October 31, 2023

Plan for Week 10

Transcendental Semantics, Conceptual Progress, and Picturing

1.   Two levels of semantics:
- Internal normative, by functional classification: 'means', 'true', 'refers'.
- External transcendental: matter-of-factual *picturing*. Relates conceptual *appearances* of material particulars to the *reality* certified by eventual ("Peircean") natural science.

2.   Sellars's Program:
- Assess **conceptual progress** by better *picturing* of the real, and
- Define the **real** by a conceptual scheme that pictures *ideally* well.

3.   Key moves are in §67-§69:
a) We can understand our conceptual scheme (CSO) *picturing more adequately* the objects there really are, according to CSO, than does some *predecessor* conceptual scheme (CS_i).
    So:
b) That is sufficient to understand the idea of some *successor* conceptual scheme CS_j that stands to CSO as CSO stands to CS_i, so that CSO pictures the objects of CS_j, but less adequately.
    Then:
c)   §69 Let us now go one step further and conceive of a language which enables its users to form *ideally* adequate pictures of objects, and let us call this language Peircish. [CSP]

4.   Two Issues with the Argument:
a) How transform *retro*spective into *pro*spective criteria of progress? (The "So" in 3a→b)
    - Wright on *superassertibility*.
    - Proposal: Invoke prospectively assessable technology.
b) How move from justifying *comparatives* to justifying *superlative*? (The "Then" in 3b→c)
    - Unger point: Only some comparatives take superlatives.
    - Convergence of conceptual frameworks. Fixed points.
    - Modalities of convergence.

5.   Interpretive Suggestion: Comparison of conceptual frameworks as better-or-worse at picturing the particulars of the ideal Peircean conceptual framework CSP construed on Lewisian functionalist model of Ramsification plus best-realizers:
a) Ramsification of the pictur*ing* framework.
b) Selection of best realizers from the pictur*ed* framework, CSP.
c) $CS_i < CS_j$ along the dimension of picturing (better appearance) of *reality* as identified with CSP iff CSP provides *better realizers* of Ramsified CS_j roles than it does of Ramsified CS_i roles.

6.   It is a crucial element of the claims to which Sellars aspires to entitle himself in Ch. V of *SM* that this relation of *comparative better picturing* be a wholly *matter-of-factual* matter.