁷, intelligence²⁸, ethical, moral and personal life²⁹, intimacy³⁰, freedom³¹, etc. have indeed not been successful; that is to say, no full naturalistic explanation has been given for practically any of the essential traits and abilities that have specifically been attributed to the human person.

In recent times, however, a multiple project for naturalising human life and the person has been gaining strength through at least two channels: biologist naturalisation from animality, and technologisation from computationalism. It is curious that the issue of the distinctive status of the human person should be questioned from both the perspective of the biological evolution of other animals and that of the innovative power of the new biotechnologies, either by reducing man to just another animal, or proposing his improvement by technological enhancement in the transhumanist and posthumanist movement.

²⁶ ÁLVAREZ, M., *El problema de la libertad ante la nueva escisión de la cultura*, Real Academia de Ciencias Morales y Política, Madrid, 2007, ARANA, J., *La conciencia inexplicada*, Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid, 2015, MORGADO, I., *Cómo percibimos el mundo*, Ariel, Barcelona, 2012.

²⁷ CORTINA, A., *Neuroética y neuropolítica*, Tecnos, Madrid, 2011.

²⁸ ZUBIRI, X., *Inteligencia sentiente*, Alianza, Madrid, 1980, AYALA, F., *Origen y evolución del hombre*, Alianza, Madrid, 1986, MARINA, J. A., *El cerebro infantil: la gran oportunidad*, Ariel, Barcelona, 2011.

²⁹ ORTEGA Y GASSET, J., *Obras completas*, Taurus, Madrid, 2004-2010, ZUBIRI, X., *Sobre el hombre*, Alianza, Madrid, 1986, ARANGUREN, J. L., *Ética*, en *Obras completas*, II, Trotta, Madrid, 1994.

³⁰ LAÍN, P., «La intimidad del hombre», Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes (<http://www.cervantesvirtual.com>), CONILL, J., *Intimidad corporal y persona humana*, Tecnos, Madrid, 2019.

³¹ FUSTER, J., *The Neuroscience of Freedom and Creativity*, Cambridge University Press, 2013.

4. CAN THE NOTION OF PERSON BE SCIENTIFICALLY NATURALISED?

The concept of person has been one of the proposals for interpreting the complex concept of human nature, which should not be reduced to a mere empirical sort of «factual issue», as Mosterín's naturalistic scientificist positivism suggests, for instance.

In his naturalistic positivism, Mosterín considers human nature to be «a factual issue»³² and proposes restricting its study to the natural aspect of the human organism (to the body) radically dissociating this from the concept of person, because the person would not be a natural nor objective property, but the product of a conventional evaluation, a mere fiction, with no «intrinsic value»³³, because «nothing has intrinsic value»; since all value is the effect (result) of an evaluation. Only science works on how things are, so that a notion of human nature as a factual issue would have to do without evaluations and thus without the concept of person, since this includes a moral evaluation.

It nevertheless draws one's attention, firstly, that Mosterín attributes the person «true freedom»³⁴, since this assertion also goes beyond the order of factual issues; and secondly, that he maintains a notion of «morality» and of «moral conscience». For example, when he affirms: «We cannot abdicate from moral conscience»³⁵, taking this to mean «morality as a structure» (referring to Aranguren) and the fact that «we always have to choose». Do these traits of morality (morality as a structure, the moral conscience and the capacity for choice) belong to human nature or are they conventional? If they are considered natural, there would be no problem with resorting to the notion of a person to express this structural aspect of human nature; if this is not the case, then Mosterín would be contradicting other assertions of his own, in which morality is reduced to a conventional property.

Undeniably, there are difficulties involved in naturalising the notion of person in contemporary culture. If it is no longer possible to «naturalise» colours (recall the problem of the «*qualia*»), it is even harder to naturalise the person. If the experience of colours is considered subjective (having no objectiveness) and secondary, this would apply even more to the experience of persons (personal experience) and to what is meant by the person (and the evaluative properties accompanying the person). If there are no colours in nature objectively (scientifically) speaking, but only subjectively and conventionally considered, neither will there be persons in nature objectively (scientifically) speaking, but only subjectively and conventionally considered. The person is not a natural reality or a natural property; instead an entity with certain natural and social qualities is considered—that is, interpreted as—a person.

³² MOSTERÍN, J., *La naturaleza humana*, Espasa-Calpe, Madrid, 2006, p. 382; also pp. 380-385.

³³ MOSTERÍN, J., *La naturaleza humana*, pp. 378-379 and 380; *El triunfo de la compasión*, Alianza, Madrid, 2014, pp. 70-71.

³⁴ MOSTERÍN, J., *La naturaleza humana*, p. 323.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 368; *El triunfo de la compasión*, p. 75.

In spite of these difficulties, some scientists do consider that the scientific theory of consciousness as an affirmation of the person is coherent. For example, Edelman and Tononi conclude that «scientific investigation of consciousness is also consistent with the facts of human individuality and subjectivity»³⁶, as a «philosophical consequence» of their scientific theory of consciousness. They posit a scientific recognition of the subjective domain, thus a scientific vision of human nature, which (1) accepts the effectiveness of the consciousness in the integration of information and planning, with evolutionary advantages, insofar as «it is the consciousness which provides us with freedom and justification»³⁷; and (2) incorporates value systems in the cerebral selection system underlying the conscience. The modification of these value systems by learning leads to the question of the place of value in a world of fact, in such a way that knowing «our place in the universe» (by means of science) is, according to these scientists, compatible with the «consolation and meaning» of life (by means of art). For this reason they defend that it is possible to have a «useful symbiosis» between the material bases of the mind and the realm of meaning, since a scientific theory cannot replace the phenomenal experience, and that there are consequently limits to the exploration of the material order, since not everything is the subject of scientific study: grasping the meaning instead requires the phenomenal experience, which is unique in each human individual³⁸.

5. THE NIHILISTIC DRIFT OF NEUROSCIENTIFIC NATURALISATION OF THE PERSON

While everyone believes they understand the concept of person, a satisfactory definition is elusive. The great problem that always comes up is that of the criteria by which this is determined as such and which philosophy has dealt with throughout its history. But neither the metaphysical concepts of the person nor the attempts to define the person on a more empirical plane have succeeded in providing objective criteria to determine the reality of the person. Neither have neurosciences got to the bottom of the person, revealing the essential differences between persons and non-persons³⁹.

Martha J. Farah and Andrea S. Heberlein believe that no-one has been successful in defining the person satisfactorily because «the concept does not

³⁶ EDELMAN and TONONI, *El universo de la conciencia*, p. 259.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 261 and 262.

³⁸ EDELMAN and TONONI, *El universo de la conciencia*, pp. 265 and 266; EDELMAN, Gerald M., «Memory and the Individual Soul: Against Silly Reductionism», in John CORNWELL (ed.), *Nature's Imagination: The Frontiers of Scientific Vision*, Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 200-206.

³⁹ FARAH, Martha J., and HEBERLEIN, Andrea S., «Personhood and Neuroscience: Naturalizing or Nihilating?», *American Journal of Bioethics*, 7 (1), 2007, pp. 37-48.

correspond to any real category of objects in the world», but «is the product of an evolved brain system that develops innately and projects itself automatically and irrepressibly onto the world whenever triggered by stimulus features such as a human-like face, body, or contingent patterns of behavior»⁴⁰. Neuroscience's empirical approach has also failed to provide a neuroscientific definition of the person with clear and objective criteria. For this reason, these authors consider that the contribution of neuroscience to understanding the person consists in revealing not what persons are, but why we have the intuition that there are persons, referring to the existence of an autonomous person network in the brain⁴¹. Hence, instead of naturalising the concept of person by identifying its essential characteristics in a natural world, neuroscience can show us that the person is an illusory construction of our brains, projected on the world, which has probably arisen with some adaptive function due to the social nature of the human animal. We thus come to a «nihilistic» result: the person is not really in the world and thus it is not worthwhile for philosophy to go on searching for objective criteria to determine what the person is⁴².

According to the analysis set forth, the person would be an illusory construction of the brain, lacking any objective reality, but acting in everyday life as a useful fiction to distinguish persons from other beings. In my opinion, nevertheless, this analysis mixes up beings of the same or similar species with persons. That is why, to clear up this confusion between human being and person, what the human brain is possibly equipped and set up for is to represent other human beings, because it is a «social brain»⁴³, which distinguishes human beings (fellow men and women) from the other beings that exist in the world. It could be true that the so-called «*person network*» is no such thing, but rather a certain biological *a priori*, by means of which we are able even unconsciously to distinguish human beings from other non-human beings; a certain region of the cortex could enable us to automatically recognise the human face⁴⁴. But the fact of our having no alternative but to distinguish humans from non-humans tells us nothing about the consideration of those human beings as persons; that is, the presumed biologically-based ability to distinguish the person does not exist because at most this comes down to the distinction between human and non-human, which is not the same thing as determining, understanding and evaluating (respecting) this as a person.

⁴⁰ FARAH, Martha J., and HEBERLEIN, Andrea S., «Personhood and Neuroscience: Naturalizing or Nihilating?», *The American Journal of Bioethics*, 7 (1), 2007, pp. 37-48.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.

⁴³ SALLES, A. y EVERS, K. (coord.), *La vida social del cerebro*, Fontamara, México, 2014; CALVO, P., *The Cordial Economy – Ethics, Recognition and Reciprocity*, Springer, 2018.

⁴⁴ FARAH, Martha J., and HEBERLEIN, Andrea S., «Personhood and Neuroscience: Naturalizing or Nihilating?», pp. 43 and 44.

6. NEED FOR A NON-NATURALISED PHILOSOPHICAL NOTION OF THE HUMAN PERSON

The concept of the person needs to be resolved more thoroughly and in a better way. In my view, it is not acceptable to dissolve the problem by denying the reality of the person and considering this to be a fictitious category, at the most with a narrative nature.

One way to recover a relevant philosophical notion has been the phenomenological hermeneutical method, but there are proposals such as the Heideggerian concept which, despite not being swept off in the naturalistic drift, have not managed to clear up the concept of the person, by having reduced it to the facticity of the *Dasein*. Heidegger believes that he overcomes the bioanthropological approach, relinquishing now traditional notions such as that of the person and replacing it with that of the *Dasein*, as he sets forth paradigmatically in his *Sein und Zeit*⁴⁵ and in *Brief über den Humanismus*. To reach the genuine «essence of man» this should not be understood as an entity among other entities, based on animality (*homo animalis*), because this form of action is proper to a «metaphysics», which merely deforms the essence of man by means of concepts such as «*animus sive mens*» (spirit or mind), «subject», «person», spirit (*Geist*), that is, «by not conceiving this in its essential provenance [*Wesensherkunft*]», which «is always the essential future for historical mankind». Humanism and metaphysics think of man «on the basis of *animalitas* and do not think in the direction of his *humanitas*»⁴⁶.

In my view, the Heideggerian approach is insufficient. There is, however, a more fruitful way to achieve a non-naturalistic concept of the human person in Zubirian philosophy, insofar as this comprises the constitutive and entitative structure of the human person. Its development overcomes the traditional form of determining the reality of the person by means of Boethius's classic definition, which was based on the Aristotelian physical-ontological concept of substance, through the innovative Zubirian notions of substantivity and open essence. In this respect Laín's structurism after Zubiri is very useful, to the extent that human reality opens up to a personalising order that goes beyond what is merely natural by virtue of the first function of human intelligence which, though biological, is nevertheless enabling and moving towards a later process, that of personal life. From this philosophical perspective, along with scientific contributions, nature and freedom in the human person are joined at the root.

Substance, in its Aristotelian sense, has been the basic concept for determining the person, characterised by its «rational nature». The structure of reality which was thus expressed in the *lógos* corresponding to Aristotelian thought

⁴⁵ HEIDEGGER, M., *Sein und Zeit*, § 10: «Die Abgrenzung der Daseinsanalytik gegen Anthropologie, Psychologie und Biologie» [How the analytic of Dasein is to be distinguished from anthropology, psychology, and biology] (*Being and Time*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1962).

⁴⁶ HEIDEGGER, M., «*Letter on Humanism*», in *Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 1992, pp. 213-265, particularly 227 and 233.

and in most of the philosophical tradition was that of subject-predicate, in an inhesion relationship, whereas the structure of reality as expressed in the Zubirian *lógos* is that of the construct of cohesion or system, which is open to interpretation and evaluation⁴⁷. That is, there is no longer any reliance on being able to reach real concepts, or objective ones, as was thought in ancient and modern traditions, but one must instead resort to interpretative concepts, such as that of the person, based on experiential innovation. In my opinion, the classic determination of the person from Boethius's definition is prone to naturalisation, but the same thing does not occur with the concept of the person put forward by Zubiri, in spite of being closely linked to the present natural sciences (evolutionary biology, genetics and neurology).

University of Valencia (Spain),
Department of Philosophy
Jesus.Conill@uv.es

JESÚS CONILL SANCHO

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⁴⁷ See ZUBIRI, X., *Sobre la esencia* (Alianza, Madrid, 1962) and *Estructura de la metafísica* (Alianza, Madrid, 2016).