

SYNOPTIC FUSION AND DIALECTICAL DISSOCIATION: THE ENTWINEMENT
OF LINGUISTIC AND EXPERIENTIAL PRAGMATISMS À LA WILFRID SELLARS

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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This work will attempt to examine the relationship between experiential and linguistic pragmatism through the lens of the twentieth century Analytic philosopher, Wilfrid Sellars. I maintain that Sellars's meta-linguistic nominalism and theory of both conceptual and non-conceptual representation, the latter being known as “picturing”, can stitch together the most vital components from both sides of the schism. I shall compare the thought of Sellars to that of two representatives corresponding to the two forms of pragmatism listed above, those representatives being John Dewey and Robert Brandom. Using Sellars’s famous critique of “the given” as a starting point, I assess whether either thinker falls prey to said critique. From thereon I examine both representatives’ relation to Sellars and where the differences and similarities lie. I conclude with a Hegelian interpretation of Sellars’s theory of representation as a preliminary sketch of a future “naturalized pragmatism.”

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I: EXPERIENCE OR LANGUAGE?

The philosophy of Wilfrid Sellars, I shall argue, provides a starting point for overcoming the wider issues found in both linguistic and experiential pragmatism, through his investigations into both the non-conceptual form of representation that he dubs “picturing,” together with conceptual form of representation, a term he dubs “signifying.” Sellars’s schematic epistemological division does not fall into the frequently purported discursive relativism of linguistic pragmatism, nor the commonly purported neo-empiricist “givenism” of experiential pragmatism. I shall also argue that Sellars’s late lectures expand upon his early epistemology and metaphysics, providing an account of consciousness via a form of process metaphysics which does not fall into the traditional trappings of strictly reductive materialism, while simultaneously dodging the hypostatization of sensory particulars (*qualia*) which would allow for a potential re-emergence of Cartesian substance dualism. More importantly, these later developments of Sellars provide the foundations for a naturalistic form of pragmatism that I entitle – rather unimaginatively - “naturalized pragmatism,” to stand in contrast to Brandom’s recently conceived “pragmatic naturalism.” It was in his attempt to develop an emergentist metaphysics of mind that Sellars circumvented the criticisms lobbed at each of the respective pragmatist orientations, and although unifying both camps was not an academic project embarked within his lifespan, one can nevertheless draw these conclusions from over-arching themes of Sellars’s work. However, one must keep in mind that although I maintain that Sellars circumvents the issues of both linguistic and experiential pragmatism, he does so by incorporating pertinent – and correct – insights from both schools. What I will propose to defend, to reiterate once more, besides the idea

of Sellars's thought as a mediating bridge between experiential and linguistic forms of pragmatism, is the value of his thought in terms of bridging what he terms the manifest and scientific conceptions of reality, as I believe this "bridging" is key to developing naturalized pragmatism. The two figures that I shall be comparing and contrasting to Sellars are also interested in reconciling both folk and scientific conceptions of reality, albeit in different manners.

This investigation will be split into five parts, first, an examination of the debate between linguistic and experiential pragmatism, second, an exposition of the Sellarsian concepts of givenness (and its relation to Sellars's stereoscopic fusion of the images), the theory of picturing, and his materialist process metaphysics. Section three will scrutinize Dewey's theory of experience in relation to that of ideas of Sellars explicated in the prior section, concluding with the assertion of the remarkable similarity between both Dewey and Sellars' philosophical projects. Contra Koopman, I maintain that Dewey's theory of experience can be reignited through Sellars's own writings on non-conceptual representings. Section four will examine Brandom's recent philosophical writings and their relation to Sellars and shall conclude with a counter-argument against the Brandomian critique of Sellarsian naturalism, which shall simultaneously function as a critique of this variant of the linguistic or neo-pragmatist school Brandom represents. Section five will function as a series of concluding remarks tying the conclusions between sections three and four, and will propose a potential trajectory for naturalized pragmatism, relating Sellars's conception of science with that of Hegel's dialectic of immediacy and mediation articulated in the opening of the *Wissenschaft Der Logik*.

In the decades ensuing between the initial development of pragmatist philosophy in the late-nineteenth century, the school of thought has diverged in a myriad of directions. The primary schism that has pitted pragmatist against pragmatist, is that between experientially-oriented and linguistically-oriented pragmatists. Regarding the conceptual terrain of “experiential-oriented pragmatism,” one must note the troika of classical pragmatist philosophers, those familiar names being Peirce – although he will be largely exempt from this analysis - James, and Dewey. Their modern-day proponents build upon key themes in the work of the latter two thinkers as a means of defending a vision of pragmatism that ensures that “experiences” are preserved as the central component of pragmatist philosophy. Peirce’s famous pragmatic maxim stated “It appears, then, that the rule for attaining the third grade of clearness of apprehension is as follows: Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object” (“How to Make Our Ideas Clear” 293).

The conception of said effects, for the experiential pragmatist, is to be measured in the domain of experience as a whole. It is primarily Dewey’s theory of experience propounded in *Experience and Nature* that should be scrutinized due to its influence on contemporary experientially oriented pragmatists, and more specifically the controversy regarding as to whether or not the Deweyan theory of experience falls prey to the premise of “experiential givenness.” This experiential givenness is often held to be a defining characteristic of the classical pragmatists by its critics. It is this givenness, oft equated with empiricism - whether in its classical, logical, or radicalized forms – that maintains

from some degree to another the primacy of that which is experienced, as opposed to that which could be described as “mere conceptualization.”

Critics of experiential-oriented pragmatism maintain that classical pragmatism falls into the trappings of empiricist “givenness,” despite its proclaimed rupture with the follies of British empiricism. Such a division between the various pragmatist strains was brought to my attention via the work of Gregory Pappas in which he also invoked concern about examining and the differences between linguistic and experiential pragmatism.¹ Contrary to Pappas, however, I maintain that most of the discrepancies within the two strands can be overcome via the work of Wilfrid Sellars. It was through the investigation of the writings of Pappas that I began to understand the intricacies of the debate between these two schools. Pappas has argued in the past that linguistic pragmatism’s insistence on the role of language undermines the emphasis on experience and social practice so characteristic of the classical pragmatism of the 19th century. In an article entitled “What Difference Can ‘Experience’ Make to Pragmatism?” Pappas argues that contemporary pragmatism can only retain its most vital contributions to philosophy through this emphasis on experience, doing so via an elaborate exposition of Dewey’s writings on logic.

Colin Koopman has also taken a position in regard to the given that views Dewey as being subject to so-called experiential given, the notion that experiences in themselves can function as self-authenticating. Koopman, in a 2007 article, “Language is a Form of

¹ See “Pappas, Gregory. “What Difference Can ‘Experience’ Make to Pragmatism?” *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy*, vol. VI, no. 2, 20 Dec. 2014, 10.4000/ejpap.322.”

Experience” maintains that Dewey’s theory of qualitative experience falls prey to this given. Specifically, Koopman believes that Dewey’s *Experience and Nature*, as well as his 1930 article, entitled “Qualitative Thought,” with its emphasis on the necessary existence of qualitative sensations, provides the foundations for the rest of our thought (698). In a more recent 2014 article titled “Conduct Pragmatism: Pressing Beyond Experientialism and Linguism,” he expounds further on the debate between experiential pragmatists and linguistic pragmatists and his issues with Dewey’s “Qualitative Thought,” concluding that “Dewey’s explicit thematization of the regulatory and directive nature of the perceptual-but-nonconceptual arena of the qualitative just is an incipient form of empiricist givenism” (151). For this reason, Koopman maintains that the Sellarsian critique of classical pragmatism put forth by figures such as Brandom and Rorty is correct, albeit flawed in its supposition of language as fundamentally determinant of situating what one traditionally considers as “philosophical truths.” Regardless of whether the claims of the experiential-oriented pragmatist or the linguistic-pragmatist are of greater importance than one another, or whether in the future either side will claim victor to this ongoing debate, we can see that the division is spurred by a recognition of lack within each respective branch of pragmatism.

In contrast to Colin Koopman, Mark Johnson also has written on the issue of Dewey’s theory of experience. Johnson states that: “As the experientialist would have it, Dewey recognizes that whenever we can discriminate qualitative differences as a way of indicating possibilities for experience, we can then go beyond merely feeling a quality and grasp its sense and meaning for us.” Thus, according to Johnson, “there are ways of marking differences in qualitative experience that are not strictly language dependent.”

(“Experiencing Language” 21) Sympathizing with Dewey’s conception of experience, Johnson is maintaining that, contrary to the linguistic pragmatist position of placing analysis on the semantic function of linguistic practice, or perhaps better stated as how semantic function is embodied within existing social practices, that experiences cannot be totally subsumed unto our currently existing linguistically mediated conceptual apparatuses.

Johnson’s critique asserts not only the primacy of experience, like Dewey, but also makes clear that experiences involving “meaning” cannot only be applied to those incidents that include, what we would commonly refer to as “semantics,” or enunciated phonetic combinations which “mean” things to us. On the contrary, experiences retain a richness that, at least initially, violently resist initial conceptual subsumption. This does not, of course, mean that one needs to affirm a type of mysticism which celebrates the ineffability of that which presents itself to us in experience. Rather, what is necessary, at least from my reading of Johnson, is a theory of experience that captures language and in turn “meaning” in syntactical and symbolic manners as opposed to the merely semantic. Elsewhere, Mark Johnson has also maintained that Dewey’s theory of experience remains pertinent in the light of recent advancements in cognitive neuroscience.² As we shall see later this is precisely a sentiment that Dewey, and perhaps Johnson himself would share with Sellars.

David Hildebrand has also voiced similar discontent with this “linguistic turn” in pragmatism, arguing that classical American pragmatists’ emphasis on experience

² See “Johnson, M. (2007). *The meaning of the body: Aesthetics of human understanding*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press”

remains the correct means of analyzing the role practice has in shaping our understanding of concepts of truth and meaning – granted we give credence to such notions in the first place. In comparing the two schools, Hildebrand endorses the classical pragmatist assertions of the primacy of experience and more specifically that of social experience, or what he perceives as Dewey’s reconstruction of experience in terms of the social individual.³ Hildebrand also explicitly in an article entitled “Avoiding Wrong Turns: A Phillipic Against the Linguistification of Pragmatism” argues that experience is “integral to pragmatism’s vitality” and that its “ability to evolve with and make a difference in the world” is what secures pragmatism’s continual relevance against popular associations with so-called postmodern sensibilities often associated with Rorty (*Dewey, Pragmatism, and Economic Methodology* 73). Hildebrand expresses in the same article, that modern proponents of the experiential pragmatist view, such as Bernstein and Misak, are formulating a strong cogent defense of the experientialist view against those of the linguistic pragmatists.

What I have presented here is something of a scattershot literature review, and one that admittedly cannot fully encapsulate the nuances of each individual philosopher on this broader issue. However, what Pappas, Koopman, Johnson, and Hildebrand explicate through their altogether varying views on the issue of the linguistification of pragmatism is the examination of social practices is the concern of the overtaking of the normative in the development of pragmatist thought. On the one hand we have figures

³ See “Symposia. Language or Experience: Charting Pragmatism’s Course for the 21st Century.” *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy*, vol. 2, 2014.”

such as Johnson and Hildebrand, advocating for a more-or-less “orthodox” defense of Dewey’s theory of experience, although in different ways. Koopman maintains that both sides are problematic and instead, at least in the article previously mentioned, advocates for a unique form of pragmatism he dubs “conduct pragmatism.” This is not to mention some of the articles by Scott Aikin which also take aim at classical pragmatism’s fixation on, according to his own account, the experientially given, although whether he sides with the linguistically oriented neo-pragmatists is rather unclear.⁴ Once again, it is my own position that Sellars reconciles the division between the two schools via a complex incorporation of both schools of thought into one another. I believe that to properly facilitate a dialectical discourse between these two emerging camps within pragmatism one must have an accurate philological and historical account of the emergence of ideas within said experiential and linguistic schools of pragmatism. Without this historical context, one cannot accurately assess the reasons why each respective camp believes what it does. Philosophy without the history of philosophy is a vacuity and its purported revelations manifest as mere nullities.

Regarding the historical origins of American pragmatism, the story usually begins with the figure of Charles Sanders Peirce, and his various contemporaries such as Royce and Santayana. While the contributions of Peirce, whose significance to the development of pragmatism should be obvious to those with some understanding on the history of American philosophy, has been extensively well-documented. As vital as Peirce was to

⁴ See “Aikin, Scott F. “Pragmatism, Experience, and the Given.” *Human Affairs*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2009, pp. 19–27.”

pragmatism, being its arguable founder, I choose to begin this historical account of the burgeoning of the linguistic-experiential pragmatist debate with an examination of William James, as I feel his ideas make clear the key motives and characteristics of experiential-pragmatism. The later work of James, compiled by Ralph Barton Perry in *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, had him developing a concept of radical empiricism in which he famously maintained that one could have knowledge without trans-empirical mediation, a hypothesis which consisted of a postulate, statement of fact, and generalized conclusion (ix). A postulate being those things “definable in terms drawn from experience,” the statement of fact being that of conjunctive & disjunctive relations between things being subsumable under the domain of direct particular experience, and the conclusive inference therefrom maintaining that “parts of experience hold together from next to next by relations that are themselves part of experience”, thereby bypassing the traditional necessity of non-experiential conceptual mediation (ix-xii). James argues for said position via his concept of “pure” experience developed in his other works, which is again briefly alluded to in the essay entitled “What is ‘Pure’ Experience?” James maintains that “the instant field of the present is all times what I call the ‘pure’ experience. It is only virtually or potentially either object or subject as yet.” Thus, for James, a pure experience is nothing more than a “plain, unqualified actuality, or existence, a simple that” (23).

In this passage, one could argue, and I believe that those linguistic pragmatists critical of James would articulate this position, that he is succumbing to the problems of traditional empiricism. The assertion made from those sympathetic to the linguistic line would be along the lines of “But what is this simple ‘that’ which you invoke, James? One

is already invoking a kind of conceptually mediated modality by insisting on a pure ‘that’ since one cannot have a ‘that’ without a differentiating ‘this’, and to determine a distinction between two experiences.” From a traditional Kantian perspective, one could maintain, for example, that James fails to recognize a crucial distinction between brute “sensations,” pure “sensing of,” as opposed to intuitions, a “sensing as.” Of course, one could also maintain that James is not rejecting the epistemological possibility of Kantian intuitions but is rather insisting that such “intuitions” can be conceptually tractable in a wholly “empirical,” in his case, experientially immediate manner. The role of the term “trans-empirical,” is somewhat opaque, and could be interpreted as a strict classical empiricist line, in which concepts and perhaps even facts embed themselves directly in the mind without further mediation or interpreted otherwise in ways that avoid such issues. I will let this remain a hermeneutical issue for Jamesians.

Later in the text, James goes further to state that “radical empiricism... accounts for... pointing as a process that occurs within experience, as an empirically mediated thing of which a perfectly definite description can be given. ‘Epistemology,’..., denies this; and pretends that the self-transcendence is unmediated or, if mediated, then mediated in a super-empirical world.” (239). Once again, James reiterates that “epistemologists” are the ones who bear guilt in this matter, as those who reject mediating powers as well as those who insist said mediating powers are “super-empirical.” From the standpoint of linguistic pragmatists, James is guilty of all the prospects of empiricist “givenness,” despite his attempts to break from the British empiricism of centuries past and circumvent the rocky crags of logical empiricism that would await the Anglo-Germanic philosophers of the near future. James’s empiricism is

one that, from the view of critics such as Koopman, attempts to “have its cake and eat it too,” regarding the function of conceptual deployment in intuiting our sensations.

While James represents a taste of the distinct characteristic of experiential-oriented pragmatism, James’s development of his theory of radical empiricism can be seen as separate, although possibly intertwineable within the “canon” of classical pragmatist works. Dewey’s own theory of experience may also be seen as succumbing to the problems of the empiricist given. What does Dewey himself have to say on the matter? Regarding the issue of experience and its role in discerning that which we include or permit to exist within the ontological frameworks we generate as philosophers, Dewey argues that facts are “cited in order to invite attention to the relationship between the objects of primary and of secondary or reflective experience” and that “the subject-matter of primary experience sets the problems and furnishes the first data of the reflection which constructs the secondary objects is evident.” However, Dewey also maintains that “when the secondary objects, the refined objects, are employed as a method or road for coming at them, these qualities cease to be isolated details; they get the meaning contained in a whole system of related objects” (*Experience and Nature* 4-5).

As with James, I think a Kantian comparison here is warranted. Dewey, here in the opening chapter of the text experiential-oriented pragmatists seem to draw heavily upon, proclaims that facts do not permit us nor force us to infer, but rather, quite specifically, *invite* us towards a relationship between primary experience and those secondary objects which are furnished and refined by further experiences. However, what one could insinuate as being omitted from this passage is the specific semantic character

of facts or perhaps more specifically, the presumption of facts as an inherently linguistic phenomenon deployed to picture, measure, and quantify non-linguistic objects which constitute our reality. However, as it was with James, to simply accuse Dewey of regressing towards pre-Kantian empiricist positions is unfair and more importantly inaccurate, and I believe this will become clear later on. Dewey's statements on experience can be described as arguing in favor of a notion of experience that cannot be directly equated with that of classical empiricism. It is the emphasis on the reality of non-linguistic – if one means by “linguistic” phonetic concatenations imbued with semantic “content” – experiences that place Dewey above the relativistic limitations of those who could be guilty of anthropologizing philosophy. The purpose of the so-called “linguistic turn” in twentieth century philosophy was to recognize the importance of linguistic function, and more relevantly the *socially-embedded* nature of said function in relation to traditional epistemological problems. It is not merely a fight against the bewitchment of our intelligence via means of language – to quote a well-known philosophical adage from a progenitor of the linguistic turn - but to fight these “means” while simultaneously using said “means.”

While his proponents uphold Dewey as managing to avoid the supposed discursive relativism of linguistically-attuned forms of pragmatism - as well as within twentieth century philosophy more generally - his detractors would argue that he inevitably falls into the clutches of experiential givenness through his conception of experience, akin to that of the radical empiricism dabbled with by James. Such a form of “empiricism,” as conceived of in the view of these detractors, is one which maintains fidelity towards “pure experiences,” wherein particular concepts are necessarily entailed

by a corresponding particular sensation or felt quality. However, the ambiguity of both the notion of experience and, perhaps more importantly, that of sensuous immediacy as such, muddies the waters for said proponents.

Further works by Dewey also seem to push this problem of experiential givenness, as already referenced by several of the articles mentioned above. These articles upon close inspection also seem to emphasize the transcendental – and once more I use this in the Kantian sense – aspects of the experiential. Thus, it seems that the primary issue found within experiential pragmatism is not merely its acknowledgement of transcendental aspects of experience, but implication of the acknowledgement of said existence. That is to say, the question is: “what does the existence of the ‘transcendental,’ i.e. non-conceptually subsumable, elements within experiences imply? What can one infer from the existence of such elements? Does it wholly refute the premise, held among some, that intentionality is innately linguistic?” Sellars’s own meta-linguistic account argues, in a rather simple and intuitive manner – although it is unfortunately not articulated concisely – that *intentionality is a linguistic achievement through and through, although representation as such is not*. However, this does not imply that intentional states by themselves provide a sufficient account of what constitutes knowledge. The immediate should not be conflated with the non-inferential. Nor does it imply, according to Sellars’s account, that our ability to represent that which is made sensibly present to us need not utilize our conceptual resources, some *denkapparat*, as a means of getting to the noumenal truth veiled behind the phenomenal. If we grant the immediacy of experience and the reality of transcendental components of said

experience, what does that permit us to infer about intentionality and its relation to language as conceived as something imbued with ‘meaningful’ semantic content?

To begin to answer this question, necessitates determining more significant characteristics between the two schools. What is obvious for now is that both camps emphasize pragmatics and reject classical foundationalism. With this, let us turn to the one who shall be our representative in the linguistic-pragmatist camp, Robert Brandom. In the last several decades, Brandom has developed an increasingly intricate systematic philosophy which has often been dubbed as “inferentialist” or more precisely, in his own words as “semantic inferentialism.” Brandom’s inferentialist position primarily follows three separate steps known as the ISA model. These inferential, substitutional, anaphoric components can be broken down semantically. The first constitutes inter-sentential relations and what that regards in terms of the network of pre-existing inferences, whereas the latter two, substitutional and anaphoric, are strictly concerned with intra-sentential relations and perhaps what one could dub as “pure” linguistic tokenings. Brandom asserts that said inferentialist models are necessary to understand the distinction between pragmatics, understood as the practical actions of language-using creatures, and semantics, understood as the study of the meaningful content within the phonetic constructions of language. This is a departure from what he terms as “semantic representationalism”, in which the semantic is placed above that of the pragmatic. Brandom’s rejection of traditional representationalist accounts could be viewed as a continuation of Sellars’s critique of traditional representationalist epistemology, although as to how much Brandom’s own position is similar to that of Sellars’s meta-linguistic nominalism is as of yet unclear.

Beginning with the most basic type of understanding, if we take into consideration the classical form of predicative expression, those lines taking the form of grammatical subject and object, we take “All Ks are p ,” all instances of grammatical subject K express sensibly observable property p . Propositions such as these can be considered a part of Brandom’s concept of “material inferences,” inferences which are guided by pragmatics instead of semantics. Such an account, according to Jeremy Wanderer in his excellent overview of Brandom’s philosophical project, attempts to overcome the issues in traditional semantic representationalist accounts of knowledge.⁵ Modal expressivism maintains that our modal operations within linguistic discourse function like tickets for an inferential tram. To push the visual analogy further, if various inferential moves, whether deductive, inductive, or abductive, function as passenger trains between various platforms – premises and conclusions - then implicit modal expressions function as permits to board such trains. Traditional analytic propositions, if one is inclined to see such propositions to be described as “analytic,” such as “all dogs are canines” contain the implicit modal assertion that “all dogs are necessarily canines.” The relation between inferentialist semantics and modal expressivism is one that is absolutely crucial for Brandom’s philosophical project, it is nothing short of its distinguishing characteristic. It is the goal of linguistic analysis within Brandom’s version of pragmatism that allows one to uphold the primacy of pragmatics over that of semantics. Before going any further I’d like to also make clear why Richard Rorty will generally not be featuring in this critique.

⁵ See “Wanderer, Jeremy. *Robert Brandom.*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008, pp. 95-105.”

Besides Brandom, Rorty has also frequently been labelled as linguistic pragmatist. This association is founded on the basis of a perceived discursive relativism, an objection not dissimilar from popular rejections of so-called “post-modernist” thought. Whether or not said accusations have theoretical legitimacy is too complicated in regard to my present interests, but regardless, Rorty’s writings, as representative of the linguistic pragmatist position, can understandably led to some of these criticisms. Such evidence for my assertion can be found in Rorty’s concluding chapter of *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Rorty, summarizing his philosophical position built up throughout the rest of the book states that “Our insistence on contingency, and our consequent opposition to ideas like ‘essence,’ ‘nature,’ and ‘foundation,’ makes it impossible for us to retain the notion that some actions and attitudes are naturally ‘inhuman.’” - that this said insistence – “implies that what counts as being a decent human being is relative to historical circumstance, a matter of transient consensus about what attitudes are normal and what practices are just or unjust” (189). The rejections of traditional philosophical notions such as “essence” and “nature,” and the hope that “relativism” will no longer have its negative connotations, seem to present Rorty as an advocate for the linguistic idealism that experiential-oriented pragmatism frequently chastises.

Another difficulty I encountered in attempting to begin this analysis is the relation of Rorty to the concept of non-linguistic intentionality. Johnson has noted that Rorty, while not adhering to what one could call a strictly linguistic conception of representation, still nevertheless seemed to share the sentiment of postmodern philosophers, in which discourse and its interplay with the multitude of discourses, and the emergent structure of this interplay contained therein, reigns supreme over all other

philosophical approaches. None of this of course is to even speak of the general exegetical difficulty of assessing coherent positions within Rorty's oeuvre, as their intertextual nature precludes strict interpretations and fixed positions on the part of Rorty - and perhaps this was his intent. Rorty is peculiar in that, like Brandom, he adopts Sellars's critique of the given and even managed to articulate these ideas on his chapter regarding what he terms as Sellars's "psychological nominalism." This is the belief that abstract sorts are a linguistic achievement, and do not exist in mind-independent reality. It is the observation that "Awareness in the first sense is manifested by rats and amoebas and computers; it is simply reliable signaling. Awareness in the second sense is manifested only by beings whose behavior we construe as the utterance of sentences with the intention of justifying the utterance of other sentences." (*Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* 182).

This assertion made by Rorty is ultimately a consequence of what I shall refer to as meta-linguistic nominalism. But nevertheless, the genealogical relation to Sellars remains obscure, at least in terms of Rorty's wider project in relation to Sellars's own. Rorty, while providing extensive commentary on Sellars and even promoting his thought in several ways, does not construct upon Sellars's theory of meta-linguistic nominalism as an epistemic thesis in a way that would do service to this examination. Brandom's attempt at building up the philosophical principles set up by Sellars, and more specifically the implicit deployment of "modal expressivism," which is made manifest in his elaborate "Modal Kant-Sellars Thesis," gives him a comparative advantage to Rorty. In summary, I find that the intellectual genealogy of Rorty's relation to Sellars is one which is fraught with exegetical difficulty. However, such difficulties should not impede

progress in regards to the goals of this article. Other figures such as Susan Haack, as well as the Pittsburgh peers of Brandom, although intriguing and worthy of investigation in their own right, shall not be considered here, as integrating them into this examination is a task is far too Gulliverian. For these reasons, I shall utilize the theoretical work of Robert Brandom as the primary representative of linguistic pragmatism, as his debts to Sellars are made even more explicit than those of Rorty, and his actual positions more transparent.

What makes Brandom's philosophical project intriguing is that it does not explicitly deny the possibility of representation beyond linguistic mediation, such that one could easily imagine, via the concept of a "feral" child who has not ever encountered such instances of semantic inferences nor even possess a means of measuring the adequacy of the utilization of semantics, someone still being able to, in some sense, represent the world around him or her. Where Brandom departs from Rorty's purported relativism is that he maintains that an idea of "objectivity" that can be nevertheless maintained in spite of the socially discursive influence on linguistically mediated knowledge. Brandom believes that this is possible via a distinction between conditions of assertability, on the one hand, and conditions of truth on the other. The latter condition, of course, is the one which most philosophers are intuitively familiar with and tend to endorse as a fundamental concern of epistemological investigation. But in that regard Brandom argues that that which warrants assertion should not be the same as that which founds truth, nor the same thing that discloses the conditions of truth. Brandom, in the concluding chapter of his introduction to inferentialism, states that "if 'assertible' is read as requiring correctness in this more objective sense, then assertibility conditions just

become truth conditions, and the link to the attitudes and practices of those who use the sentences to make claims... becomes correspondingly obscured.” Continuing on, the difficulty in regards to assertibility theories for them is “to start with a notion of propriety of assertion that is grounded in and intelligible in terms of the practice of speakers and audiences, and yet which is rich enough to fund normative assessments that are objective in the sense of transcending the attitudes of practitioners.” (*Articulating Reasons* 198). A subject of our inquiry would be to examine the nature of Brandom’s account of the normative and its relation to Sellars’s own elaborate meditations on normativity qua rule-obeying behavior, and specifically how Sellars’s conception of naturalism challenges Brandom’s account.

Brandom, of course, can be seen taking a similar stance against certain forms of representationalism in a manner like Sellars. For both thinkers see that the traditional representationalist can potentially fall prey to what I shall refer to as “surreptitious Platonism,” in which concepts must, in some sense, “precede” the things which can be extensionally subsumed under them. Sellars attempts to reject this “surreptitious Platonism” in favor of an account of representation that is not strictly “conceptual” or “semantic,” as we know these words in a general philosophical sense, yet one that still remains deeply indebted to publicly observable norms and human social practices, and one which is sympathetic to the anthropological account of the development of concepts as opposed to a strictly *a priori* one. I shall argue, that components of Brandom’s account, while sharing numerous parallels with that of Sellars’s, can also be substituted with that of Sellars’s own position, that being a meta-linguistic nominalist critique of orthodox accounts of representationalism, with little added or subtracted to said position.

Now that the general positions of both Dewey and Brandom have been made (somewhat) clear, we can move onto the role of Sellars in this debacle and more specifically his concept of the “given,” as an explication of this term will be the starting part for our comparison.

Prior to any further exposition, I think it is best that I make clear two dyads that are recurrent throughout Sellars’s thought, those being sentience-sapience and manifest-scientific. The distinction between sentience and sapience is the distinction between the capacity to sense sense-contents and the capacity to recognize those sense-contents as sense-contents, the former is embedded within all organisms with some form of nervous system, whereas the latter – may or may not be - a unique achievement of the human qua social animal. Lastly, the manifest and scientific images of man-in-the-world, as Sellars refers to them throughout his essay “Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man”⁶ refer to our normatively attuned conceptual understanding of items of sensuous experience and the latter being the account of said items through the lens of the theoretical terminology of the natural sciences, i.e. the difference between what I encounter as in everyday experience. These divisions are central to all of Sellars’s thought.

⁶ See “*Science, Perception and Reality.* , Ridgeview Publishing Company, 1991.”

II- GIVENNESS, PICTURING, AND PROCESS ONTOLOGY

To answer what “the Given” is, a proper historical situating must be undertaken. Shane Ralston explains what he terms the “experiential given” in the following manner:

“Traditional empiricists appreciate experiences such as *E* as the ultimate font of empirical knowledge. When a human observer has an *E*, she will typically form the belief that there exists a large translucent green cube above her. Why is this? There are two mental events and an inferential pattern at work here; experience *E* and belief *B*, such that an experience with the same set of phenomenal properties the same sensible/perceptual content, results in the same belief about that content.” (“Taking Experiential” 2)

Ralston stresses that “the given” should not be conflated with the notion of foundationalism, which as classically understood, maintains that knowledge is built upon a non-inferentially justified foundation or first principle, but rather the formal assumption that certain privileged experiences necessarily result in certain determinate “facts” or “beliefs” being imparted upon the psychological subject. While I believe that Sellars’s project provides us with an anti-foundationalist paradigm, what needs to be called into question is precisely whether or not what Ralston conceives of as “the given” is an accurate reflection of Sellars’s own position, which to the abruptly answer the inquiry I have just proposed, is to say, “not fully.” We must bear in mind that Ralston is discussing the broad concept of “the given” within the wider context of exegetical debates regarding key pragmatist thinkers, whereas Sellars’s critique of the given was developed in response to - although its ramifications are not strictly limited to - logical empiricism as a predominant mode of thinking in the twentieth century, so differences are to be expected.

It is important that one not relegate Sellars's critique of the given to that of a repudiation of mere "naïve realism," as one consequently misses the historical significance and broad applicability of Sellars's perceptive critique of foundationalist epistemology. I would maintain the Sellarsian "given," beyond popular conception as a mere critique of logical positivism, is applicable to a multitude of the various historical schools of twentieth century philosophy, whether it be the so-called "ordinary-language philosophy" popular within post-WWII Anglophonic philosophy departments, as well as the phenomenological tradition as conceived and developed by Husserl and his successors. It should also be prefaced that Sellars's critique of the given should not be regarded as a broad generalized skepticism, whether of the Humean or Pyrrhonian variety, for skepticism in-and-of-itself would fall into the category of givenness - why this is the case I hope shall become clear.

In his seminal essay, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," Sellars launches an assault on the concept of what he refers to as the "given", which he come to define succinctly in his 1978 Carus lecture as any theory of epistemology which holds that the categorical structure of the world imprinting itself upon the mind in precisely the same way a seal imprints itself on a piece of wax (12). Our concern is not necessarily to provide a full-proof defense of Sellars's critique of the given, but rather demonstrate how said critique is relevant to Sellars's systematic philosophical project as a whole and regarding the contemporary schism within pragmatism. Sellars's conception of the given nevertheless, I once again insist, must not merely be understood as a repudiation of the naïve realist or positivist. It is rather the claim that there is nothing absolutely given, not even "givenness" itself, that the criterion of that in which one differs the apparent from

the inapparent is in-itself not fully apparent. The Sellarsian standpoint is that mediation is prominent in our access, whether sensuous or conceptual. Sellars, within the essay, presents us with a famous “inconsistent triad” of empiricism which provides us three epistemic theses which cannot all be held in tandem.

Sellars’s inconsistent triad:

- A. X senses red sense content s entails x non-inferentially knows that s is red.
- B. The ability to sense sense-contents is unacquired
- C. The ability to know facts of the form x is q is acquired

(*Science, Perception And Reality* 133)

We may represent the concatenations of these positions in the following manner:

1. A & B entail \sim C
2. A & C entail \sim B
3. B & C entail \sim A

Here the conjunctions of each of the propositions permit one to infer the negation of the remaining proposition of the triad. Nevertheless, the question that should arise here is which of the options is Sellars interested in endorsing and which is he interested in rejecting (if any). To pursue the first option, would immediately do away with any supposition that maintains that linguistic facts expressed through predicative expression must be socially acquired. To endorse the second option would maintain the possibility of non-inferential knowing (seen in proposition A), but it would also mean that one

simultaneously endorses immediate sensations which are not conceptually tractable. To endorse #3 would mean rejecting non-inferential knowledge altogether, while simultaneously endorsing the socially-mediated nature of any empirical predicative description. Ultimately, I believe Sellars's position is to uphold "A" and "C" while, in a certain sense, rejecting "B" – I would prefer the term "modify."⁷ Why is this? Sellars's project is, ultimately, to defend Kant's concept of *Verstand* (Understanding) within the context of twentieth century philosophy, and reconstrue intentionality as a primarily linguistic phenomenon, a position which will carry on into the work of Robert Brandom. More importantly however, is the implication that recognizing qualities as qualities is not the same as merely sensing those qualities, that there is a difference between sensations-of and knowings-as. But this implication forces upon us another question, that is, what does it even mean to "know-as?" The two distinct types of representation that Sellars attempt to develop are the response to this inquiry.

Another important tenet of Sellars's philosophy, which consequently generated his non-conceptual form of representationalism, as laid out in EPM was that of meta-linguistic nominalism. Here Sellars provides us with two statements:

'Und' means and

And

'Rot' means red

⁷ I use the term "modify" because Sellars ultimately does believe in a non-conceptual stratum of experience, hence he does not so much want to say that "sensing sense-contents is acquired" as much as "recognizing sense-contents is acquired."

Sellars maintains that both propositions “can tell us quite different things about ‘und and ‘rot, for the first conveys the information that ‘und’ plays the purely formal role of a certain logical connective, the second that ‘rot’ plays in German the role of the observation word ‘red’” (*Science, Perception and Reality* 164).

The semantic function of ‘rot’ in German and ‘red’ in English are, *prima facie*, equivalent. They both seem to refer to respective predicates in each particular language. Sellars’s point is that the relation between the two is secured not by fact that said words refer to the same things cross-culturally. Notice that the German word is quoted whereas the English word is not. Such distributive terms are “meta-linguistic” on the basis of the application of their *mention* as opposed to their *use*. To explain this well-known distinction in the most elementary manner, let us say that I propose that “Cheyenne exists” and “‘Cheyenne’ exists.” Such differences in implementation recognize the utilization of the predicate “existence” as being identical, at least in terms of their semantic content, however the application of the predicate itself differs, as the former predication applies to the author of this article as an actually existing entity, while the latter predicates the inscription itself. Similarly, the well-known Liar’s paradox, the proposition “This sentence is false” is only paradoxical on the assumption the predicative deployment of the term “false” is self-referential, that the predicate is applied to the very mention of the entire sentence itself. This meta-linguistic component of nomination factors into the Free Logics in which the nebulosity of a concept such as existence is embraced rather than rejected, in contrast to the well-known Kantian claim that existence cannot be a predicate. To put it another way, the proposition “‘Rot’ means red” identifies

the mention of the German word with the conceptual use of the English equivalent. Sellars's central point is that predicative statements, best seen in atomic propositions, operate identically to the above example. Sentences such as the "lion is tawny," do not refer to lions as abstract entities demonstrating traits of the surreptitiously Platonic forms of "lion-ness" as instances of "F" would demonstrate the intensionally-defined traits of "f-ness." To clarify one last time before moving forward, we can say that *what is established is a purely conceptual relation between names and things.*

The key takeaway from this, and perhaps Sellars's most important breakthrough philosophically, is that *no strict establishment is made between common nouns & empirical predicates and the extra-linguistic objects they are supposed to denote.* Denotation must be re-examined, not as a relation between "words" and "things" but between natural linguistic objects and extra-linguistic objects that they represent. It is this relation that Sellars designates as "*picturing*," which stand in contradistinction to "*signifying*." The latter is exemplified in the "mentioned" noun and a predicate whose conceptual traction is a normative, which is to say, socio-cultural achievement. *At no point is there an established relation between thing and external world.* Sellars consequently rejects any pre-established harmony between interiority and exteriority, and any presupposed relationship of propriety in regard to either thoughts or worldly objects. Abstract singular terms do not refer to abstract entities, thus bypassing the any form of "surreptitious Platonism." It is curiously this type of nominalism that allows Sellars to retain a realist position. Traditionally, of course, nominalistic positions within philosophy are seen as inherently anti-realist, that one is affirming that there is no more reality to a thing than what one names it. However, Sellars's endorsement of nominalism is utilized

as a means of preserving realist epistemology against the numerous anti-realist projects in twentieth century philosophy.

Sellars's theory of *picturing*⁸ would be continuously expanded upon through his career. Sellars's inspiration for his concept of picturing is the Tractarian thesis that "The proposition only asserts something, in so far as it is a picture" (4.03). In the same subsection, Wittgenstein continues stating that "the possibility of propositions is based upon the principle of the representation of objects by signs" (4.0312). Sellars is also partially inspired by an ambiguity in the relation between "sensitivity" & "understanding" within Kant's first critique.⁹ Sellars interprets this as partitioning the conceptual representation of atomic propositions from that of the semantic rule-governed regularities. The logical structure of these regularities that endow them with syntactic order prior to their normative reinforcement, is something that shows itself, but cannot - at least initially - be spoken of using its own terms. To bridge this gap between the *signifying* and *picturing*, is to conceptualize that which was previously thought unconceptualizable, that is the sense-datum and our brute sensations of the sense-datum. Sellars states explicitly in the concluding paragraph to his seminal essay "Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man" that the "conceptual framework of persons is not something that needs to be *reconciled with* the scientific image, but rather something to be *joined*

⁸ The distinction between signifying and picturing was made famous in Sellars's essay "Being and Being Known," contained within the essay compilation used throughout this article, "*Science, Perception and Reality.* , Ridgeview Publishing Company, 1991."

⁹ See "*Science and Metaphysics: Variations on Kantian Themes.*, Ridgeview Pub. Co, 1992."

with it” (*Science, Perception and Reality* 43). This theme shall be re-examined in the analysis of Brandom’s critique of Sellars.

While Sellars’s “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind” was considered a groundbreaking text within the development of Analytic tradition, it suffers, in my opinion of Sellars’s inability to sketch a clear resolution or propose an intellectual trajectory that would grant philosophers the means to reach beyond the conception of the given. What one should discern is that while Sellars shares a sentiment akin to that of prominent twentieth century philosophers, such as Heidegger and Wittgenstein, with his rejection of the Cartesian privacy of the mental, there is an attempt within Sellars’s thought to retain a realist position regarding internal thought episodes, which does not simply adhere to a deflationary behaviorist account of psychological states and is partially achieved via his theory of picturing. Numerous philosophers of the pre-Kantian “modernist” period, whether of rationalist or empiricist persuasion have the proclivity to conceive of representation strictly on the basis of conceptualization regardless of whether said concepts are *a priori* or acquired *a posteriori*. Sellars by contrast, establishes a non-conceptual form of representationalism in which a dyadic relationship between conceptually-mediated linguistic representations and non-conceptual inert reality is to be upended.

In the fourth lecture given in Sellars’s 1974 John Dewey lectures, later retitled and republished as *Naturalism and Ontology*, Sellars continues to develop and further the distinction between signifying and picturing. The difference lies between two modalities of objects, as opposed to a strict difference in kind between “linguistic” facts and extra-

linguistic non-conceptual reality. In the fourth lecture entitled “Meaning and Ontology,” Sellars re-endorses his meta-linguistic nominalism, concluding the lecture with the assurance that the aforementioned “generalizations in question do not, so to speak, separately relate 'red' to red things nor 'man' to men. They relate sentential expressions containing 'red' to red things and sentential expressions containing 'man' to men. For, after all, if our account of predication is correct, the kind of connection involved must also apply to the Jumblese dialect, in which there are no predicative expressions” (*Naturalism and Ontology* 80). The Jumblese aforementioned by Sellars refers to an artificial language constructed by Sellars in his articles in the 1950’s, perhaps most famously in “Naming and Saying.”¹⁰ Sellars here generated a language void of traditional predication, and only in *Naturalism and Ontology* does he finally endorse the possibility of a language void of predicates. Jumblese articulates itself via the syntactical configuration of sign-design tokens, which can take the form of either graphic markers of inscription or of phonetic concatenations from which spoken language is composed.

Jumblese propositions of the form:

A

b

can be read within traditional predicative structure as “A is larger than b” (*Naturalism and Ontology* 112-113). While such a language is rule-governed in this instance, said representations hypothetically subsist without these sorts of rules, and are rather instantiated in the form of patterns. Thus, language need not defer to “meanings” as

¹⁰ See “*Science, Perception and Reality*. , Ridgeview Publishing Company, 1991.”

represented through predicates, and certainly have to partake in no disposition in regard to “content” in its strict semantic sense. Thus, semantic content within the Jumblese language is non-existent, yet nevertheless meaning is imparted onto what would conventionally be grammatical subjects. The syntactical orientation of “A” and “b” demonstrate the manner in which they are related, i.e. the “how” of the relation. The relation itself is not an object and is consequently not to be hypostatized, at least in Sellars’s view.

The Jumblese examples of Sellars provided throughout this lecture series are the culmination of the meta-linguistic nominalism developed within “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind” and other essays. To clarify once more, said nominalism is meta-linguistic in the sense that they present themselves as representing a relationship between language users mentioning of terms (they do not substantialize the relationship itself) and the conceptual use of terms within common language being implemented, distributive singular nouns are “distributive” insofar as they encapsulate a “kind” or “species,” and they are singular as opposed to plural in the grammatical sense. The existence of these sign-design tokens provide the grounds for a language void of predication. What is the significance of this in regard to Sellars avoiding the classical tropes of behavioristic language acquisition? At its most simplistic level, the takeaway is that the observation of behaviors within standard rule-governed procedures are not identical with the response to pattern-governed responses. However, what must be taken in consideration here is the distinction between rule-obeying behavior and pattern-governing responses. How then do we socialize our epistemic closures according to Sellars? How do we account for private thinking on the basis of the socially-governed character of conceptual

mediation? In the infamous “Myth of Jones,” a thought experiment which bookends “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind,” Sellars develops the character of genius known as “Jones” who exists in a tribal society in which languages simply function to describe external actions as opposed to internal thought episodes (*Science, Perception and Reality* 178-189).

The character of Jones in this thought experiment is to be understood as the precedent to the formation of the external expression, via linguistic utterances, of the reality of internal thought episodes. The role of the myth of Jones is relevant in regards to how Sellars accounts for, through a means of a speculative/hypothetical anthropological narrative, the emergence of descriptive accounts of “internal” experience. But again, contrary to behavioristic accounts of language acquisition Sellars does not locate this purely in so-called actions. It is this *pattern-governed* behavior, as opposed to rule-governed (i.e. conceptually mediated) which serves as a functional example of human language acquisition, albeit one of course that cannot suffice as a substitute to that conceptual signification, linguistic representations dwelling within the theoretical terrain of human sapience. Pattern-governed responses and rule-obeying behavior correspond to the representation forms of *picturing* and *signifying* respectively. (*Naturalism and Ontology* 87)

Sellars insists that the “trainees” of such rules necessarily acquire “not only the repertoire of pattern—governed linguistic behavior”, i.e. language concerning the non-linguistic, but also language about the relation of linguistic terms to non-linguistic items. Such inferences cannot be stripped down to their bare linguistic and grammatical components. Picturing qua representation, tied with pattern-governed responses, to

reiterate for Sellars is a “mirroring” relationship between two sets of objects. Importantly, Sellars leaves the door open for evolutionary biologists, anthropologists, and linguists to further examine this proposed form of representation. The radical materialist implication to all this is that human beings “represent” objects in a manner not dissimilar to that of how a thermometer “represents” temperature. What is developed here is not a dyadic relationship between linguistically articulated facts and extra-linguistic reality that the grammatical components of said facts denote, but rather an isomorphic relationship between object-sets which nevertheless can both be subsumed into the domain of that which philosophers traditionally considered as “material.” Sellars thus can uphold the primacy of experience, repudiating the linguistic pragmatist’s concern with semantic content, while simultaneously not giving into the experiential givenness. Thus, a materialist monism is secured for Sellars via this transfigurative conception of representation.

Regarding this materialist monism, I will turn to the 1978 Carus lectures, later republished in the *Monist* and re-titled as “Foundations for a Metaphysics of Pure Process,” as our last overview of Sellars’s work, one in which he develops his own form of process ontology. It is towards the final section of the lecture that Sellars reinvestigates, although non-explicitly, the concerns that had fueled William James’s radical empiricist project, and perhaps to a similar extent, that which had fueled James’s contemporary Henri Bergson. This is of course, not to insinuate both thinkers held

identical positions.¹¹ Sellars argues that we must maneuver around the “sin of the spatializing time” (57), when speaking of duration *qua* extensity. It is from this that Sellars develops a model of so-called absolute processes, which should be distinguished patterns, both in the colloquial sense and in the sense in which Sellars understands the term. While pattern-governed behavior elicits pictorial responses articulated via the syntactical configuration of natural linguistic objects, such is the consequence of the notion of a “pattern” as a complex concatenation of various perceptibles, the construction of a process cannot be encapsulated in mere pictorial representation. Pure processes are those which cannot be reduced to grammatical subjects normally associated with them.

Sellars opens to us and asks whether tokens of *C#* contain temporal duration in precisely the same manner that sensations of red have extensive spatial magnitude (“Foundations for a Metaphysics of Pure Process” 58). It is here that Sellars speculates that the spatio-temporal components of experiences that may potentially although not necessarily, in other words, contingently, be unique to human sensation. For Sellars, this is the great lesson of Kantian conception of *Verstand* (Understanding/Intellect), the concepts deployed in the act of judgement as tacit modal differentiation. According to Sellars, the qualitative homogeneity of sensations such as that of the pinkness occurrent in a pink ice cube, are not reducible to the relations of its physical components. The sensibly occurrent pinkness of a pink ice cube (80) is not equivalent with its micro-physical constituents conjoined in the manner as described by the natural sciences.

¹¹ The relationship between Bergson and James is complicated and I do not have time to diverge into what differentiates them. I would recommend interested readers seek out: “John Alexander Gunn. *Bergson and His Philosophy*. Aeterna Press, 2018.”

Rather, the pinkness that is sensibly occurrent to us is an immediacy which is pictured, i.e. non-conceptually represented to us in its sensuous immediacy. Or to use Brentanian terminology, the pinkness of the cube is not an intentional relation between object and – the phenomenologically receptive - subject, but rather a non-intentional correlation, a representation void of intentionality. Such picturing relations indeed preclude the possibility of conceptual mediation without ensuring immediate experiences as internally verifying. Thus, the scientific conception, or in Sellars’s terms, “image” of the of the pink ice cube lies within the order of *signifying* (conceptual representation) and not of *picturing* (non-conceptual representation).

The implications of *sensa* within Sellars’s thought, is that the occurrent pinkness of the ice cube and its apparent homogeneity -homogeneity understood in the sense of the continuous flux of experience of the pinkness qua property attributed to the ice cube - is experienced within the space-time continuum, does not entail that those characteristics are an “objective characteristic” of the continuum irrespective of human consciousness. One must inquire into the nature of human sentential capacities through the lens of the scientific image to expand our knowledge of non-conceptual representation. Once more we see reinforced, of sensation as non-conceptual representations which necessitate, at least assuming the existence of “natural science,” the development of new conceptual categories to properly subsume said *sensa* into the framework of naturalist physicalism. Thus, beliefs for Sellars must be grounded on a wide-ranging network of background inferences, but these are inferences alone are not sufficient for completely accounting for the process. The characteristics of sensuously immediate experience are to be redescribed as products of “absolute process.” This term

was initially coined by C.D. Broad in an extensive commentary on the philosophy of John Mctaggart. Broad expounds on the concept of absolute processes which he distinguishes from things or substances, stating that “statements which grammatically predicate... qualitative change... of Things, seem to be replaceable, by more complicated statements about Processes.” Broad however, insists that “there are Processes which cannot plausibly be regarded as states of Things” (*Examination of Mctaggart’s Philosophy* 166). Sellars ultimately re-appropriates this concept, except now it functions as a means of describing phenomena which cannot be reduced to associate phenomena.

Contemporary research on this dimension of Sellars’s thought has been explored quite thoroughly by Ray Brassier of the American University of Beirut. In a recent article entitled, “The Metaphysics of Sensation,” Brassier expands upon Sellars concept of absolute processes stating that: “Their other significant characteristic for Sellars’s purpose is that they are characterized in terms of an intrinsic qualitative aspect that, although associated with their typical causes, cannot be identified with those causes” (*Wilfrid Sellars, Idealism, and Realism* 75). Thus, certain phenomena can be said to be devoid of grammatical subject, or even an extra-linguistic object, the phenomena of thunder “thunders” as a pure process. To put it in another manner, one says “he is walking” but one doesn’t say “the clouds were thundering.” Sellars believes that if we are to suture this non-conceptual sensuous immediacy of felt qualities and the heterogeneous patterns of the micro-physical constituents “within” the object of sensation, without back-pedaling into vulgar forms of empiricism, one must invent a middle ground as it were to unify these two discrete patterns. For Sellars, these imperceptible components which allow for sensory experience, are the aforementioned “*sensa*.” *Sensa* must be understood

not simply as the physical constituents of the central nervous system, but rather the “mediator” between both sensations qua phenomenological experience and their corresponding neurological counterparts. In other words, both are to be registered as “pure processes.”¹²

What is fascinating about Sellars’s position is that it attempts to reconcile the immediacy of felt qualities, in this case being the occurrent pinkness of the ice cube with an account of processes. What is to be done in regard to these pure processes? While Sellars upholds their inability to be reduced to their constituents, he nevertheless insists that one must probe into their causes as a means of not merely upholding a commitment to scientific realism but of also overcoming the Myth of the Given. For if Sellars fails to defend this notion, not only does he lose the physicalist worldview, but simultaneously lapses into the crosshairs of the critique that had made him famous decades earlier. Sellars re-implements this category in regard to the functioning of mental processes within sentient organisms and human beings, that peculiar creature that all philosophers seem to neurotically fixate on. Against the notion of a process as merely an object “x” at space s , time t moving to $s'-t'$ and $s''-t''$, a new philosophical vocabulary would thus need to be invoked in order to explain the mental connections between objects and sensations of objects, and consequently the conceptual traction of said connections. Sellars believes that the capacity for sentience, a characteristic of nearly all “living” organisms, cannot simply be reduced to a linear timeline of successive events. Rather, sentient organisms must be conceived of as entities functioning within “absolute” or

¹² I will use the term “pure process” instead of “absolute process” from here on out. The terms are synonymous. Sellars uses both terms somewhat interchangeably.

“pure” processes. This is not Whiteheadian process philosophy however, but an attempt to integrate the insights of process philosophy into that of a thoroughgoing materialism. Sellars’s goal is to ultimately liberate process philosophy from the vestiges of pan-psychism.

Once more, Sellars attempts this by proposing further divisions in regards to the predication of physical entities within the conceptual. In the Carus lecture, Sellars stipulates that there are both physical₁ and physical₂ predicates. The former are standard descriptions of spatio-temporal phenomena while the latter refer to, best described in Sellars’s own words, in an article entitled “The Concept of Emergence,” “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” (*Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 252). As such the physical₂ predicates cannot otherwise be composed of pure processes. These take the form of φ_2 processes. By contrast, Sellars insists that the pure processes of phenomenological experience take the form of σ -ings. σ -ings are the pure processes of the central nervous system. Sellars maintains that “[W]hereas the objects of contemporary neuro-physiological theory are taken to consist of neurons, which consist of molecules, which consist of quarks – all physical₂ objects – an ideal successor theory formulated in terms of absolute processes (both φ_2 -ings and σ -ings) might so constitute certain of its ‘objects’ (e.g., neurons in the visual cortex) that they had σ -ings as ingredients, differing in this respect from purely physical₂ structures” (“Foundations for a Metaphysics of Pure Process” 86).

It is then possible to track physical₁ processes as *sensa*. However, these processes would be tracked via the understanding of the components of σ -ings via processes

predicated as physical². Consequently, the aforementioned “c#-ings” could be construed as co-constitutive of the nervous system alongside its standard constituents, the physical² constituents. The distinction between patterns – as had been invoked in the discussion of picturing above - and processes in the work of Sellars is one that is still undergoing analysis, but nevertheless the takeaway is that Sellars’s goal is to unify phenomenological experience unified natural process and demonstrate the entwinement of experience and nature, and how the former cannot be partitioned from the latter. The implications of this rather elaborate system developed by Sellars, which I’ve done the best to articulate here succinctly, beyond being, from an exegetical perspective, the culmination of the metaphysical concerns that concerned Sellars throughout his academic career, is relevant to the issue at hand in regard to the nature of experience. I believe that the most obvious consequences of these ideas developed by Sellars can be made when once more compared to Dewey.

Pattern-governed responses that were previously mentioned are not processes that can be merely reduced to of neurological function, yet the ultimate purpose of Sellars’s process metaphysics, if he were to continue it, would be to understand the relationship between pure processes and the instantiation of those process in pattern-governed responses as a example pictorial representation within the human organism. While signifying is a form of representation that relies on conceptual determinations that are historically generated and socially mediated, picturing is not, but consequently can be subsumed into a signifiatory order governed by natural science. The goal of a Sellarsian philosophy of science therefore is to understand the necessity of empirical and endow it with a rationalist metaphysics of becoming via Broad’s “pure processes.” Such a

philosophical approach would ensure that science functions not only as a means of disclosing “how” things work, but also changes its own predispositions. *Wissenschaft* becomes the process of developing both facts about the world and how we come to know these facts. Contrary to the any denunciation of Analytic philosophy as wanting to subordinate philosophy to the natural sciences, in a manner not too dissimilar from that of its prior subordination to those shrouded Scholastic theologians, Sellars puts the decisive power of conceptualization into the hands of philosophers. Now that three tenets of Sellars’s thought, the notion of givenness, picturing, and pure process, have been – to some degree - explicated, we’ll now turn to how these Sellarsian concepts relate to the progenitor of the experiential pragmatist position, John Dewey.

III: DEWEY AND SELLARS-RECONCILING EXPERIENCE WITH NATURE

Dewey attempts to subsume all knowledge under the order of experience and explicitly defends a form of empiricism, a self-professed neo-empiricism or “naturalistic empiricism” (*Experience and Nature* 1a), albeit one that radically differs from prior forms of this school. In Dewey one finds a division between primary and secondary experience. Primary experience is defined as those immediate qualities felt by the senses. The objects of secondary experience, or reflective inquiry, are what we would normally typify as objects philosophical and scientific investigation. In his own words, Dewey maintains that an empirical methodology implemented within philosophy must conclude:

“that refined methods and products be traced back to their origin in primary experience, in all its heterogeneity and fullness; so that the needs and problems out of which they arise and which they have to satisfy be acknowledged. Secondly, that the secondary methods and conclusions be brought back to the things of ordinary experience, in all their coarseness and crudity, for verification” (*Experience and Nature* 36).

If we are to read Dewey as subsuming the secondary form of experience, as ultimately being derivative of the primary form of experience, without any form of mediation, then Dewey can be said to succumb to some notion of “the given.” However, in contrast, if one could read Dewey’s theory of experience as being analogous to Sellars’s own partition between sentient and sapiential capacities respectively, then Dewey’s position on experience can be easily reconciled with Sellars. Roughly, I think this is what Dewey does within his work. Read in this manner, Sellars’s theory of picturing can be read as an expansion upon Dewey’s own theory of experience, as a

schematized form of non-conceptual representation. To defend this position requires a tremendous deal of exegetical finesse which I hope to exert.

Dewey enumerates numerous times throughout *Experience and Nature* that experiences are the means in which we not only scientifically, but philosophically scrutinize ourselves and the world and that experiences as such are not to be conceived of as being “apart” or “transcendent” of the natural world. What is made clear at the outset is that Dewey’s emphasis on experience cannot be considered a form of epistemic foundationalism. I maintain, as Ralston does in his article cited above, that Dewey’s defense of the primacy of experience obviously cannot be equated to the classical forms of epistemic foundationalism seen in the rationalist figures of pre-Kantian philosophy nor of those in the tradition of British empiricism. As made clear in the first section, these “primary experiences” are not to be confused with those “primary aspects of experience” that one would associate with something such as *extensa*. If one were to hypostatize said experiences, one would encounter the same problems as those oft brought up within contemporary cognitive philosophy, wherein unique sensuous qualities of experience, are hypostatized into a notion commonly dubbed as “qualia.” This is also not the case with Dewey as his vision is not a vulgar empiricism nor a phenomenalism. Further along in the same text, Dewey articulates his conception of science, maintaining that “Inquiry... [is] controlled by [an indeterminate situation’s] specific qualitative nature.” (181). The problem here is what makes said indeterminate situation’s specific qualitative nature “specific?” For Dewey, as we had discussed earlier, the question was fundamentally how to draw out conception from sensation, or in other words to partition it. Wilfrid Sellars, following the intellectual trajectory of the critical realist project, instead insists on strictly

partitioning sensation and conception, upholding a schematic dualism in epistemological terms in order to avoid forms of substantive dualism, holding a degree of continuity with American critical realism.

Within the same text, Dewey himself provides an answer to the inquiry drawn above. Dewey's critique of nominalism which is rather illuminative in relation to Wilfrid Sellars, states that "the defect of nominalism lies in its denial of interaction and association. It regarded the word not as a mode of social action with which to realize the ends of association, but as an expression of a ready-made, mental state; which, being an existence, is necessarily particular" (184-185). Dewey asserts that nominalist positions ascribe too much emphasis on the particularity of the entity being named and not on the relation between the nominator and that which is nominated. Sellars would largely agree with Dewey's assessment here if the two were to converse hypothetically and anachronistically. Traditional predicative propositions gain meaning for Dewey when "its use establishes a genuine community of action." Similarly, Sellars, in other works, maintains that association and specifically the human capacity to derive and support inferences is determined by our immersion in a social world, one with discernible and reinforced rule-governed behavior. Sellars's peculiar reinvention of nominalism, is a meta-linguistic nominalism in which only abstract universals are denied entry into the realm of rule-governed semantics. To answer the question of "specific character" noted above, Dewey is essentially proposing that socially-delimited rule-governed actions and behaviors, rendered within this so-called "genuine community of action" provide the foundations for what Sellarsians often refer to as the "space of reasons." While the various sections of *Experience and Nature* provide us a taste of Dewey's positions on

experience, there is another article that I would maintain is both more illustrative and simultaneously contains a succinct encapsulation of his position.

This article in question is entitled “Qualitative Thought,” where Dewey further explicates his theory of experience. Dewey maintains that “underlying unity of qualitiveness regulates [the] pertinence... and force of every distinction and relation” (*Philosophy and Civilization* 99) In other words, that which is qualitatively apparent within every experience, secures the prominence of every kind of relation within an experience. It is this delimiting qualitative immediacy, that becomes a starting point for both scientific and philosophical endeavors, at least according to Dewey. The question asked here is: what are the criteria in which we recognize these qualities *as* qualities? For there is a distinction between sensing and recognizing qualities, and this is one of the most tenable theses of the Sellarsian critique of the given. However, Dewey ultimately does have an answer to this question as one is about to see.

If experiences are, at heart, the regulating ideals of empirical inquiry, we must ask ourselves, “what is precisely so regulative about these ideals?” The question is however, if Dewey does not believe that these regulative ideals are disclosed within experiential episodes themselves, then precisely where does he locate them? Or more importantly, if Dewey does indeed think that regulative ideals are a fundamentally social-discursive phenomenon, then why invoke “experience” in such a blatant manner. For Sellars we must recall that apperceptive act of recognizing experience as experience is a linguistic achievement, one derivative of a human’s sapiential capacities as opposed to their mere sentential capacities. If this is Dewey’s conception of secondary or tertiary experience, then why not insist on a stricter partition, why invoke empiricism or more specifically a

naturalist empiricism as he himself proclaims? I believe that Dewey's invocation of experience here is one that is tacitly altering the conditions of what experience is meant to be understood as. It is a conception of experience that embeds the notion of experience within existing problems and practices. Or to counter Dewey against a contemporary of his era, one can say that his conception of experience is not akin to the Russelian "knowledge-by-acquaintance," those forms of knowledge which, in the Englishman's own words, function as "acquaintance with anything of which we are directly aware, without the intermediary of any process of inference or any knowledge of truths" (*Problems of Philosophy* 73-74). Such acquaintances are never wholly bereft of mediation, this is the point of Dewey's "community of action" and Sellars's critique of the given. While Dewey shares the classical British empiricists' affinity for natural science, there is nonetheless a rupture that distinguishes Dewey from the latter.

Dewey's notion of experience is entwined with action in a manner that precludes him from being suspect to "The Myth of the Given" in its most obvious form. Dewey argues that the "unifying qualitiveness in the subject-matter defines the meaning of "feeling." The notion that "a feeling" designates a ready-made independent psychological entity is a product of a reflection which presupposes the direct presence of quality as such. "Feeling" and "felt" are names for a *relation* of quality" (*Philosophy and Civilization* 99). In other words, within a grammatical subject-predicate relation, calling something a "feeling" is merely nominating a relation to a quality, it is not the felt quality as such. This nomination qua psychological entity is a reflection that necessarily presupposes felt qualities as such, but it does not articulate what the criterion of registration of such

felt qualities are. For example, in relation to the James-Bergson comparison I had made above, Dewey states tellingly:

“To my mind, Bergson's contention that intuition precedes conception and goes deeper is correct. Reflection and rational elaboration spring from and make explicit a prior intuition. But there is nothing mystical about this fact, and it does not signify that there are two modes of knowledge, one of which is appropriate to one kind of subject-matter, and the other mode to the other kind” (*Philosophy and Civilization* 101).

Let us pay close attention here. Dewey is agreeing with Bergson on the basis of his intuitionism and consequently Bergson's philosophical project of upending the division between sensing and the object of sensation. This non-conceptual stratum of experience, however, should not be understood of as mystical, as Dewey insists, and in turn should be worthy of scientific scrutiny. But what does Dewey think of “the given?” Dewey in his own writing on the nature of the given states that “The ‘given,’ that is to say the existent, is precisely an undetermined and dominant complex quality. ‘Subject’ and ‘predicate’ are correlative determinations of this quality” (*Philosophy and Civilization* 105). Dewey can be read here, in my own opinion, as anticipating Sellars's own observations in regards to function of linguistic predicative propositions not as denotation, that the grammatical identification of subject with predicate does not join an extra-linguistic object with a concept but rather has predication operate within a strictly linguistic domain. Dewey continues, stating that “One source of the difficulty and the error in the classic theory lies in a radical misconception of the treacherous idea of the ‘given.’ The only thing that is unqualifiedly given is the total pervasive quality; and the objection to calling it ‘given’ is that the word suggests something *to* which it is given, as

well possibly as something that gives” (*Philosophy and Civilization* 107). Once more Dewey tempts us here. On the one hand we have a rather frank observation that only which is “given” is total pervasive quality, a pervasive quality that, as noted above, appears to be hypostatized. Thus, we should do away with the assumption of givenness in the context that a sense-datum is “given” like a gift to a recipient, which in this case, human consciousness. It is admittedly rather difficult to discern the relationship between Sellars and Dewey completely on their own terms, so allow me to introduce a mediator into this debate, this mediator being both an intellectual predecessor and biological progenitor to Wilfrid Sellars, Roy Wood Sellars.

The necessity of this mediator became apparent to me after analyzing the relationship between Sellars and Dewey, which was that it could be read largely as a reignition of the debate that was prominent in the early twentieth century American philosophy. The fervent debate between critical realists and new realists in which R.W. Sellars, a prominent American philosopher in his own right, was deeply involved with are pertinent here. In an article entitled, “Epistemological Dualism vs. Metaphysical Dualism,” R.W. Sellars¹³ argues that one of the fundamental components of critical realism is its partition between knower and the object of knowledge. R.W. asserts that critical realism as a realist position, implicates said separation insofar as the definition of realism remains that of its common definition as a mind-independent reality. R.W. places his position in contrast to both what now would be called “classical pragmatism,” as well as new realism, the latter movement being accused of an epistemological monism. In

¹³ I shall refer to him as “R.W.” from here on out to avoid confusion with Wilfrid.

other words, to defend a materialist form of monism necessitates that one develop an epistemological dualism, at least from the standpoint of critical realism. Interestingly, in relation to John Dewey, R.W. Sellars accuses him of failing to properly radicalize his form of empiricism. Dewey, according to R.W., sees the epistemic dualist, and in this case the dualist of the critical realist movement, as being unable to reconcile the knower with the world known (*Principles of Emergent Realism* 125).

Further, R.W. claims that “The differentia between pragmatism and epistemological dualism does not lie in the naturalism of the one and the supernaturalism of the other...” (*Principles of Emergent Realism* 103) and consequently any subjectively accounted for percept is “subjective only in the sense that it is bound up existentially with me a specific concrete knower” (103). R.W. Sellars rejects, what he perceives to be the foundation of the Deweyan variant of pragmatism, on the basis of categorial divisions as being functional epistemic tools instead of metaphysical partitions. In other words, the critical realists’ epistemic dualism does not imply the separation of world from subject. For him the goal of the critical realist’s epistemic dualism is not to partition man from nature but to recognize that a distinction must be affirmed in relation to the object of knowledge. Of course, such criticism cannot be equated to whatever Sellars’s criticisms of Dewey may have been. R.W. Sellars can also be seen as pertinent in relation to Sellars’s own attempts at critiquing his major contemporaries in the realm of Anglophone philosophy, most obviously logical empiricism. Sellars as well upholds a schematic dualism within his epistemology, the sentiential and sapiential components of the human organism in which only the latter can maintain cogent intentionality. R.W. looks to defend critical realism via a demarcation between mind and nature, whereas Dewey

insists that mind and nature are entwined. I propose now to change the mediator and emphasize that Wilfrid Sellars's late attempts at developing a process ontology can assist in this suturing of mind and nature and simultaneously provide a bridge between this discrepancy between Dewey's experiential pragmatism and R.W.'s critical realism. This Deweyan attempt is essentially recoded as *sensa* and pure process in Sellars's Carus lecture.

While it was against my initial suspicions upon launching this investigation, I've taken a position standing in contrast to that of Professor Koopman. I do not think that Dewey, falls into the category of Ralston's conception of the "given," that of direct acquirement of a specific belief *B* within experiential episode *E*. While it has been clearly noted above that Dewey does diverge from R.W. Sellars's project of critical realism, by the time Sellars reached his late career, so did he. It is here that Dewey and Sellars nevertheless retain a key insight in regards to the non-inferential character of experiential episodes, recognizing the universality characteristic of sensuous experiences in the form of pure immediacy. I will make the bold assertion, that Dewey, and in turn experiential pragmatism's non-linguistic conception of experience, is closer to the theory of conceptual development and application of that brought about by Sellars than that of Brandom's, in spite of Sellars's direct influence on the former.

Both Dewey and Sellars are concerned with limitations that psychological language places upon our ability to commit ourselves to a theory of experience that remains scientifically informed and scrupulous, a rational - if not openly rationalist, in the case of Sellars - basis of empirical inquiry. The question here is one regarding intentionality, a subject that curiously is left out of Dewey's *Experience and Nature*. For

Sellars, sapience is not merely concomitant with intentionality, but necessary as its condition. The inferentialist position is one which does not concern the relegations of what is traditionally defined as the sensuous. On the contrary, Sellars's inferentialism is first and foremost a rejection of intentionality as embedded in sentient capacities. There is nothing wholly immediate about such an acquaintance according to Sellars, all immediacy must pass into mediation. In other words, the inter-relationship between "mind" and "world," as well as the intra-relationship of thoughts and sensations within "mind" itself, are both equally mediated. One must be taught to sense things as things, as sentient organisms developing pattern-governed responses to natural linguistic objects, such as the burbling of a brook or the silhouette of a dangerous predatory beast but need not be taught to have sensations themselves. Dewey as shown above seems to uphold the same position. Picturing, it must be reiterated, is a non-intentional correlation, as it is ultimately the byproduct of human sentience as opposed to sapience. The theory of picturing stands in contrast to those forms of empiricism in which sensations merely present themselves to consciousness, with our ability to respond to them are delimited and internally verified by said experiences. The main takeaway from all of this is that the Sellarsian theory of picturing ultimately works in tandem with that of the concerns of experiential pragmatists to develop an account of experience that does not rely on a continuous re-negotiation of the pragmatic-semantic distinction. While it is true that the Sellarsian/Brandonian embrace of inferentialism rejects the possibility of a purely non-linguistic intentionality, and as such it is not completely reconcilable with the attempts within the experiential pragmatist school, avenues are nonetheless still opened. Nevertheless, the goal of this article is to propose Sellars as mediating between

experiential and linguistic pragmatists respectively, then what issues can still be found to differentiate Sellars and Dewey? If Dewey, and in turn his experiential pragmatist followers do not succumb to the Sellarsian critique, then of what value does Sellars's thought provide in mending the division between the experiential and linguistic fields of pragmatism?

Well to begin to answer this question, let us have one final overview of Dewey's theses. Primary experience, to reiterate must be understood as the felt intensities of sensations, that which is qualitatively self-evident when we sense anything, that which is now commonly dubbed as "qualia." In terms the components of secondary experience are those which we use to reflect upon the felt qualities encountered within the primary experience. Thus, one cannot simply dismiss Dewey as having fallen under "The Myth of the Given" in the manner conceived by Ralston or Sellars. With this in mind, one could rather easily combine Sellars's theory of picturing as a mediator with that of Dewey's partition of experiences into primary and secondary. Nevertheless, differences remain. The role of experience within Dewey's thought is one which is in contrast to the critical realist positions of both Sellars and his father, at least in regards to the philosophical deployment of the concept of experience. Yet there is nevertheless an attempt to understand the relevance of sense-data in our epistemological dispositions, or more specifically the occurrentness or felt qualities of sensory experience being beyond the reduction of said impressions to a crude physicalism, while also avoiding the problematic consequences of a Berkeleyan empiricism in which objects merely exist for subjects with God as supreme mediator.

It is Sellars's upholding of the irreducibility of felt qualities' homogeneity within sensory episodes, which also bears a resemblance to phenomenology, or more specifically, the classical phenomenological project insofar as it utilizes the direct experience of qualities to go beyond the qualities, to use the experiential datum/data as launch pad into exploring the "transcendental" categorical structure of reality. Sellars upholds this insight from the phenomenological tradition while explicitly repudiating classical phenomenology's attempt to found intentionality in the sentient. The Kantian/Sellarsian/Brandomian position is to root intentionality in sapience, in the aboutness of conception, the so-called "space of reasons." Dewey attempts something similar, and like Sellars does so without being a phenomenologist, although one could argue that Dewey shares a similarity to phenomenologists by, at least at face value, rooting intentionality what in Sellarsian terms would be called sentient structures of human consciousness. Of course, both are trying to eschew phenomenology in the long term due to what could be argued to be its "givenness," but nonetheless it is a noteworthy remark in regards to the history of philosophy in the twentieth century.

It should also be said that Sellars's late process ontology could enable new academic work to be done with the Deweyan theory of experience. The role of *sensa* within Sellars's outlined process ontology, particularly the pure processes of φ_2 -ings and σ -ings, which correspond to inorganic and organic pure process respectively are of significant interest. As such Dewey's attempt to develop a theory of relations embedded within experience, without doing a disservice to the intricacy of the phenomenological apprehension of qualitative relations within sensible occurrences, parallels Sellars.

Reddings, buzzings, Ab-ings,¹⁴ are to be understood as qualitatively determinate situations, in Sellars's terms, pure processes which although initially utilizing the physical predicates of the manifest image, are to later be subsumed within the scientific image such that which was formerly seen as peculiar is no longer so.

To do so without hypostatizing said occurrences, while still upholding the theoretical necessity of their qualitative occurrentness in which natural languages depend upon is still a difficulty, but one that can be resolved via an investigation of the normative and its relation to the natural. Perception becomes a kind of apperception, and apperception as such is recognized as a social achievement—Hegel is vindicated. Much of what I consider to be Sellars's advantageousness over Dewey is ultimately down to historical contingency. That is to say that Sellars had the advantage over Dewey of his direct incorporation of the rigorous technical tools, those of symbolic logic and semantic analysis, developed by the Analytic tradition. This is of course not to patronizingly suggest that Dewey made no attempts of these of his own to engage with said tradition or with formalized logic, and to be frank I do not consider myself a well-versed scholar on Dewey to really provide any substantive remarks on Dewey's engagement with the then-emerging Analytic tradition in the early twentieth century. But I hope it is not too controversial to suggest that Wilfrid had the contingent privilege of engaging in the Analytic tradition as its great breakthroughs, seen in figures such as Frege and Wittgenstein, were blossoming. For this reason, I think Sellars, while identifying more with the critical realism than with pragmatism, shares the same profound pragmatist

¹⁴ Just to add some variety to the banal "C#-ing."

reconceptualization of experience, which in a way is not an “empiricism” at all, insofar as the characteristics of classical or logical empiricism are concerned, but rather falls more in tandem with radicalized empiricism of James noted above in the first section.

However, unlike James, I believe that Dewey has the distinct advantage of not being confined to the spectral Bergsonianism that becomes manifest in James’s work, particularly the later Hibbert lectures.

Dewey and the experiential pragmatist branch which either upholds or shares numerous suppositions with Dewey, are correct to assert this irreducible component of sensuous experience, albeit, to reiterate once more, hypostatizing this into an ontological category. Nevertheless, Dewey’s theory of experience is similar to Sellars’s writings on “pure” or “absolute” processes, albeit one that is subsumed into the naturalist worldview, if one is to understand naturalism as the world understood by the current conceptual traction of the natural. To conclude: the difference between Dewey and Sellars’s positions on the given, while not superfluous, are also not untenable. It is Dewey’s theory of experience that stands in contrast to those of previous philosophers and the experiential-pragmatists are correct in defending this theory. What is not so much a repudiation, but theoretical expansion of what Dewey had conceptualized as experience, not self-authenticating episodes but rather a continual process of revision dependent on the socially-mediated conceptual assessment of qualitative experiences.

IV: CROSS-SORTAL IDENTITIES & HERMENEUTIC TRANSCENDENTALISM

Let's now switch over to Robert Brandom. As one of the most well-known and significant interpreters of Sellars's thought, Brandom largely abides by Sellars's critique of the given in his own writings. Most importantly, Brandom maintains that Sellars's critique of the given is primarily a critique of non-inferential knowledge, as opposed to being merely relegated as a critique of the logical empiricist movement exclusively, a position that based on my own philosophical proclivities, as well as many others, is most certainly agreeable. Brandom, in his guide included with the Harvard University Press edition of *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* argues in favor of the impossibility of non-inferential knowledge stating that "for Sellars, there is no such thing as a non-inferential belief, if by that one means a belief one could have without grasping its inferential connection to at least some other beliefs" (153). From this, Brandom interprets Sellars as endorsing a form of coherentism as opposed to that of a foundationalism, upholding the necessity of a complex inferential network over that of an established set of a priori principles. The point to be seen here is that Brandom does appear to agree with Sellars's injunction that nothing is directly "given," within so-called private experiential episodes.

However, the obvious question arises as to how Brandom's own philosophical position, that of semantic inferentialism, even while purporting to overcome the issue of experiential givenness, manages to differentiate itself from Sellars's own project. Or to put it another way, if Brandom's philosophical project, doesn't fall into the trap of experiential givenness, such as those "pure" experiences of James, which could be

maintained to fall into the former, is there another way that Sellars's broader criticism could factor into an assessment of Brandom's inferentialism? Broadly, I think that Brandom does fall into trappings of givenness albeit not within the parameters most clearly specified by Ralston above, nor in the succinct definition of givenness that Sellars provides in the Carus lecture. The answer for this investigation lies in one of his most recent published works, in which he criticizes Sellars's conception of naturalism. While from both a pragmatist standpoint and that of Sellars himself, Brandom is correct in emphasizing the primacy of pragmatics over that of semantics, the issues of Brandom's givenness can be seen and within his critique of Sellars's naturalism, in favor of his own naturalistic account which he denotes as "subject naturalism." This form of naturalism can be argued to stand in contrast to so-called "object naturalism" that which seeks "to locate the truth-seekers of claims in target discourse... as specified in a favored naturalistic vocabulary" i.e. that of the natural sciences (*From Empiricism to Expressivism* 91). "Subject naturalism" by contrast seeks a naturalistic account of discursive practice, as utilizing vocabulary "as meaningful in the way it is meaningful" ultimately culminating in the development of a "naturalistic pragmatic metavocabulary" (91). This latter quasi-tautological statement by Brandom I think holds the key to his issues – but let's not get ahead of ourselves.

I believe that Brandom's issues can be summarized as the following proposition: Brandom's misconstrual of Sellars's naturalism as reductive consequently results in a rejection of the central project of Brandom's very own philosophical enterprise, that of fusing the manifest and scientific images. This is due to the necessity of strong cross-sortal identities needed between the manifest and scientific images. The presupposition

underlying this rejection, is that naturalistic pragmatic meta-vocabulary is ultimately subordinate to human social practice. There can be no attempt to equate, replace, or at the very least fundamentally re-structure pragmatic meta-vocabulary in line with the advancement of the natural sciences, said meta-vocabulary, in the eyes of Brandom, must remain a social achievement through and through. Brandom believes that Sellars's own modal expressivism contradicts the consequences of his naturalism and his argument against Sellars largely rests on this supposition.

Of course, one must ask how Brandom develops this critique of Sellars? In *From Empiricism to Expressivism*, a series of essays on Sellars's philosophy, Brandom develops a critique of the Sellarsian conception of naturalism. The text is largely centered around Brandom's "Modal Kant-Sellars Thesis," which is to make explicit the modal vocabulary involved in forms of empirical predication. I will focus on Brandom's critique of Sellarsian naturalism instead of this other component of his thought. Earlier when I invoked Brandom's intricate semantics I was doing so in order to make them stand in contradistinction to both Dewey's "experientialism" and Sellars's inferentialism. Instead of digressing into the particularities of Brandom's model, I believe our time would be better spent digressing into Brandom's own critique of Sellars's naturalism and his proposed solution, an advantage that Brandom provides me that Dewey, due to him being more than half-a-century post-mortem, cannot afford. Brandom maintains that Sellars's own naturalistic defense of metaphysics is that it fails to account for the functioning of cross-sortal predication. Sortals, in their most basic form, generally refer to an entity that can be numerically counted: 2 goats, 3 rabbits, etc. Brandom maintains that Sellars's critique of predication nevertheless assumes a strong cross-sortal relationship due to the

dialectical tethering of the manifest and scientific images. Sellars's attempt to fuse the manifest and scientific images, for Brandom is not possible, as pragmatic meta-vocabulary is first and foremost a normative achievement and thus falls within the framework of, what in Sellarsian terms would be called the manifest image of man. Brandom essentially believes that the modal expressivism already apparent in the work of Sellars is not reconcilable with Sellars's naturalistic proclivities.

Brandom argues that Fregean sortals can have a "strong" resemblance based on an established criterion of identity that measures them. Thus, a bank-teller can have unitary criterion of identity which individuates him, albeit one that differs from him being for example, a Homo Sapien. The bank-teller is at least one, but one could not infer from this that all men are necessarily bank-tellers – note the alethic modal concept at play - and instead that they contingently become bank-tellers. In other words, at least one modal property must exist that differentiates a sortal's two distinct criteria of identity, the former taking ontological precedence over the latter. More importantly, for us, however, is the criterion of identity in relation to strong cross-sortal identities. Brandom, as stated earlier, maintains the supervenience of semantic function upon pragmatic inference, but he nevertheless renders a difference between the two. Brandom maintains that empirical descriptive predicates, specifically those based on meta-linguistic sortals, are to be implemented by those socially cognizant of practical antecedents and consequents. In other words, Brandom insists on the development and implementation of pragmatic meta-vocabulary in regards to the subjunctive conditionals which determine strong cross-sortal identities. Sellars's division between manifest and scientific images, as well as his distinction between sensate and conceptual states rely on strong cross-sortal predication

and implicitly fall under the modal expressivist theses which necessitate at least one shared modal property. If sortal-based predicates implicitly establish or defer back to a criterion of identity they nevertheless can differ in terms of applicability, applicability measured on pragmatic terms. This turns one to the crux of Brandom's argument.

To explore this concept of strong cross-sortal identity in relation to the Modal Kant-Sellars Thesis, which Brandom is adamant on defending, he recalls a personal instance of his roundtrip flight from Pittsburgh to Boston. For our purposes it will help clarify what has been stated above. Brandom recalls how during his travels, both the initial flight and the returning flight, he was counted as two separate passengers, which he denotes as "Passenger A" and "Passenger B." These two entities share a criterion of identity - although as we are about to see this does not mean that they are necessarily identical - that being airline travelers, and thus are counted as a single type of sortal. However, Robert Brandom is also a person - let's hope - and consequently a different kind of sortal is brought into the fray. Thus, "Passenger A" is identical to the figure known as "Robert Brandom," and so is "Passenger B." But in spite of this one cannot say that "Passenger A is identical to Passenger B" in spite of them being the same type of sortal. Brandom concludes that "strongly cross-sortal identity claims are *never* true" (*From Empiricism to Expressivism* 75). Relating this back to Sellars, the issue at hand for Brandom is one of justifying his stereoscopic fusion of the manifest and scientific images of thought as well as conceptual and non-conceptual representings.

In other words, an attempt to establish strong cross-sortal identities, via a naturalistic account of reality, means to contradict Sellars's own modal expressivism, which implicates that all empirical descriptive predicates tacitly deploy alethic modal

concepts such as possibility and necessity. For example, to subsume any species within a genus, to say that to move from “there are koalas” to “all koalas are marsupials” is to deploy the alethic modal concept of necessity, “all koalas are necessarily marsupials” or better yet “there is no counter-factual situation in which koalas are not marsupials.” In relation to sortals, this means that any cross-sortal predication must presuppose the establishment of at least one shared alethic modal concept, but since according to Brandom’s account, these alethic modalities are the consequence of the development of pragmatic meta-vocabulary instead semantic meta-vocabulary of the natural sciences, no such establishment can be made. Since Sellars ultimately desires to show that non-conceptual representings can in some sense account for various sortal identities, via his theory of picturing and later his concept of pure processes, Brandom believes that this necessitates the establishment a correlation between conceptual (normative) and non-conceptual representings (non-normative), which he does not believe to be possible as these would require establishing these cross-sortal identities which are never true. The question is what exactly makes the pragmatic meta-vocabulary “naturalistic?” The issue is that Brandom at no point clearly answers this question. Ultimately, Brandom seeks to preserve a relationship in which pragmatic inferences, which govern the subjunctive conditionals (should, would, could, etc.) utilized in both folk assertions and those governing the natural sciences. It is at heart a flaccid naturalism, one which by its common conception, the delimitation of metaphysics by the conceptual development of what many would call the “natural” or “hard” sciences, is not laid bare. Of course, whether or not one is sympathetic towards naturalism as a school of philosophy, is not

relevant, but there is nothing about Brandom's purported naturalism that actually manifests itself as naturalism at all.

Regarding this point, and in contrast to Brandom's accusations of a reductive naturalism incapable of addressing the issue of strong cross-sortal identities, I maintain that Sellars's naturalism is non-reductive, if we are to understand reductionism in popularly conceived physicalist sense, that is the equation of a sensible appearances or events with their micro-physical constituents. I believe this has been made clear by his concerns within his Carus Lecture. By placing the primacy of pragmatics over that of semantics, Brandom needs to demonstrate how pragmatics inform and delimit semantic capabilities of linguistic articulation, without either reducing semantics to pragmatics. Similar to Dewey's initial dilemma of justifying experiential episodes as the basis of knowledge, Brandom's issue is that he must find justification for self-authenticating pragmatic meta-vocabulary.

Beyond the issue of where to demarcate the boundary between pragmatics and semantics we must first question the manner in which a so-called "language" is embedded within pragmatic action in the first place, that is to say, examine how a practical act already defers to inferential nexus determined by other practical experiences whose nature cannot be equated with that of the former act. The community of language-users is remarkably pertinent to Sellars, but it in-itself cannot begin to explain the fundamentally biological and consequently sentient origins of linguistic acquirement. Sellars's theory of picturing, I believe, can achieve this. Sellars maintained that "It is on the ground that the learning of a language is a public process which proceeds in a domain of public objects and is governed by public sanctions" and therefore "while these

philosophers are immune to the form of the myth which has flowered in sense-datum theories, they have no defence against the myth in the form of the givenness of such facts as that *physical object x looks red to person S at time t.*”(Science, Perception and Reality 142)

Of course, the term “these philosophers” according to Wilfrid Sellars, is referring to the major figures of ordinary-language philosophy, Austin and Ryle who come to mind for many. I believe that this quote is telling in relation to Brandom. As while he attempts to affirm a pragmatic meta-vocabulary, and admirably develop a form of naturalism which does not fall prey to what some would call “scientism,” he nevertheless succumbs to this direct criticism put forth by Sellars more than half a century ago. That is to say, the folly of ordinary-language philosophy lied in its attempt to reduce philosophical inquiry into a mere questioning of the conditions of gauging the proper implementation of inferences within various discursive practices - language-games, if one is inclined - via their situating within normatively determinate forms of social practice. What artificial language, after all, can grasp the socially constructed semantic function of “Mozal Tov!”? Brandom ultimately falls prey to a kind of relativist reasoning through the appeal to pragmatic metavocabulary. This appeal secures the strange kind of givenness that Sellars remarks about above, one invoked in Brandom’s attempt to utilize meta-vocabulary that is “meaningful in the way it is meaningful,” a meta-vocabulary which permits one to assert empirical predicates while circumventing the issue of the conceptual deployment of said predicates as capable of being sustained through their traction and general acceptability within the domain of the natural sciences. It is a safeguarding via an appeal to implicit alethic modality.

One must keep in mind that Brandom doesn't want to dissolve all philosophical problems with the assertion that they are somehow misunderstandings, misusings, misappropriations of our folk-implementation of language. He does not take the Rortyan option of attempting to rob philosophy of its ability to deliver us capital "T" truths, and his attempt to rehabilitate Sellars's naturalism into his own version of naturalized pragmatism is a sign of this. However, Brandom, runs into the issue, that of what can be dubbed, to borrow a term from I heard from my colleague, Ray Brassier, "hermeneutic transcendentalism."¹⁵ This is the notion that interpretive gesture, and in this case inquiry into the natural world utilizing the linguistic criteria of contemporary natural science, must always defer back to normatively reinforced pragmatic structures from which the semantic vocabulary of the natural sciences is dependent upon. Furthermore, I believe the consequences of Brandom's subject naturalism stand in contrast to what was asserted regarding his notion of the propriety of normative claims. Sellars – as well as I – hold that the propriety of assertion can only be "transcended" via a means of incorporating that which is initially "other" to it, to fuse the scientific image with the manifest image.

The broad takeaway from all this is simply that Brandom's linguistic pragmatism is ultimately mired in issues that Sellars himself had already addressed in his critique of the given. In contrast to Brandom, Sellars construes normative structures as being fundamentally malleable to the scientific image, that is, to reiterate, the scientific conception of our natural world. It is to be joined as opposed to merely reconciled, such

¹⁵ See Ray Brassier's essay in *Choses En Soi : Métaphysique Du Réalisme*. Edited by Emmanuel Alloa and Élie During, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2018.

that what was initially considered foreign to our cultural subjectivity is no longer so. What makes Sellars's account of normativity radical is that it demonstrates the limitations of normativity alone in accounting for the development of a language-using community. The twentieth century “linguistic turn,” as it is often called, attempted to reduce philosophy to a form of logico-linguistic analysis, whether manifested in the inquiry into semiotic functions, structural linguistics, systematized artificial-languages, and most importantly in relation to my examination, the understanding of language as socially-construed inter-subjectively verifiable phenomenon, where philosophy’s goal is by-and-large made to differentiate and demarcate where one language – or “language-game” if one prefers – should or shouldn’t overlap with another. This is what many would broadly construe as the “normative” in philosophy. Nevertheless, Sellars stands by normativity in regard to its pivotal role in apperception, that is apperception for Sellars must be understood as a fundamentally linguistic achievement.

To reproach Brandom in another way, I believe that there is a tacit supposition running through his critique of Sellars, and this supposition could be summarized as the idea that science is merely a project of generating ever more complex systems of describing what many would colloquially call the “natural world.” I would argue, on the contrary, and I maintain that the implication of Sellars’s naturalism states the same, that if natural science be properly constructed as a dialectical procedure, then scientific investigation itself always becomes a meta-investigation of the very means of which one investigates nature. Scientific investigation is as much a *knowing-how* as it is *knowing-of*, and I believe this is the key to reconciling pragmatism with a naturalistic account of reality.

V: “WITH WHAT MUST SCIENCE BEGIN?”

My main goal here has been to demonstrate that Sellarsian philosophy, whose depths in my opinion have yet to be truly plumbed, fuses key insights from Deweyan experiential pragmatism and Brandomian linguistic pragmatism. Sellars’s philosophy presents us with the idea that the issue at hand is not merely one of opposing language against experience and simply developing more and more scrupulous conceptions of both the former and the latter, but rather problematizes the question of a hidden schism within the language-experience schism. For it is not a simple dichotomy between “language” and “experiences” – where “language” is a wholly conceptual-grammatical schema with descriptive capacities derived from what could broadly be construed as the “normative,” while “experiences” wholly non-linguistic episodes beyond any conceptual mediation. What I propose, and hope that I at least partially demonstrated, is that there is rather already a schism within language itself, language as normative socially rule-governed articulations involving the classical grammatical subject-predicate relationship and language and, as articulated in Sellars’s Jumblese example, as a non-conceptual structure within experience that can be said, with Wittgensteinian poeticism, to “show.” Picturing retains itself as non-intentional correlation between naturally occurring sign-design tokens i.e. natural linguistic objects. Sensations qua “brute” sensations are not and cannot be “about” anything, at least according to Sellars’s account.

As we draw to the end of this investigation, I must reiterate my own self-imposed limits. It is this focusing on Dewey and Brandom as representatives for experiential and linguistic pragmatism respectively, that has prevented me from fully encapsulating the myriad of individual viewpoints coming from both sides of this schism. However, my

hope is to demonstrate that neither thinker is at a full loss, but rather both have made significant philosophical contributions that can be strengthened by some of Sellars's core insights. Both Brandom and Dewey are, at heart, naturalists who are concerned with sketching a conception of reality that need not defer to supernatural entities. Neither of them falls prey to experiential givenness as construed by Ralston, although I have argued that Brandom does in some sense fall prey to a different kind of givenness explicated by Sellars in "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind." Both follow the trends of post-Kantian critical philosophy, feeling no need to revive "metaphysics" if one is to consider metaphysics in the Heideggerian sense of the word, as a "metaphysics of presence." Simultaneously, there is obvious difference between the two in regard to how they encounter the question of givenness. Dewey's theory of experience is ultimately commensurate with that of the phenomenologist, rooting intentionality in sentient capacities as opposed to sapiential ones. While Dewey makes a distinction between these forms of experience, it is a difference without a distinction, a question of quantitative intensification as opposed to being differently rooted in kind. However, Dewey is also astute in pointing out that there is a dimension of experience that always exceeds conceptual subsumption, and that said excess need not make one infer or posit a subjectivity itself as transcendental. I believe that the late Sellars's writings on process ontology are not simply reconcilable with Dewey's insights into the nature of felt qualities but can even be read as a continuation of Deweyan project, even if this was not deliberate on Sellars's part.

Brandom, I have argued, falls into the trappings of twentieth century ordinary-language philosophy in spite of his otherwise valiant attempts to surpass the all-together

agreed dead-end of said tradition. While his attempt to forge a “subject naturalism” entailing a pragmatic, instead of semantic, meta-vocabulary is commendable, issues arise as Brandom juggles Sellars’s critique of the given yet at the same time fails to defend a coherent alternative to Sellars’s naturalism, his “subject naturalism” culminating in the aforementioned “hermeneutic transcendentalism.” He is indeed correct in asserting that a naturalistic form of pragmatism must attune itself to the affirmation of pragmatics as opposed to the affirmation of semantics, but the question goes back again to what practices are as they manifest themselves in both our doings and sayings. Sellars’s dialectical conception of pragmatics, embedded within the application of natural science itself, or in other words, science as action-oriented investigative inquiry, transforms scientific inquiry from merely an attempt to know about the world and represent this knowledge in the form of “laws” or “facts”. Science qua *naturwissenschaft* becomes a process of uncovering both knowledge of the physical world and knowing how one knows this knowledge. I believe Brandom’s construal of pragmatic naturalism is missing this crucial insight. As such, I think that the typically generated scission between scientific realism and normative social practice, with the latter, in the case of a figure such as Rorty, setting explicit constraints on the powers of science to disclose truths, can be overcome. Sellars’s conception of science, and consequently the vision of a “naturalized pragmatism” which I sketch would be commensurate with such a vision.

What Sellars’s thought presents us with is a resurrection - although the deliberateness of said resurrection may be ambiguous - of the Hegelian dictum from the *Wissenschaft Der Logik*, that of the confluence of immediacy and mediation. Inquiring into the foundations of scientific inquiry, Hegel maintains “that there is nothing, nothing

in heaven or in nature or mind or anywhere else which does not equally contain both immediacy and mediation, so that these two determinations reveal themselves to be unseparated and inseparable and the opposition between them to be a nullity” (*Science of Logic* 68). If I’m to extend the analogy to Sellars’s thought, I believe that one can read “immediacy” here as being the domain of sensation and “mediation” being the domain of conception. The normative historical achievements of human language, permit one to discuss how the “mind” operates. But this in-itself does not entail that our self-knowledge of mind can be reduced to this normative dimension. The normative component requires sensuous immediacy, i.e. the intuitable, which stands outside of the purely normative. Sensation comes in direct contact with extra-linguistic reality yet cannot rely on itself to articulate said sensations *as* sensation of things. Picturing, as a form of representing is fundamentally non-conceptual. It must rely on what could be described as trans-empirical support which does not rely on immediate experience. Thus, what has been commonly referred to as non-inferential knowledge, a key characteristic of radicalized forms of empiricism, as well as certain anti-representationalist epistemologies, is impossible, and necessarily disqualifies itself as knowledge *qua* knowledge in accordance with the Sellarsian account. In contradistinction to sensation, conception does not come in direct contact with reality, yet the semantically rich rule-governed articulations imparted upon the subject by intersubjectively-verifiable social norms, nevertheless orient our epistemological dispositions which have the potential to mediate the aforementioned sensations. The schematically dissociable nature of sensation and conception, that which is a consequence the concatenation of our sentience - the aboutness of sensation - and sapience - the aboutness of conception - implicates the dialectical indissociability of the

both the former and the latter. Needless to say, this dialectical approach to epistemology explains why Sellars humorously - although not without warrant - referred to “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind” as his “*meditations hegeliennes*” (*Science, Perception and Reality* 149).

Sellars’s philosophy when systematized, I believe, navigates the issues presented between the present schism within contemporary pragmatism. The consequence of Sellars’s metaphysical theses is an affirmation of intelligibility of being through the means of scientific knowing, reasserting the analytic power of *Vernunft* that more orthodox Kantian fears. The consequences of this reaffirmation, at least in relation to the so-called “antinomies of pure reason” have yet to be negotiated. I believe that my reading of Sellars, could develop a naturalistic pragmatism that, to reiterate for a final time, overcomes both the division haunting contemporary pragmatist thought, this schism of its linguistic and experiential components. After all this exposition, one may ask oneself as to why these latter developments are relevant to our initial investigative inquiry. I would maintain that it is because of the encounter with the question of a pragmatistic ontology, following in the wake of Sellars, that one would be compelled to embrace rather than reject the dialectical tension between both manifest (folk) and scientific conceptions of the world. Any future pragmatisms, I believe, would need to affirm this dialectical tension as the prelude of its *Aufhebung* via conceptualizing that which was previously thought non-conceptualizable.

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