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SELLARS  
& *his* LEGACY

Edited by James R. O'Shea

## Sellars and his Legacy



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James R. O'Shea

**OXFORD**  
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*In memory of two Sellarsians:  
Richard Rorty (1931–2007) and Jay F. Rosenberg (1942–2008)*



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# References for Sellars's Works

## A Note on Citations

There is a standard method of abbreviated citation to Sellars's works, in large part thanks to the ongoing work over several decades of Jeffrey Sicha at Ridgeview Publishing Company, in his continuing efforts to keep Sellars's writings in print (<<http://www.ridgeviewpublishing.com>>). Also important to note in this regard are the bibliographical, archival, and other contributions from Andrew Chrucky available at his Sellars website, 'Problems from Wilfrid Sellars' (<<http://www.ditext.com/sellars/>>). The Sellars Archive held in the Archives of Scientific Philosophy of the University of Pittsburgh is also an outstanding resource for obtaining both the published and unpublished work of Sellars, much of which is also available online: <<http://www.library.pitt.edu/wilfrid-s-sellars-papers>>. It has been the vitally important funding by Robert Brandom and John McDowell via their successive Andrew Mellon Foundation Distinguished Achievement Awards that has made possible the processing and digitizing of the materials in the Sellars Archive, in addition to making possible the *Sellars Centenary Conference* at University College Dublin in 2012 that led to this volume.

The standard abbreviations of Sellars's works that follow have been used throughout this volume. Given the many different collections of Sellars's writings that are now and soon to be available—including digital and online versions with new numbering introduced for every paragraph (identified in this volume by '¶')—references to parts (e.g., 'VI') or short sections ('§') and paragraph numbers ('¶') of books and articles have frequently been substituted for or added to page number citations, to facilitate location across present and future editions. In some cases I have also followed the citation methods of particular contributors in various respects when these were usefully detailed in various ways.

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# Introduction

## Origins and Legacy of a Synoptic Vision

*James R. O'Shea*

### I

Over the last two decades the influence of Wilfrid Sellars (1912–89) on contemporary philosophical debates about mind, meaning, knowledge, and ontology has accelerated to such a degree that it no longer seems necessary to justify the claim that he was, and will remain, one of the most important philosophers of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> His work is now widely recognized to be having a steadily increasing impact across an extraordinary range of topics and differing philosophical perspectives.

In some cases it has been some particular groundbreaking idea of Sellars's that has animated the work of philosophers working in specific areas of philosophy: for example, his normative functionalist account of thoughts; his strong scientific realism; his account of and attempt to resolve the 'clash' between the 'manifest and scientific images of man-in-the-world'; his thoroughgoing naturalism and his nominalist approach to ontology; his social pragmatist and inferentialist approach to meaning; his famous views on the 'myth of the given' and the 'logical space of reasons' in epistemology, semantics, and the philosophy of perception; his 'myth of Jones' account of inner thoughts and sensations as theoretical posits; or his novel theoretical approach to sensory consciousness and sensible qualities. But perhaps because Sellars's own approach to philosophy was deeply systematic and dialectical rather than piecemeal, both in its spirit and in its execution, most of the well-known contemporary philosophers who have been inspired by aspects of Sellars's views have tended to profess that his views helped to form the very core of their philosophical outlooks in general. One of the most striking aspects of Sellars's philosophical legacy, consequently, has been the remarkable range of sharply contrasting philosophical outlooks that his systematic

<sup>1</sup> For book-length systematic overviews and analyses of Sellars's philosophy (including biographical sketches), see Brandom (2015), deVries (2005), O'Shea (2007), Rosenberg (2007), and Seibt (2007). See also deVries (2015); and for further resources see the "Problems from Wilfrid Sellars" website maintained by Andrew Churcky (<<http://www.ditext.com/sellars/>>).

work has inspired, each of which nonetheless remains Sellarsian in central and systematic respects. This volume is intended to reflect that spirit and that legacy.

To mark the one hundredth anniversary of Sellars's birth, a "Sellars Centenary Conference" was hosted by University College Dublin in 2012, and the chapters of this volume have grown out of papers that were first presented at that large conference.<sup>2</sup> Before sketching the main highlights of those chapters below, however, perhaps a few words about the general character and development of Sellars's philosophy might help to put into context the famously divided yet exceptionally productive legacy of ideas that will come through loud and clear in the chapters to follow.

It has become common to refer to a rough-and-ready distinction between 'left-wing' and 'right-wing' Sellarsians, a distinction that reportedly traces back at least as far as remarks by Richard Rorty at a summer workshop featuring Sellars in 1974.<sup>3</sup> Left-wing Sellarsians (perhaps the most famous examples being Richard Rorty, Robert Brandom, John McDowell, and Michael Williams, among others) typically view right-wing Sellarsians (usually attributed to Ruth Millikan, Paul Churchland, Jay Rosenberg, Daniel Dennett, and Johanna Seibt, among others) as endorsing the ultimate eliminability or reducibility of the normative to the scientifically natural.<sup>4</sup> This is based primarily on what the left-Sellarsians argue are misguided right-wing conceptions, shared by Sellars himself, of the nature and reach of scientific realism or scientific naturalism. The left-Sellarsians hold that what has come to be known as Sellars's *scientia mensura* passage is implausible even when all of Sellars's various qualifications have been entered; that is, they reject Sellars's claim that "in the dimension of describing and explaining the world, science is the measure of all things, of what is that it is and of what is not that it is not" (Sellars EPM §41; the ancient Greek sophist Protagoras's *homo mensura* dictum was of course: "Of all things the measure is man, of the things that are, that they are, and of things that are not, that they are not"). Right-wing Sellarsians, on the other hand, typically charge left-Sellarsians with failure to appreciate the plausibility of Sellars's scientific naturalist accounts of cognition and his emphasis on the importance of radical conceptual change in science. They typically contend for the plausibility of some or all of the naturalistic dimensions of Sellars's views: for example, his prescient cognitive-scientific account of mental and linguistic 'picturing' representation; his appeal to evolution-based 'animal representational systems'; his defenses of the non-conceptual yet contentual and representational aspects of sensory consciousness;

<sup>2</sup> Many thanks are due to John McDowell, whose Andrew Mellon Foundation Distinguished Achievement Award provided the substantial funding for the Sellars Centenary Conference. In addition to twelve plenary papers there were also twenty-seven workshop papers and three hundred participants overall, testifying to the growing influence of Sellars's philosophy.

<sup>3</sup> For recent remarks on the 'left/right-wing Sellarsian' distinction and its possible origins, see Brandom (2015: 25, 31, 56–9, 94, 97; 2008: 211) and Lance (2008: 413; 2000: 124). These and other remarks by Sellarsians on the 'left/right' distinction are often helpful in various ways, but all typically grant that the distinction is subject to various interpretations and is liable to exceptions on any specific rendering.

<sup>4</sup> For a recent explicit characterization and defense of the 'right-wing' interpretation of Sellars's views, see William Rottschaefer (2011a, 2011b). Rottschaefer there argues that the particular middle way or reconciling interpretation I defend in O'Shea (2007) is too 'left-wing' Kantian to represent accurately Sellars's own scientifically naturalist views.

his novel nominalist metaphysics and process ontology; and his gestures toward the ultimately naturalistic bases of normativity itself.

While there is undoubtedly some usefulness in this rather sweeping distinction of Sellars-influenced views into two camps, when one looks carefully at the views of the philosophers that span this division one finds that, on the one hand, the right-wing Sellarsians do not in fact typically argue for the eliminability or reducibility of normativity (although this is certainly a complex issue), and on the other hand, the left-wing Sellarsians are fully aware of, but launch arguments against, Sellars's particular ways of interpreting and attempting to integrate scientific realism and naturalism into the 'manifest' dimensions of human rationality, experience, and action. Nonetheless, the left-wing/right-wing distinction does reflect not only a real divergence in Sellars's philosophical legacy, but also, I will now suggest, certain persistent tensions in Sellars's own insightful and ambitious systematic philosophy. These pertain primarily to (1) his Kantianism (which Sellars also formulated in pragmatist and later-Wittgensteinian terms) when combined with (2) his comprehensive scientific naturalism; and we must also add, in addition to that primary tension, (3) his views on the nature of sensory consciousness and perceptible qualities. We can see these themes, and the possible tensions between them, developing from early on in Sellars's career.

The familiar Kantian themes are those that bear on what Sellars takes to be the correct account of the nature of human conceptual cognition and intentionality. Roughly speaking, one version of the idea of the Given that Sellars famously rejects, at least in one of its traditional epistemological roles, is the idea that since it would seem not all items of knowledge can be epistemically dependent on other items of knowledge, there must be some items of knowledge that are directly warranted for us simply in our immediate experience or apprehension of them, whether by sense or by reason, independently of any other knowledge that we might possess. Sellars, however, argued that there are no epistemically autonomous or independent items of directly given knowledge that could coherently fit that bill. And like Kant, the ways in which Sellars argued for this claim made it a point not just about knowledge, but about the more basic possibility of having any contentful and potentially self-aware experience of objects in a world at all—a point about intentionality or representational purport itself.

Kant had argued, for instance, that the very possibility of directly apprehending any change or event as such, whether by 'inner' or 'outer' sense, already requires the possession of certain concepts that determine the rules of possibility and necessity for a wider system of objects and states of affairs, of which *this* experience must (at least implicitly) be conceived to be a lawful part. On Sellars's own developed view of conceptual content, this Kantian line of thought is reflected in the well-known 'space of reasons' conception of knowledge that was highlighted in Sellars's 1956 masterwork, 'Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind' (EPM), and epitomized in this oft-quoted remark:

The essential point is that 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. (EPM VIII, §36)

The above Kantian view of conceptual content was taken by Sellars to entail in *some* sense the conceptual or pragmatic *irreducibility* of the normative 'ought-to-be' rules that make meaning, knowledge, and conceptual thinking possible. As Sellars put it in another well-known remark from EPM: "... the idea that epistemic facts can be analyzed without remainder—even 'in principle'—into non-epistemic facts... is, I believe, a radical mistake—a mistake of a piece with the so-called 'naturalistic fallacy' in ethics" (EPM I, §5).

Sellars's "Autobiographical Remarks" (AR, 1975) certainly confirm the early and deep influence of Kant on the development of these famous Sellarsian themes. But one also finds equally marked emphasis, usually in the very same passages, on the second familiar Sellarsian theme mentioned above: namely, the role of scientific naturalism, not only in shaping Sellars's overall philosophical outlook, but in particular in relation to his attitude toward the specific Kantian contributions just noted. Thus, of his first graduate school days, at Buffalo in 1933, Sellars remarks on having studied Kant and Husserl with the American phenomenologist Marvin Farber, and about Farber he comments that his "combination of utter respect for the structure of Husserl's thought with the equally firm conviction that this structure could be given a naturalistic interpretation was undoubtedly a key influence on my own subsequent philosophical strategy" (AR 283). But it is of course not transparent what exactly it would *be* to have a strategy of providing a naturalistic interpretation of the structure of Husserl's thought, or of Kant's thought—of what it would be to *naturalize Kant*, as one might put it. What would it look like to succeed in giving a naturalistic interpretation of the rule-governed, constitutive, objectivity-enabling role of concepts on Kant's account, as briefly described above? What would a naturalistic "interpretation" of the content and role of irreducibly normative concepts look like? It is not clear that the goal of finding a satisfactory answer to this crucial question was to get any easier to answer over the next five decades of Sellars's career. But Sellars's retrospective self-diagnosis was correct: he was to continue to focus throughout his entire career on the centrality and persistence of this overarching Kantian naturalist strategy.

From Buffalo, with his MA thesis on "Substance, Change, and Event" in hand, Sellars then travelled on a Rhodes scholarship to Oriel College, Oxford, where from 1934 to 1936 he would complete a first-class honours BA degree in philosophy, politics, and economics, with a concentration in philosophy (later converted to an MA degree with a standard fee). At Oxford, he tells us, he studied Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* with H. H. Price of New College as his tutor, and in particular he recollects his conviction that Kant, with his holistic, rule-governed conception of thought and experience, had successfully shown that "a skeptic who grants knowledge of even the simplest fact about an event occurring in Time is, in effect, granting knowledge of the existence of nature as a whole. I was sure he was right" (AR 285). The deep-seated nature of these Kantian convictions in Sellars has in recent years been strongly defended in influential works by John McDowell and Robert Brandom.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> I would also add that the irreducibly Kantian and normative dimensions of Sellars's thought were also defended in detail, and with expertise on Kant's philosophy, by Jay F. Rosenberg, whose 1986 book, *The*

In the very next sentence, however, having just endorsed the holistic and anti-skeptical transcendental argument quoted above, comes once again what Sellars here characterizes as a haunting question:

... I was sure [Kant] was right. But his own question haunted me. How is it *possible* that knowledge has this structure? The tension between dogmatic realism, and its appeal to self-evident truth, and transcendental idealism, in which conceptual structures hover over a non-cognitive manifold of sense, became almost intolerable. It wasn't until much later that I came to see that the solution of the puzzle lay in correctly locating the conceptual order in the causal order and correctly interpreting the causality involved.

Although this larger enterprise was never far from my thoughts, I was not even clear about the terms in which it was to be formulated. (AR 285–6)

The Kantian question, as Sellars formulates it here, is the question: How is it *possible* that our knowledge has the holistic, 'concept-first', rule-governed, objective thought-enabling structure that it does have, as described above? This question haunts Sellars because he is unsatisfied with both "dogmatic realist" and "transcendental idealist" answers to the question of how it is possible that our knowledge has the Kantian structure that Sellars agrees that it must have, if knowledge of even the "simplest fact" is to be possible. This is what leaves us in an "almost intolerable" position—that is, until the possibility of the necessarily Kantian structure of our knowledge is explained by, as he puts it, "correctly locating the conceptual order in the causal order and correctly interpreting the causality involved." Which once again leaves *us* with the haunting question: What does Sellars think it takes to do *that* job properly?—the job of correctly locating the conceptual order *in* the causal order?

Sellars indicates straightaway in the next paragraph that answering this haunting question eventually required him to develop "an adequate naturalistic philosophy of mind"—and more particularly, an adequate account of "the intentional structure of mental acts" (AR 286). He tells us that "it wasn't until some ten years later [i.e., in the mid-1940s], when I began to *equate* thought with language, that the desired synthesis began to take shape" (AR 286).<sup>6</sup> Sellars's overall discussion in this autobiographical context makes it clear that one thing that he thinks is needed in order to answer the question of how the Kantian structure of our thought and experience is possible is a properly *naturalistic* account of the intentionality of thought and language.

*Thinking Self*, was a Kantian and Sellarsian tour de force that has thankfully recently been reprinted at an affordable price by Jeffrey Sicha of Ridgeview Publishing Company.

<sup>6</sup> In his important late article, 'Mental Events', Sellars begins by remarking that he is "often construed as holding that mental events in the sense of thoughts ... are linguistic events. This is a misunderstanding" (MEV, 1981, §1). In fact what he wants "to highlight [is] the methodological point that in the domain of the mental, language is primary in the order of knowing" (§4). What, then, in the domain of the mental, is "prior in the order of being" (§5)? Sellars's answer is that "if the mental as linguistic is better known to us, it is in the theory of animal representational systems generally that we come to grips with the better known in itself of the mental" (§6). This last, of course, is precisely the sort of claim that is highlighted in 'right-wing' defenses of Sellars's various sketches of the underlying representational 'picturing' or mapping cognitions that are generated by natural selection in the case of both humans and other animals, and by rule-governed linguistic practices in the case of human beings.

A very similar dialectic plays out in Sellars's autobiographical reflections on his encounters with H. A. Prichard's "deontological intuitionism" at Oxford. What gripped him in moral philosophy, he tells us, was Prichard's account of the logic of 'ought'—the concept of moral obligation—and in particular the intersubjective moral truths that, as he agreed with Prichard, such concepts make possible (AR 285). But once again he adds straightaway: "As I put it to myself at the time, Prichard's insights would somehow have to be cashed out in naturalistic terms": "Somehow intuitionism and emotivism would have to be *aufgehoben* into a naturalistic framework which recognized ethical concepts as genuine concepts and found a place for intersubjectivity and truth" (AR 284–5).

So the two-pronged nature of Sellars's own take on the development of his philosophical views is clear. On the one hand, for Sellars, in crucial respects Kant was right about the necessary structure of our conceptual cognition in general. As he puts it in the *Autobiographical Reflections*, "What was needed was a functional theory of concepts which would make their role in reasoning, rather than a supposed origin in experience, their primary feature. The influence of Kant was to play a decisive role" (AR 285). This functionalist or inferentialist aspect of Sellars's broadly Kantian view of conceptual content has of course been developed with particular force and depth by Robert Brandom. At the same time, Sellars reports that while working at the University of Iowa in the late 1930s, he and his friend Herbert Feigl, the logical empiricist, "shared a common purpose: to formulate a scientifically oriented, naturalistic realism which would 'save the appearances'" (AR 289). As Sellars recounts it, Feigl was surprised by "the seriousness with which I took such ideas as causal necessity, synthetic *a priori* knowledge, intentionality, ethical intuitionism, the problem of universals, etc. [...], even] when I made it clear that my aim was to map these structures into a naturalistic, even a materialistic metaphysics..." (AR 290).

It is this overriding and enduring project of Sellars's—that of defending a Kantian conception of our conceptual cognition, and yet at the same time attempting to sketch how to naturalize scientifically that same conception—that I think has been the primary source of the subsequent forks in the road that have been carved out by those who have been strongly influenced by Sellars's work. John McDowell's *Mind and World* (1994), for instance, surely raises the question of whether Sellars really ought to have been 'haunted'—in the particular way that we have just seen Sellars early on was haunted—by the question of how to give a scientific naturalist account of the very possibility of the Kantian space of reasons itself. Perhaps, if McDowell is right, the latter naturalistic project, conceived in *that* way, is continuously in danger of leading to various distorting 'interiorizations' of the space of reasons, distortions to which Sellars himself was arguably susceptible. By contrast, it is precisely the ambitious and subtle naturalistic explanatory aims of Sellars's thought that has inspired the work of the more scientific naturalist 'right-wing' Sellarsians mentioned earlier. Such thinkers not only take up Sellars's overriding naturalizing aim, they also embrace, in different ways, many of the other central Sellarsian themes mentioned above: the rejection of the

Given; a holistic, functional, or ‘network’ conception of meaning, highlighting the ‘theory-ladenness’ of cognition; a thoroughgoing anti-Cartesian outlook; and even an emphasis—when properly understood—on the constitutive normativity of cognition.

Taking all of the Sellars-inspired thinkers across the spectrum, however, it would seem that the “true *via media*” that Sellars sought—giving, in *his* way, equal force to both the irreducibly Kantian and the globally naturalizing sides of his story, has continued to prove elusive, although fruitfully so, when the more detailed Sellarsian stories have been told on each side, left and right. We saw earlier that Sellars had sought to reassure Feigl, in relation to the question that had ‘haunted’ him—the question of how the Kantian rule-governed structure of our conceptual cognition is itself possible—by insisting that his “aim was to map these structures onto a naturalistic, even a materialistic metaphysics” (AR 290). Yet when attempts have been made to try to construct or project the ideal scientific explanatory story as to how we as a species and as individuals were able to get into and are now able to employ such a Kantian rule-governed framework, the resulting task of explaining just how the Kantian space of possibilities and necessities non-trivially ‘maps onto’ the projected *naturalistic* space of possibilities and necessities has continued to generate familiar reductionist/anti-reductionist controversies (across the ‘manifest’ and ‘scientific naturalist’ levels, as it were).

The tendency among many scientific naturalist Sellarsians in response to this situation has been to argue that the broadly Kantian and later-Wittgensteinian conception of our rational nature that was dear to Sellars (and which remains dear to Hegelian and pragmatist left-wing Sellarsians today) is *itself* in central respects a problematic or only partial ‘manifest’ conception of our cognitive nature, one that is properly being more adequately *reconceived* in light of the more fundamentally explanatory biological and cognitive-scientific conceptions of the sorts of intentionality and representational systems that we actually possess. In the right hands, as I have noted, the resulting scientific accounts of cognition are Sellarsian in many crucial respects, and the overriding naturalistic impulse is plausibly taken to be one of which Sellars would approve. By contrast, the tendency among the more Kantian or left-wing Sellarsians has been to argue that a non-mysterious integration of our rational nature with the causal order of nature does not require that we row in with what was, as they see it, a tendency in Sellars to be haunted by implausibly strong and over-generalizing claims on behalf of scientific naturalism.

So far in these synoptic remarks I have been discussing some of the enduring challenges raised by Sellars in his attempt to bring his scientific naturalism fully to bear on his Kantian-pragmatist conception of the manifest image as the holistic and conceptually irreducible domain of persons and norms, of meaning and intentionality.<sup>7</sup> One of

<sup>7</sup> For robust ‘left-wing’ Sellarsian defenses of the *pragmatist* dimensions of Sellars’s thought, see the chapters by Kukla and Lance and by Williams. For criticism from the pragmatist ‘left’ of Sellars’s account of the ontological issues involved in the ‘clash of the images’, see the chapters by deVries and by Brandom. See also, however, the chapter by Kraut on Sellars’s attempt to sustain a metaphysics of abstract objects on grounds that should, Kraut argues, be acceptable to contemporary pragmatists.

Sellars's key moves in this integrating project, as noted in several of the chapters in this volume, is the essentially Kantian one of arguing that persons and norms are not *objects* in a way that clashes with the all-comprehensive object-ontology of the scientific image. I shall not explore that issue further here (cf. chapter seven). However, in addition to being the domain of persons and norms, Sellars also defines the manifest image of "man-in-the-world" in terms of its *objects*: the manifest image is by stipulation, Sellars tells us, restricted to the domain of properly *sense perceptible objects* (as opposed to imperceptible, theoretically postulated objects; cf. PSIM II ¶18, SPR 7, ISR 375). I will close these introductory remarks with a few words on this crucial synoptic issue in Sellars, an issue that has divided Sellarsians along lines that are somewhat orthogonal to those generated by the left/right tensions explored above.

The following three conditions constitute the minimal core of what one might call a *Sellarsian pragmatist* account of sense perception in general (a view that Sellars himself traced back to Paul Feyerabend's 'pragmatic' theory of observation: cf. Sellars SRII). Put in a nutshell, an adult, human visual perception of (say) a red physical object, on Sellars's account, paradigmatically includes the following three elements:

- (a) a *conceptually* contentful, rule-governed response [an  $\bullet x$  is red $\bullet^8$  response],
- (b) *normally caused* by the appropriate corresponding object [i.e., by red physical objects], and
- (c) *causally* (not epistemically) mediated by nonconceptual sensings [i.e., states of *sensing red-ly*: sensing in the manner normally caused by the seeing of a red object].

This Sellarsian pragmatist or reliable conceptual response view of perception goes together with Sellars's *methodological* rather than ontological conception of the theory/observation distinction in science. This methodological conception of the theory/observation distinction has recently been emphasized by Robert Brandom—from the pragmatist 'left', as it were—and it had been equally vigorously championed earlier by Paul Churchland from the scientific 'right', in chapter two of his 1979 book, *Scientific Realism and the Plasticity of Mind* (central aspects of which trace back to his 1969 PhD dissertation under Sellars at Pittsburgh). Sellars in one place in his 'Notre Dame lectures' in fact states his pragmatic, methodological conception of observation explicitly as an agreement with Feyerabend:

...let me indicate my general agreement with Feyerabend that a predicate is an observation predicate not because it labels an object of a certain kind but because it is a reliable response to concrete objects in situations. (WSNDL, 263)<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> For a basic explanation of Sellars's dot-quotation device, see O'Shea 2007: 59, 67. The dot-quotes call attention to the (presumed known) *functional role* or norm-governed usage in the given language or representational system of the word or statement that is illustrated between the dot-quotes. An ' $\bullet$ and $\bullet$ ', for example, is thus a sortal term covering any item in any language which plays *that* role (or a relevantly similar role).

<sup>9</sup> For Feyerabend's pragmatic theory of observation as central to his scientific realism, see his earlier papers collected in *Realism, Rationalism and Scientific Method: Philosophical Papers* Vol. I (Cambridge:

On this Sellarsian pragmatic conception, we can come to be able to *directly* perceptually observe any type of object—such as electrons in a cloud chamber—to which we have come to be able to have the appropriately reliable non-inferential conceptual response, however theory-laden that response may be. So far this story can mesh well, in principle, with both the Kantian pragmatist and the scientific naturalist sides of Sellars's philosophy.

However, it is sometimes not recognized that in addition to the above pragmatic or methodological conception of observation Sellars also simultaneously defended a different, *ontological* conception of the theory/observation distinction, based primarily on phenomenological grounds and conceptual analysis. This is most explicit in his 1976 paper, "Is Scientific Realism Tenable?" (SRT), but it runs throughout all of the many works in which Sellars distinguishes between what we perceive objects *as*—which in accordance with the basic Sellarsian pragmatist account above depends on the *concepts* that are incorporated in the non-inferential response—as opposed to the subset of such conceptual responses that is restricted to the 'proper and common sensible qualities' of objects (for example, to the colors and shapes of the perspectively facing aspects of the perceived physical object) that we, in a more strict sense, 'perceive *of*' the physical objects that we directly perceive. In SRT Sellars makes it clear that what he calls *perception proper*, and thus what he also calls in one place the "absolute" observation framework proper (WSNDL 265), is restricted to that subset of our reliable non-inferential responses to objects that are conceptualized in terms of those objects' proper and common sensible qualities, along with whatever causal kind and dispositional properties we conceive those objects *as* having that *are also restricted to* relations among 'properly perceivable' properties in this sense (e.g., such empirical observation conditionals as are involved in our conception of salt's being disposed to dissolve in water; cf. Sellars's 'Theoretical Explanation' (TE)).

In SRT Sellars clarifies (in response to van Fraassen) that his own argument for scientific realism has always depended on taking the observation framework to be absolutely restricted to the domain of properly perceivable objects in the above sense—a domain which in SRT he then explicitly identifies with the object-ontology of the manifest image. For Sellars, as just noted, this crucial distinction is based on a phenomenological analysis of what it is that we strictly speaking 'perceive of' the physical objects that we do perceive, whatever else we may go on to learn to reliably perceive them as. In this sense of what is properly or manifestly perceivable, on Sellars's view, electrons are *essentially* imperceptible by us; and this is in fact the theory/observation contrast in terms of which his basic ontological distinction between the *objects* of the manifest and scientific

Cambridge University Press, 1981). See especially chapter 4, "Explanation, Reduction and Empiricism" (4.1) and chapter 6, "Reply to Criticism: Comments on Smart, Sellars and Putnam" (6.7). It is perhaps interesting to note that in the latter paper Feyerabend remarks in relation to Sellars's partial critique of Feyerabend's views in "Scientific Realism or Irenic Instrumentalism: A Critique of Nagel and Feyerabend on Theoretical Explanation" (SR11, 1965), that Sellars's "paper is so rich in content and so full of interesting conjectures that it is perhaps somewhat impudent to deal with it in such a summary fashion. Yet, the editor beckons urgently!" (Feyerabend 1981: 119–20).

images is based. (This systematic, twofold conception of the theory/observation distinction has perhaps not been sufficiently recognized to be a crucial component of Sellars's views across many different topics.)

It is right here, I would suggest, in his initial phenomenological account of the ontology of the strictly observable or perceptible objects of the manifest image, that Sellars has made certain key moves that have gone on to divide subsequent Sellarsians along different lines from the fruitful divisions that, as we have seen, have arisen in relation to Sellars's simultaneously Kantian and scientific naturalist views. This is the case even before Sellars adds his further controversial arguments for the conclusion that this manifest ontology of colored physical objects (but *not* the manifest ontology of persons and norms) is strictly speaking *false*: that is, that the sensible qualities we perceive objects as possessing are really, to the contrary, states of the perceiver, roughly (though much would need to be said here) as Galileo and most of the early modern philosophers had held. Crudely put, and to use his famous example of the pink ice cube, for Sellars the initial problem is how to fit the *cubical expanse of pink*, conceived phenomenologically in the manifest image as constituting the very content of the pink physical ice cube, into the apparently exhaustive world of colorless particles revealed by theoretical science. It is this analysis that initiates Sellars's subsequent argumentative journey that as it were 'relocates' (as David Rosenthal puts it) the cubical expanse of pink back into the perceiver, ultimately bottoming out in the as-yet-undiscovered 'non-physical<sub>2</sub>' *sensa*, as basic constituents of central nervous systems, that Sellars holds *must* be there to be discovered.<sup>10</sup> (For a systematic defense of Sellars's views on the latter topic, *inter alia*, see Johanna Seibt's chapter in this volume.)

This, as I have said, has been the second main issue that has continued to haunt Sellars's synoptic vision. The first, as we saw going back to Sellars's college days, was essentially the question of how to naturalize properly the irreducible Kantian-pragmatist framework that Sellars argues makes it possible for us to be the conceptually thinking persons that we are. The second problem, as we have just seen, concerns what to do, not with the *ice* (that is not the present problem), but with the *manifest cube of pink*, as Sellars puts it. Or as Sellars asserts during the third of his Carus Lectures in 1981 ('Is Consciousness Physical?'):

Obviously there are volumes of pink. No inventory of what there is can meaningfully deny that fact. What is at stake is their status and function in the scheme of things. (FMPP III, §46)

<sup>10</sup> In 'The Concept of Emergence' (CE) co-authored with Paul Meehl in 1956, Sellars marked the distinction between 'physical<sub>1</sub>' and 'physical<sub>2</sub>' this way: "an event or entity is *physical*<sub>1</sub> if it belongs in the space-time network," whereas "an event or entity is *physical*<sub>2</sub> if it is definable in terms of theoretical primitives adequate to describe completely the actual states though not necessarily the potentialities of the universe before the appearance of life" (CE 252, ¶23). Twenty-five years later in his 1981 Carus Lectures he put it this way: "Roughly, those features of objects are *physical*<sub>2</sub>, which are, in principle definable in terms of attributes exemplified in the world before the appearance of sentient organisms, i.e., attributes necessary and sufficient to describe and explain the behavior of 'merely material' things. *Physical*<sub>2</sub> features, on the other hand, are any which belong in the causal order" (FMPP III, Note 15). For further explanation see O'Shea 2007: 163–75.