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SOME KANTIAN THEMES IN WILFRID
SELLARS'S PHILOSOPHY

The American philosopher Wilfrid Sellars has been one of the most important voices of Analytical Philosophy in the second half of the 20th century. That may seem to make it all the more surprising that he developed his own philosophy in constant exchange with the work of Immanuel Kant. At one point he went so far as to characterize the philosophical endeavour from Hegel onwards as a «slow climb 'back to Kant' which is still underway» (Sellars, 1968, p. 29). Not only did Sellars contribute in a number of important papers and a book-length study with the telling title *Science and Metaphysics. Variations on Kantian Themes* to the exegesis of both Kant's theoretical and practical philosophy; some of the theses at the heart of Sellars's own systematic approach are, as I would like to illustrate in what follows, most appropriately understood if one acknowledges their methodological and argumentative foundation in Kant's Transcendental Philosophy.

I will concentrate on Sellars's Kantian approach to perception. This is, I take it, the philosophical subject on which there is the greatest affinity between the two authors: not only concerning the methodological foundation of their respective thinking, but also the particulars of the constructive account of the philosophical problem under discussion – a problem that lies at the heart of contemporary philosophy of mind, epistemology, and philosophy of language.

1. Transcendental methodology

This argument can be convincing only if Sellars's philosophy is understood as subscribing to Kant's transcendental method. I should therefore like to begin with making plausible this methodological commitment of Sellars that has not received the attention it deserves.

For a detailed proof of this claim it would, of course, be necessary to show this method at work in central pieces of Sellars's philosophical work. As I in-

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licated, I will do so in the later parts of this paper with respect to the topic of intentionality and perception. At this point of my argument, however, I would like to address this question by appealing to a defence of Kant's transcendental psychology that can be found in one of Sellars's important papers on Kant, *Some Remarks on Kant's Theory of Experience* (1967). This defence can serve as a reason for making plausible Sellars's own methodological commitments to transcendental philosophy, but can at the same time help us to understand what this methodology consists in.

What are the characteristics of transcendental methodology? I suggest that it is, firstly, an ascent to a different, characteristic level of philosophical abstraction which, secondly, is restricted, at least as far as theoretical philosophy is concerned, to the question of intentional reference to a world of which we as finite rational beings are a part.

These claims stand in need of elucidation. I take my cue from the very beginning of the development of transcendental philosophy, that is: from the time when Kant first seems to have become clear about the radical nature of his philosophical project. In his famous letter to Marcus Herz from February 1772 he claims to have found the «key to the whole secret of metaphysics, hitherto still hidden from itself» (Kant, 1772, AA 10: 130; engl. trans., p. 133). This key is a question, namely the question «What is the ground [*Grund*] of the relation of that in us which we call 'representation' to the object?» (*ibidem*).

The question for a ground or foundation of the reference of ideas to their objects, Kant insisted, was a genuinely new one. Indeed, it was so new that, as he frequently insists, he could expect no help from traditional philosophy. It is very important, therefore, to understand what exactly Kant is asking for in putting this question on the philosophical agenda.

At first glance one might think that Kant was only asking a question that was discussed at least since the great representationalist schemes developed by Descartes and philosophers influenced by him (Sellars, 1977). What these philosophers did was to offer solutions to the question concerning the relation between representations and their objects. The inquiry about the *intentionality* of our representations therefore was by no means a new one.

And yet Kant retrospectively writes in his *Prolegomena*: it is «a completely new science, of which no one had previously formed merely the thought, of which even the bare idea was unknown, and for which nothing from all that has been provided before now could be used» (Kant, 1783, AA 04: 262; Engl. trans., p. 11).

The important difference that justifies Kant's emphasis is, of course, the fact that the project of representationalists before Kant was wholly *descrip-*

tive. For them, once an accurate description of intentional relations had been achieved, no further questions about the "grounding" of this relation remained.

What exactly Kant had in mind by speaking of the "ground" that serves as the "foundation" of the representational relation, of course needs to be discussed. At least as a first proposal, it may not be too far from the truth that Kant is appealing here to the question of what may serve as the *justification* of certain knowledge-claims. What Kant understood was that a pure, even a true description of an epistemic process could never amount to a justification of the process in question.

Justification, however, – at least explicit justification – is, as Sellars often points out, «a higher-order thinking» (1975, p. 342). Accordingly, we have to leave the object-level of matter of fact truth and ascend to the meta-level where we turn from the question "What do we know?" to the question "Why are our beliefs justified?"

It is exactly at this point, I think, that we should bring Sellars's characterization of the Kantian project into play in order to achieve a better understanding of what makes the Kantian way of justification a specifically *transcendental* way of justifying knowledge-claims.

By way of introduction Sellars writes in his paper on "Kant's theory of experience":

It is [...] obvious [...] that Kant is not seeking to prove that there is empirical knowledge, but only to show that the concept is a coherent one and that it is such as to rule out the possibility that there could be empirical knowledge not implicitly of the form 'such and such a state of affairs belongs to a coherent system of states of affairs of which my perceptual experience is a part' (Sellars, 1967, p. 635).

One possible way to prove the *coherence* of one's concept of empirical knowledge consists exactly in showing its conditions of possibility. But in achieving a clear concept of the conditions of the possibility of one's empirical knowledge one has at the same time *justified* the claim to the validity of such knowledge. For, if those conditions really are conditions of possibility, we have no further choice: there is no other, alternative way at our disposal to think of empirical knowledge. If someone really gets hold of the conditions of possibility of some kind of knowledge, he possesses knowledge of the conditions that this kind of knowledge is necessarily subjected to.

The second part of the Sellars-quote points to his coherentist interpretation of the result of Kant's inquiry: a thinking subject has empirical knowledge of a certain state of affairs only if this state of affairs belongs to a coherent sys-

tem of states of affairs that includes the subject's own perceptual experience. This is in line with Sellars's own anti-foundationalist picture of empirical knowledge and the conception of justification he first published in his famous paper *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (1956) and elucidated and refined until his very last publications almost thirty years later. If Sellars therefore is right in his characterization of Kant's epistemological aims, as I take him to be, at least as far as the outcome of this particular philosophical investigation is concerned both authors share the same objective.

But similarity of the picture of the *outcome* of a philosophical investigation surely is not enough to prove a close affinity in its *methodology*. This acquaintance can, as I already suggested, best be seen if one takes a closer look at Sellars's defence of Kant's *transcendental psychology* in the same paper.

The naïve critique of transcendental psychology he is defending Kant against is summarized by Sellars as follows: «Kant is said to postulate a mechanism consisting of empirically inaccessible mental processes which “constructs” the world of experience out of sense-impressions» (1967, p. 646). Kant, according to this critique, would be a bad psychologist who tries to solve problems that properly belong to the realm of empirical psychology by invoking doubtful, mysterious and ultimately unverifiable processes.

Sellars, unsurprisingly, believes this criticism to be fundamentally misdirected. What is, however, very interesting, is the way he argues for this conviction. He does so in outlining a science he calls *transcendental linguistics*. This science, construed in strict analogy to transcendental psychology, is, so he seems to think, obviously not vulnerable to this line of critique. By way of analogy the very same holds for transcendental psychology.

What, then, is transcendental linguistics? The transcendental linguist is construing the concepts of meaning, truth, and knowledge «as metalinguistic concepts pertaining to linguistic behaviour (and dispositions to behave)» (1967, p. 646). This «involves construing [linguistic behaviour] as governed by *ought-to-be's* which are actualized as uniformities by the training that transmits language from generation to generation» (*ibidem*).

Ought-to-be's are what Sellars in other places calls rules of criticism. They are to be distinguished sharply from ought-to-do's or rules of action. They do not convey how one ought to act, but how things – in this case linguistic behaviour or dispositions to linguistic behaviour – ought to be, given certain circumstances. Although these rules are realized by linguistic uniformities, the rules themselves, of course, are metalinguistic. An example would be: «(*Ceteris paribus*) one ought to respond to red objects in sunlight by uttering or being disposed to utter “this is red”» (Example taken from Sellars, 1969, p. 511).

The concepts of meaning, truth, and knowledge in their turn construed as metalinguistic concepts are nothing else but categories or rules pertaining to the most general features of those rules of criticism. In other words, they express the most general features of the concrete rules of criticism that are necessary for language to play the role of a *cognitive* instrument. They contain in the most general form what are the necessary normative conditions for language to play the role it *de facto* plays. In this linguistic context transcendental philosophy becomes the theory of the conditions of possibility of this cognitive functioning of language – it becomes *transcendental linguistics*.

Transcendental linguistics thus conceived does not aim to describe the actual features of «historical languages in the actual world» (Sellars, 1967, p. 646). It «attempts to delineate the general features that would be common to the epistemic functioning of any language in any possible world» (*ibidem*). It does so in discerning norms that are necessary conditions for the cognitive functioning of a language «which are themselves formulated in that language» (*ibidem*).

Transcendental linguistics, therefore, does not attempt to describe mysterious mechanisms guaranteeing the cognitive functioning of a language. That would be “rational” linguistics – in analogy to a rational psychology in the Kantian sense. The postulation of such obscure mechanisms is completely different from the investigation and articulation of the norms that are implicit in the actual functioning of language as a cognitive instrument.

For analogous reasons, Sellars insists, transcendental *psychology* is not an obscure pseudo-science, but simply good philosophy: «Kant's transcendental psychology is the heart of his system. He, too [just like the transcendental linguist; J.H.], seeks the general features any conceptual system must have in order to generate knowledge of a world to which it belongs» (*ibidem*).

The question remains, though, whether Sellars's own methodology should more aptly be described as transcendental *linguistics* – thus reflecting the methodological development known as the “linguistic turn”.

I do not think this would be an adequate description of what Sellars is up to: transcendental linguistics certainly would be sufficient if all epistemic concepts would be completely understandable as (meta-) linguistic concepts. Sellars, however, is quite clear that this is not possible. Although in his famous Myth of Jones in *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (1956) the scientific genius Jones introduces the ontology of inner conceptual episodes in analogy to spontaneous languageings, Sellars emphasizes that these spontaneous acts – uttered by the mythical community of the Ryleans – are already acts of thinking in their own right, i.e. instances of thinking-out-loud. Jones's

theory of inner episodes thus *presupposes* thinking at an observable level. It is essential for the philosophical aim of the Myth of Jones that the Ryleans already are rational, thinking beings. Otherwise it would utterly lose its plausibility as a myth. The Ryleans already do have a concept of thinking – but it is not our concept of thinking. What is new in Jones’s theory is that episodes analogous to those thinking-out-louds are postulated to occur as inner processes. This is nicely illustrated by a remark from Sellars’s late paper on *Mental Events* which he begins with the following clarification: «I find that I am often construed as holding that mental events in the sense of thoughts, as contrasted with aches and pains, are linguistic events. This is a misunderstanding. What I have held is that the members of a certain class of linguistic events are thoughts» (1981b, p. 325).

Transcendental linguistics therefore cannot be sufficient on Sellars’s view, even after the “linguistic turn”. It has to be embedded – as a vital part – in the larger project of a transcendental psychology, though – unlike Kant – Sellars thinks that the *concept* of *thinking-out-loud* precedes that of thoughts as inner episodes in the order of knowing, while thinking-out-louds depend on thoughts as inner episodes in the order of being. Sellars himself «seeks the general features any conceptual system must have in order to generate knowledge of a world to which it belongs» (Sellars, 1967, p. 646). I therefore think that, for all his criticism in (important) detail, Sellars is a Kantian through and through as far as *methodology* is concerned.

2. Givenness and guidance

Having answered the question of methodological affinity to the positive, let us now turn to a reconstruction of at least some of the correspondences between their respective philosophical systems.

Let me start by highlighting a well-known similarity between the two systems, just to put it aside: it is a well-known fact, indicated repeatedly by Sellars himself, that Sellars’s own doctrine of scientific realism – the possibility in principle of our attaining knowledge of objective reality as it is in itself by way of scientific investigation – implies the phenomenality of empirical reality as conceived in the so-called manifest image. Consequently, Sellars himself is a transcendental idealist concerning empirical reality as conceived within the manifest image. His transcendental realism concerning the ideal scientific image of empirical reality implies this transcendental ideality of the manifest world.

A related, though frequently ignored Kantian insight that found Sellars’s wholehearted support was the analysis of the function of the concept object of experience. This analysis is the subject of his late paper on *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism* (1976). At the very end of this paper he writes by way of conclusion:

Kant saw that the concept of an *object* of perception contains a reference to the perceptual takings which are the criteria for its actuality. He *also* saw that the concept of a perceptual taking, as the taking of an *object*, contains a reference to material things and events which, if actual, would imply its own actuality. The actuality of perceptual takings and the actuality of material things and processes are not logically independent (Sellars, 1976, § 53).

As I tried to show on another occasion (Haag, 2007, ch. 9), it is this acceptance of Kant’s doctrines of the mutual dependence of the object perceived and our perception of the object that ultimately forces Sellars to accept some form of scientific realism – at least as a regulative ideal. For it is this mutual dependence of the possibility of a conceptual taking on the transcendental subject’s part and the *Denknotwendigkeit* of an objective correlate, so central to Kant’s theory, that necessitates in Sellars’s framework the thinking of successor-concepts that ultimately have to be the successor concepts of a science ideally conceived.

In what follows, however, I will put those strands of dependence of Sellars’s thought on Kant aside and concentrate on the topic of the *intentionality of our perceptual states* that is so central to both authors – although we will reencounter the perceptual takings Sellars talks about in the paragraph just quoted: perceptual takings are what Sellars takes Kantian intuitions to be. And intuitions, of course, are an ingredient in Kant’s theory of perceptual experience as important as they are in Sellars’s account of perception – under the label “perceptual takings”. Since they are the taking up of non-conceptual sense-impressions, they mark, as it were, the lower boundary of the conceptual order, i.e. the only direct contact between the conceptual and the non-conceptual. They are, accordingly, the conceptual product of the process that starts from the subjects being perceptually affected by something external – a process the details of which Sellars in many important respects models after Kant’s own construal of perceptual experience.

Instead of directly sketching this process, let me start, however, by turning to an admittedly rather distant resemblance that I already noted in passing and that motivates Sellars’s particular conception of perception: the rejection of the foundationalist picture that Sellars castigated as the Myth of the Given on the one hand and the acceptance of the importance of an element

of guidance of the perceptual or, more general, epistemological process “from without”. Both aspects, at least at first glance, seem to stand in a certain tension to each other: the concept of guidance has to be given an anti-foundationalist reading. It is this task that, ultimately, shapes Sellars’s account of perception and that makes the distinctions he finds in Kant’s conception of perception so instructive for his own purposes.

Let me start with the concept of guidance. In *Science and Metaphysics* Sellars observes: «The [manifold of intuitions; J.H.] has the interesting feature that its existence is postulated on general epistemological or, as Kant would say, transcendental grounds, after *reflection on the concept of human knowledge as based on, though not constituted by, the impact of independent reality*» (1968, p. 9; emphasis J.H.).

This impact of an independent reality corresponds to the “guidedness” of our perceptual content Sellars shows himself so impressed by in the opening pages of *Science and Metaphysics*. This guidedness, for Sellars, is an ultimately phenomenological fact grounded in the *passivity* of our experience. Kant, throughout his critical writings, emphasizes this passivity with respect to the content of our experience. It is generally aligned with the concept of receptivity and therefore with the non-conceptual faculty of sensibility.

This fact is of central importance for assessing both Kant’s and Sellars’s views of our relation to the world we are a part of: there has to be something that explains the basic phenomenological fact that we are passive with respect to the actual content of our experience. Although Sellars thought himself in disagreement with Kant in this respect, for both authors this guidance has to be strictly “from without” the conceptual order. For Kant it is constituted by the activity of our essentially spontaneous faculty of understanding.

For both Kant and Sellars, this guidance is the joint effect of independent reality and sense-impressions brought about by the former’s impact – Sellars’s «sheer receptivity» (1968, p. 15). Independent reality is the Kantian thing in itself, guiding us from without *via* the impressions of sheer receptivity. Only the latter are immediately accessible for the working of conceptual spontaneity.

Even this immediate contact with sense-impressions is, however, guidance *from without* the conceptual order in the sense that these impressions are not given as what they are in themselves, but are *always synthesized by the conceptually guided synthesis of imagination*.

This fact, in turn, connects the subject of guidance to the repudiation of the Myth of the Given. This Myth in its «most basic form» (Sellars, 1981a, p. 11) consists in the following principle: «If a person is directly aware of an item which has categorical status C, then the person is aware of it *as having*

categorical status C» (*ibidem*). And he adds: «To reject the Myth of the Given is to reject the idea that the categorial structure of the world – if it has a categorial structure – imposes itself on the mind as a seal imposes an image on melted wax» (*ibidem*, p. 12).

The *rejection* of the Myth therefore involves a rejection of every form of direct or immediate *awareness* of something with a certain categorial structure *as having* this very categorial structure *unless* one already developed a conceptual framework, which forms the background of this direct awareness.

The connection to the subject of guidance *via* the synthesis of the receptively given sense-impressions should now be obvious. It might be summarized in the following question: in perception, are we immediately aware of the receptively given sense-impressions guiding us *as* what they are in themselves? If that should be the case, the resulting position had forfeited every claim to its drawing an anti-foundationalist picture of perception and its guidance “from without”. How does Sellars’s theory cope with this problem?

In answering this question, everything depends on how imagination in its synthesizing activity transforms what is receptively given according to his theory. As we will shortly see, Sellars’s conception of perception – at least in its later, more sophisticated form – not only heavily relies on those Kantian concepts but in large part aims to incorporate their specific functioning, at least as Sellars reconstructed it.

3. Sellars on the intentionality of perception

Sellars’s sophisticated conception of perceptual consciousness – emerging in the early 70ties – differs from the earlier versions mainly by the introduction of the concept of an *image-model*. Image-models are, in first approximation, complex images of objects and as such the result of the operation of conceptually guided imagination based on non-conceptual sensory input.

Let me sketch their role in Sellars’s Kantian picture of perception. If image-models are the result of a conceptually shaping of strictly non-conceptual sensory input by the activity of what Sellars, following Kant, calls the *productive imagination*, we should start by asking: what is the nature of the *sensory input* that feeds into this shaping?

3.1. Sensations

Purely receptive *sensations* (or sense-impressions) are conceived in first analysis as states of perceiving subjects that are the *effect* of affections of our

senses by external objects and that *contain* the *sensibilia* the perceiving subject conceives as properties of the objects of perception. As sensations they are non-conceptual «states of consciousness *none* [...] of which are apperceived» (Sellars, 1968, p. 10).

The question of sensory input is related to the question of guidance: we have to ask ourselves why it cannot be the mind-independent reality, i.e. things in themselves, as such that is responsible for the guiding activity. Why do we have to posit a further intermediate class of purely non-conceptual sensory states?

Sellars's argument for this is not – as McDowell argued (2009a, pp. 16-22; cf. deVries, 2006, pp. 182-183) – a piece of transcendental reasoning. Sensations are initially postulated to explain what Sellars took to be two *phenomenological* facts:

(1) In perception «*something, somehow* a cube of pink in physical space, is present [...] other than as merely believed in» (Sellars, 1982, p. 89).

This is the *descriptive core* (cf. Sellars, 1975, p. 310) of our perceptions that accounts for the actual existence of something in our perceptions and that in turn cannot be accounted for by talking of merely intentional existence. In a similar vein he writes in the *Carus-Lectures*: «The one thing we can say, with phenomenological assurance, is that whatever its “true” *categorical* status, the expanse of red involved in a [...] seeing of the very redness of an apple has *actual existence* as contrasted with the *intentional in-existence* of that which is believed in *as believed in*» (Sellars, 1981a, pp. 20-21).

This is how far *phenomenology* takes us in the «analysis of the sense in which we see of the pink ice cube its very pinkness» (Sellars, 1982, p. 89), as Sellars puts it.

But this fact alone would not justify the introduction of sensations in the sense sketched above. Physical objects having those qualitative properties could explain it just as well. To justify the further step of relocating the descriptive core in sensations one has to take into account a further phenomenological fact: in his philosophical writings Sellars keeps insisting that the sense-datum-inference has a phenomenological foundation which – while misinterpreted by many sense-datum theorists – is yet to be taken seriously and in need of interpretation by a philosophical account of perception. Sellars is impressed by the following observation:

(2) There is an intrinsic likeness of the qualitative content of a veridical perception of a pink ice cube and the corresponding case of an illusion of a pink ice cube, i.e. between a case of real seeing and merely ostensible seeing. (It is important to keep in mind, that perception and seeing are *conceptual* episodes on Sellars's interpretation).

I will not discuss this claim here, although it definitely will need discussion if one is to defend Sellars's theory of perception. For my purpose it is important that phenomenology, in Sellars's view, thus generates explanatory pressure: what is it, we are inevitably led to ask, that accounts for the somehow presence of the descriptive core in cases of veridical perception and ostensible seeing alike? What, in other words, is this descriptive core's «intrinsic nature» (Sellars, 1956, p. 152)? What are the colours and shapes we ordinarily take to be properties of the objects “out there”? As Sellars writes: «What is at stake is their [i.e. the colours'] status and function in the scheme of things» (*ibidem*).

The theory that is explicitly designed to supply us with this explanation is, of course, his *theory of sense-impressions or sensations*. Those sensations form a class of non-conceptual, non-intentional entities introduced exclusively to explain the occurrence of ostensible seeings, i.e. conceptual, intentional entities, in the abnormal case just as much as in the normal case, where proper seeing takes place.

3.2. Image-models

Given this picture of the *material* the productive imagination operates on, what happens to it in the synthesizing process? The synthesizing activity of productive imagination *forms* this receptive sensory input so that it becomes the qualitative content of a spontaneously and hence conceptually structured complex *image* of a three-dimensional object. This object is represented with its sensory properties and is pictured from the perspective of a perceiving subject.

Those image-models serve a very important purpose in the Sellarsian picture of sensory perception. They are the conscious shapings of the unconscious receptive input that is situated below the line that separates not only receptivity from spontaneity, but also sub-conscious mental states from conscious ones.

Image-models fill an ostensible theoretical gap in Sellars's theory that must become obvious to even the superficial reader of his earlier works: they can substantiate the metaphor of a descriptive core, i.e. the descriptive, qualitative aspects of experience that remain, if we abstract from all the properties the understanding is responsible for. It may, at least at first glance, seem that Sellars's sensings are able to fill this gap, but the *conscious* descriptive core cannot simply be *identified* with the sensory content of experience – un-

less the sensory content itself is *more* than just the raw sensation that is thus conceptually transformed – because the raw sensations introduced by the sense-impression-inference are *unconscious*. The descriptive core, in other words, turns out to be sensory consciousness conceptually constructed in image-models.

It is this descriptive core that serves as the phenomenological basis for the sense-impression inference, which, as we have seen, was introduced for the purpose of justifying our talk of sense-impressions or sensations in the first place. Image-models, in other words, are the way we are aware of objects “other than as merely believed in”.

But in what sense is the content of those images conceptually transformed? Image-models themselves are partly *conceptual*, not merely sensory. Productive imagination could not form image-models unless it was according to recipes provided by understanding and part of our empirical concepts of objects. Those recipes are therefore designed to play a role exactly corresponding to Kant’s concept of an empirical schema: «This representation of a general procedure of imagination in providing an image of a concept, I entitle the schema of this concept» (Kant, 1781, 1787, A 140/B 179-180; Engl. trans., p. 182).

It is thus a conceptual recipe to form the sense-impressions restricted by the Kantian *mathematical*, though *not* the *dynamical* categories and their corresponding transcendental schemata. They are the result of a spontaneous-conceptual shaping of the sensations that in turn are the result of the affection of our receptivity by things-in-themselves. Consequently, the properties of the image thus construed are only their *sensibilia*. They comprise, however, not only the ones actually perceived, but also the merely imagined sensible properties that we represent the object as having:

We see the cool red apple. We see it *as* red on the facing side, as red on the opposite side, and *as* containing a volume of cool white apple flesh. We do not see of the apple its opposite side, or its inside, or its internal whiteness, or its coolness, or its juiciness. But while these features are not *seen*, they are not *merely* believed in. These features are present in the object of perception as actualities. They are present by virtue of being imagined (Sellars, 1978, § 21).

Image-models are a blend of features seen *and* features imagined, a «*sensing-cum-imaging* a unified structure» (Sellars, 1978, § 24). They are what we *take to be* the objects we are directly aware of in sensory or, as Sellars sometimes puts it, perceptual consciousness: «[A]lthough the objects of which we are directly aware in perceptual consciousness are image-models, we are not aware of them as image-models» (*ibidem*, § 27).

3.3. Intuitions

The mental states that are the *takings* of those image-models as objects are what Sellars often calls “perceptual takings”. Since Sellars himself repeatedly makes clear that intuitions on his interpretation of Kant’s theory serve the very same purpose as perceptual takings, I will use the term “intuition” (*Anschauung*) instead. Intuitions hence are the *takings* of the image-models *as* objects of experience, and image-models are, again in Kantian terminology, the appearances that are taken to be objects in an intuition of an object of experience.

It is of great importance to notice that intuitions in this Sellarsian sense of the term (a sense that I will defend as being a truly Kantian use as well) are *distinct* from image-models: intuitions, firstly, represent their objects with causal and dispositional properties that we «do not see of [those objects] [...] though we see them as having them» (Sellars, 1978, § 22), whereas image-models do contain only properties of actual or possible sensory experience.

More importantly, intuitions are *not* sensory representations: they are representations that serve to make a conceptually laden demonstrative reference to an image-model that is taken to be an object of experience thereby «bringing a particular object before the mind for its consideration» (Sellars, 1978, § 48). In an intuition we take a complex sensory object to be an *object of experience*. In this way an intuition can serve as the subject of a perceptual judgment that guarantees the direct contact between the ensuing judgment and what we take to be (part of) the world outside *via* its demonstrative aspect.

Another way to make essentially the same point: intuitions are representations of objects of experience whose *esse* essentially is *not percipi*, while image-models are representations of objects whose *esse* is *percipi* in that they are essentially perspectival objects. Image-models are, as it were, objects without objectivity: they always incorporate the perspective of the perceiving subject. The schemata that provide the recipes for their construction are never just schemata of objects but always of objects «*in such-and-such relation to a perceiver*» (Sellars, 1978, § 34). As such they simply cannot play the role of being perceptual takings of objects as objects that exist independently of being perceived – and hence cannot play the transcendently required role of serving as «criteria for its [i.e. the object of perception] actuality» (Sellars, 1976, § 53).

Their conceptual content allows intuitions, on the other hand, to figure in Sellars’s theory as perceptual takings in the full meaning of the term, namely as containing proto-judgmental form. That is why, as Sellars points out, we

may think of this kind of taking as believing, but have to think of it as “believing in” rather than “believing about” or “believing that”: «What is *taken* or, if I may so put it, believed *in* is represented by the complex demonstrative phrase; while that which is believed *about* the object is represented by the explicitly predicative phrase which follows. Perceptual takings, thus construed, provide the perceiver with perceptual subject-terms for judgments proper» (Sellars, 1978, § 10).

Again, this sharply distinguishes intuitions from image-models, which do not serve as means of reference to objects, but – by being “mis-taken” – as those objects themselves. As McDowell correctly puts it: «Sellars does not consider claim-containing occurrences that are themselves shapings of sensory consciousness» (McDowell, 2009b, p. 122).

Naturally, there are further questions concerning the relationship between image-models and intuitions. One may ask whether the recipe (schema) used in the generation of the image-model can be simply identified with the «demonstrative conceptualization», that is the intuition, as Jay Rosenberg (2007a, p. 273) claims?

I am skeptical and would like to suggest instead that this particular use of concepts and their correlated schemata guides the activity of productive imagination that generates *both* the construction of image-models and the demonstrative reference to this image-model as an object of experience.

Indeed, Sellars claims that productive imagination «is a unique blend of a capacity to form images *in accordance with* a recipe, and a capacity to conceive of objects in a way which *supplies* the relevant recipes» (Sellars, 1978, § 31). But here the capacity to conceive of objects, contrary to what Rosenberg suggested (Rosenberg, 2007a, p. 273; 2007b, pp. 239-240) should not be identified with the capacity to demonstratively refer to objects (although the latter presupposes the former). It should be understood as the capacity to use concepts in general, a capacity that is presupposed not only in the construction of image-models, but just as much in the forming of an intuitive representation of an object.

That would explain why Sellars proceeds talking only about concepts and schemata without even mentioning demonstrative reference: «Kant distinguished between the *concept* of a dog and the *schema* of a dog. The former together with the concept of a *perceiver* capable of changing his relation to his environment implies a family of recipes for constructing image models of *perceiver-confronting-dog*» (Sellars, 1978, § 31).

There is no reference to the use of those concepts in the conceptual capacity of intuitively referring to an object, but only to concepts and the related

schemata. Both, concepts and schemata, are presupposed in “providing concepts with images” *and* in intuitive reference. It is only the interplay of intuitive reference and the synthesizing activity of productive imagination in the construal of image-models out of a given manifold of sensations that makes possible the immediate intentional reference to objects in perception. Hence, it is a thoroughly Kantian framework that Sellars develops to take up the philosophical challenge posed by the problem of doing justice to the guidance of our perceptual process without relapsing into the Myth of the Given: ultimately it is the ability Kant labelled productive imagination, informed by spontaneous conceptual activity, that transforms the sensory Given in a conceptually laden perceptual representation of objects of experience.

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