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PURE PROCESSES AND PROJECTIVE METAPHYSICS

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INTRODUCTION

In the systematic pursuit of a nominalist stance Wilfrid Sellars has laid the foundations for a formal conventionalist semantics, a functionalist philosophy of mind, a naturalist theory of linguistic representation, an anti-foundationalist epistemology, and a metaphysics of Peircean scientific realism. Sellars' philosophical legacy is thus a scheme which – if successful in all its argumentational strands – presents the most comprehensive and most sophisticated nominalist approach ever developed. Much of the critical work on Sellars is concerned with the semantical and epistemological arguments that surround Sellars' naturalist nominalism. The relationship between the ontological core thesis and its systematic environment, however, has received comparatively little attention.¹

This is astounding since Sellars' commitments to an anti-foundationalist epistemology and a Peircean scientific realism have immediate implications for the methodology of ontological category theory and amplify an already existing tension within the scheme. On the one hand, Sellars applies and extends Carnap's metalinguistic turn in ontological category theory, treating traditional category terms ('individual,' 'property,' 'relation,' 'proposition' etc.) and abstract singular terms ('redness,' 'fatherhood,' etc.) as hidden metalinguistic predicates for functional sorts of sign-designs. On the other hand, however, Sellars is not prepared to accept the strictly conventionalist position which Carnap presents as the natural consequence of his metalinguistic turn. In contrast to Carnap Sellars considers questions about the dispensability of certain linguistic resources – questions, that is, which correspond to traditional ontological questions about the existence of certain classes of



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entities such as ‘Are there *really* properties?’ – as meaningful theoretical questions. Whereas Carnap propagates the conventionalist elimination of metaphysical questions in general and the dispute between nominalists and platonists in particular, Sellars upholds the possibility of metaphysical category theory and uses the Carnapian metalinguistic reduction strategy merely to “pour nominalistic wine into platonistic bottles.”²

But does such a procedure indeed prove viable? Can one consistently integrate the metalinguistic deflation of category terms into a metaphysical program which makes use of the very same category terms to describe the structure not of language but of reality? Does Sellars’ scheme contain the resources to combine a “negative” or deflationary and a “positive” or thetic program in ontology?³ How can it be possible for us non-Peirceans to make any descriptive claims about the structure of reality? These are the questions I will address in the following. I will show that the Carus Lectures provide us with the sketch not only of a new ontology but also of Sellars’ views on the methodology of ontological theory construction, and I will argue that the method of category projection as exemplified in the Carus Lectures can be said, within the setting of Sellars’ scheme, to ‘transcend from within’ the limitations of category theories developed in non-Peircean conceptual structures.

I

Sellars leaves little space for speculation about the historical lines of influence on his thought – expressly and frequently he names Kant, Hegel, Peirce, Broad, Carnap, and Wittgenstein as main sources of constructional inspiration. But Sellars’ references to, and explicit interactions with, these historical resources by no means yield a sufficiently clear and complete picture to make comparative studies obsolete. The constructional similarities as well as the methodological dissimilarities between Carnap’s and Sellars’ philosophical programs, for example, are more profound than Sellars’ discussion and integration of Carnapian ideas may suggest.⁴ I will begin here with a short glance at the striking difference between Sellars’ and Carnap’s position on category theory to launch us conveniently into the paper’s problematic.

In his 1928 *Der logische Aufbau der Welt*, Carnap confronted the metaphysical ‘establishment’ of his time with a radical methodological reconception of traditional category theory. Inspired by Russell’s *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism* Carnap propagated a formal approach to category theory; however, while Russell employed the tools of logical analysis for metaphysical theory construction, Carnap used them to demarcate a decisively anti-metaphysical program called “constitution theory.” The goal of constitution theory as envisaged in the *Aufbau* is to devise a “constitution system” for the reconstruction of the meaning of scientific concepts, that is, a system of formal reductive definitions in which the extensions of scientific concepts may be expressed as logical constructions of the extensions of certain basic empirical concepts. A constitution system ideally comprises the concepts of all sciences and thus, ideally, can be taken to represent the structure of empirical knowledge. Since metaphysical concepts in Carnap’s view characteristically aim beyond the domain of empirical knowledge, they cannot be “constituted” and thus are meaningless apart from a poetic or “intuitive” function.

With the appearance of *Die Logische Syntax der Sprache* in 1932 Carnap changes his tools of formal reconstruction; instead of supplying definitions of classical categories within a set-theoretical system, Carnap from now on conceives of category theory as the business of providing (first purely syntactic, later also semantic) metalinguistic classifications of category terms. Now Carnap proposes to interpret traditional category terms, such as ‘individual’ or ‘property,’ as “formal expressions in the material mode,” i.e., as hidden metalinguistic predicates such as ‘individual constant’ or ‘predicate constant.’ Traditional ontological questions about the existence of certain types of entities thus are reduced to questions about the preferability of linguistic frameworks with different linguistic resources.⁵

Throughout these developments of the *Aufbau* program Carnap’s methodological standpoint remains largely unchanged, however. He continues to promote a reorientation of philosophy from metaphysics, a theoretically fruitless task, toward a “scientific philosophy of science,” i.e., a philosophy that takes science both as its model of style of inquiry as well as its object of analysis: a philosophy

which constructs disambiguated, formal languages to be used for the reconstruction of scientific claims. This program rests on a radical conventionalist position which is already present in the *Aufbau* but surfaces more clearly in Carnap's later writings. In the *Aufbau* Carnap illustrates the principles of constitution theory with a constitution system incorporating phenomenalist assumptions, but also stresses that an empirical domain can be definitionally structured in a variety of ways, yielding a number of alternative constitution systems; since the metaphysical question about the relative adequacy of these alternative constitution systems cannot be meaningfully posed nor answered, category theory, the description of the structure of empirical reality, thus becomes a conventional affair. In *Syntax* Carnap highlights the conventional character of category theory by formulating a "Principle of Tolerance" which calls for a free choice among a plurality of languages with different syntactic and semantic complexity: "It is not our task to introduce restrictions, but to set up conventions . . . In logic there are no morals. Everyone is free to build up his own logic, i.e., his own form of language."⁶

Only two decades later, however, in "Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology," Carnap elaborates in more detail the motivations for his radical conventionalism. In this late essay he introduces a distinction between two types of questions one may ask about a linguistic framework *F* used to formulate the sentences of a theory *T*. So-called "internal" questions ask about the resources of a linguistic framework: whether, for example, *F* has predicate constants, or, to put it in the material mode, whether *T* is committed to properties. Internal questions are metaquestions about a framework *F*, but they make use of the framework *F'* of the metatheory of *F* and are thus internal to *F'*. In contrast, "external" questions, ask about "the existence or reality of the framework itself," that is, about its adequacy or correspondence to 'reality in itself.'⁷ External questions, so goes Carnap's argument, are either not truly external or meaningless. For when we ask whether a framework corresponds to something in 'reality as such,' this very question is either part of another framework and thus refers not to 'reality as such' but to the referential domains specified in the semantic conventions of the framework; otherwise, if it is not part of any other framework, all of its terms are semantically empty.⁸ The question whether a certain framework should be accepted thus

cannot be treated as a theoretical question about the framework's adequacy but can only be answered on practical grounds, taking into account its "efficiency, fruitfulness, and simplicity."⁹ Such practical assets are, however, not to be taken as a measure of the framework's representational adequacy – "it would be wrong to describe this situation [i.e., the practical preferability of a certain framework] by saying 'The fact of the efficiency of the thing language is confirming evidence for the reality of the thing world.'"¹⁰

Carnap's argument that category theory is purely a matter of convention rests on two basic assumptions. The first assumption articulates the tenet of a strong semantic holism: only within the context of a linguistic framework does a word have meaning (sense or reference). It is this meaning-theoretic assumption which eliminates the possibility of asking 'external,' i.e., theoretical questions about the adequacy of linguistic frameworks – the core questions of metaphysical inquiry. The second assumption could be called a 'principle of anti-pragmatism': the utility of a framework must not be taken as an indication of its adequacy or, more generally, its metaphysical significance.

Significantly, the three lead figures of American analytical philosophy that were deeply influenced by Carnap's program, Quine, Sellars, and Goodman, all three reject Carnap's conventionalist elimination of metaphysics. All three endorse semantic holism and thus agree with Carnap's claim that meaningful framework assessments are inescapably internal.¹¹ But, in line with the American pragmatist tradition and against Carnap, all three affirm that the practical utility of a framework can be assigned metaphysical significance. For Quine and, in particular, for Goodman, metaphysical category theory itself thus becomes a matter of choice or convention; Sellars, on the other hand, precisely performs the pragmatic-realist move that Carnap denounces explicitly as "wrong" and is prepared to take, for example, "the fact of the efficiency of the thing language [as] confirming evidence for the reality of the thing world."

Quine and Goodman argue explicitly against Carnap's conventionalist elimination of metaphysics or for a pragmatist embedding of the conventionalist program.¹² Sellars, however, does not discuss Carnap's eliminativism; in fact, one might wonder to what extent he appreciated the radicality of Carnap's conventionalism. Ending his

studies in Munich in late December 1930, Sellars missed Carnap's presentation of *Der logische Aufbau der Welt* at the University of Munich by couple of days,¹³ and so it was only in 1937, in a Seminar by Quine, when he encountered Carnap's writings. Guided by Quine's and Goodman's criticism – who both mistook the illustrative phenomenalist system sketched in the *Aufbau* for the program of constitution theory itself¹⁴ – Sellars was left with a lasting impression whose initially negative overtones vanished as he found his own stance towards the Carnapian program over the course of the following two decades:

I am afraid that I got little out of the *Aufbau*. I would, I believe, have gained a better appreciation of the power of its technical devices if I had been able to put to one side my violent anti-phenomenalism. Carnap was doing what can't be done, therefore there must be something wrong about how he is doing it. It was not until Goodman's *Structure of Appearance* that I realized my mistake. As for the *Logical Syntax of Language*, I reacted, as did many of my contemporaries, with the idea that while a rigorous account syntax was clearly a *desideratum*, as far as its *philosophical* content was concerned, Carnap was putting the cart before the horse. Surely (or so it seemed to me) the syntax of language reflects the structure of the world. And since thought deals directly with the world, *that* is where the action is. Yet a seed was planted. It might have sprouted earlier if the impact of *Syntax* had not been blunted by Carnap's own move into semantical phase, which *seemed* to support the above reaction.¹⁵

Neither these autobiographic remarks nor the two essays devoted to a closer investigation of Carnap's program suggest that Sellars ever realized the full extent of Carnap's anti-metaphysical attitude.¹⁶ The way in which Sellars adapts Carnap's metalinguistic reduction of category terms would seem to confirm the suspicion that he did not. With Carnap Sellars holds that the traditional ontological predicates for sorts of abstract entities ('property,' 'relation,' 'proposition,' 'class') can be taken to be hidden metalinguistic predicates for functional sorts of sign-designs ('predicate constant,' 'propositional constant').¹⁷ Sellars extends this reduction strategy from category terms, i.e., terms that are ostensibly names of sorts of abstract entities, to abstract nouns, i.e., terms that are ostensibly names of abstract entities. In this way not only traditional category terms but also abstract singular terms like 'redness' or 'fatherhood,' as well as 'that'-clauses and set-theoretical expressions, are taken to be metalinguistic expressions in disguise; they are complex signs

consisting of a quotational device (e.g., a suffix ‘-ness’ or ‘-hood’) and a quoted expression, and refer distributively to all linguistic sign-designs of all languages which fulfill (relative to the language to which they belong) the function of the quoted expression.¹⁸ As much as Sellars in this way endorses Carnap’s reduction strategy, the underlying philosophical motive for applying it is a profoundly different one. For Carnap the reductive maneuver is part and parcel of an argument for the elimination of ontological inquiry in its traditional form. Sellars, on the other hand, recognizes in Carnap’s reduction strategy a gambit employed in nominalist positions from Roscellinus onwards – what appears to be about entities in the world is actually about language – and he uses Carnapian reduction to support a nominalist interpretation of abstract expressions. Surprisingly, Sellars does not comment on the fact he that employs the Carnapian tool quite against Carnap’s intentions.

One might find it equally surprising that Sellars also does not discuss the problem whether and how the metalinguistic interpretation of category terms can at all be combined with a commitment to nominalism – if metalinguistic deflation is taken seriously a nominalist position cannot be formulated, at least not as a claim about the inventory of reality. How can Sellars maintain that *all* category terms, even category terms for concrete entities such as ‘object’ or ‘particular’ are metalinguistic terms, classifying not entities but linguistic expressions, and yet hold that, while there ‘*really* are’ no abstract entities, there ‘*really* are’ concrete, natural objects?¹⁹ Sellars seems committed both to a deflationary and a realist approach of category theory, which is plainly incoherent – if *all* category terms are sortal predicates for linguistic items *only*, why does Sellars feel entitled to apply a double standard to category terms and use some of them at once as predicates for non-linguistic items?

Sellars’ apparently incoherent approach to category theory is part of a more comprehensive deviation from the Carnapian program, generating a more comprehensive tension within Sellars’ scheme. For Sellars, as for Carnap, linguistic meaning is strictly holistically determined; quite in line with the structuralist theory of meaning in the *Aufbau*, Sellars conceives of the meaning of an expression as its role or function within a certain language, i.e., a system of linguistic

roles or functions. For Sellars, as for Carnap, all metalinguistic assertions are ‘internal’; statements that appear to formulate word-world relationships, such as the rules which determine the usage of an expression within observational and agentive contexts (“language entries” and “language exists”), merely establish intra-linguistic relationships across language levels: between the object-linguistic expression and meta-linguistic descriptions of observational and agentive situations. Thus it would seem that Sellars is committed to holding, with Carnap, that there are no meaningful ‘external’ assertions about the relationship between language and reality; in fact, since Sellars considers language also to be the medium of conceptualization, it would seem that Sellars is committed to holding that any conceptual access to reality is inextricably internal or description dependent. And yet Sellars is not prepared to subscribe either to the Carnapian conventionalist elimination of traditional metaphysics nor, like Goodman, to its pragmatist redefinition. He retains the core claims of a traditional realist metaphysics: first, that the main function of language is to represent reality; second, that empirical truth is a matter of correspondence; third, that reality is not the result but the causal antecedent of our conceptual constructions. To be sure, Sellars modifies the traditional layout of a realist metaphysics to accommodate his commitments to a functionalist semantics and an anti-foundationalist epistemology. First, exploiting the “Janus-faced character of languagings as belonging to both the causal order and the order to reason”²⁰ Sellars postulates that the representational relations between parts of language and parts of reality are not semantic word-world relations but causally founded correlations (“picturing” relations) between the material implementations of sign designs and phonetic units (“natural-linguistic objects”) and “natural objects” in the speaker’s environment. This opens, second, the door to a naturalist, demystified sense of the correspondence relationship in terms of which realists traditionally interpret empirical truth. A linguistic framework (more precisely the “world story” associated with the framework: the set of empirical sentences licensed by the framework) represents the speaker’s environment just like a map, by means of an isomorphism,²¹ and, like maps drawn at different scales, frameworks may represent reality at different degrees of accuracy. Third, the structure of reality is

not something we can directly apprehend; rather, “science is the measure of all things, of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not.”²² Every new scientific theory contributes a new part of a framework or a new partial framework, increasing the scope and level of accuracy of the existing ‘world-stories.’ The framework generated by scientific research in the ideal limit of this long-term effort of mapping out reality, the framework of “Peircean science,” will yield a correct picture of reality: an ideally comprehensive and consistent description of reality. These three modifications of the traditional realist scheme are apt to eliminate the most obvious conflicts with Sellars’ semantics and epistemology, but the basic tension I want to highlight here remains. Let us view the relevant claims close together.

- (T1) The meaning of a linguistic expression consists in its function or role within a linguistic system.²³
- (T2) Language is not the expression but the medium of our conceptualization; we have no access to reality by direct apprehension; and the fact that we are aware of an item’s A having categorial status C does not license the inference that A has indeed categorial status C.²⁴
- (T3) “By virtue of the fact that they stand in certain configurations or are characterized in a certain way, natural-linguistic objects nO_1, nO_2, \dots, nO_n picture natural objects O_1, O_2, \dots, O_n .”²⁵
- (T4) The conceptual structure of the maximally unified, ideally comprehensive, and ideally predictively confirmed scientific theory in the Peircean limit yields a correct picture of reality; picture-correctness in this sense is the regulative ideal of the empirical adequacy of a system of linguistic representation.²⁶
- (T5) Which entities are real is determined by science in its final state of development. Which *types* of entities are real is determined by the categorial scheme of the framework (conceptual structure) of science in its final state of development.²⁷

Theses (T1) and (T2) imply that there is no framework-independent standpoint from which we can evaluate the representational accuracy or picture-correctness of a framework. But, given the inescapable internality or framework-dependence of our assertions, how are we to understand a claim like (T3), which postulates

that it is objects, not properties or events, which are pictured? More generally, how are we to understand the descriptive predicates and categorial classifications of the envisaged naturalist theory of linguistic representation? If they are not external and meaningless, how can they provide a sufficiently general description of reality? Let me call this difficulty the ‘problem of internality.’ (T4) and (T5) further compound the problem of internality. For how could we know, from our present vantage point, which conceptual framework Peircean science will operate with? If we do not have any framework-independent access to what one may call – in analogy to ‘truth-makers’ – the ‘picture-makers’ of sentences of present-day categorial frameworks, how could we ever fathom the picture-makers of the future framework of ultimate science?

To summarize the results of this brief comparison, Sellars applies Carnap’s metalinguistic reduction of category terms and he joins Carnap in holding that the meaning (sense and reference) of an expression is constituted by the systematic context of a linguistic framework. But unlike Carnap he does not take these commitments to imply that the choice of a category theory is purely conventional. For Sellars category theories are more or less correct and such correctness is a matter-of-factual relation. By insisting that some categorial descriptions of reality are more correct than others, and that the more correct descriptions conform to nominalist constraints, Sellars has saddled himself with two problems. First, there is the problem of how to justify the application of two different standards in the interpretation of category terms – while all category terms are disguised metalinguistic expressions in Sellars’ view, he nevertheless uses some to describe the structure of reality. Second, there is the problem of how to justify the possibility of general assertions about the structure of reality when external or framework-independent assessments of the correctness of a framework are impossible.

II.

The two problems mentioned in the previous section have certainly not gone unnoticed among Sellars’ readers. Already over two decades ago Jay Rosenberg has offered what may be the system-

atically most penetrating exposition of various aspects of the problem of internality.²⁸ Rosenberg notes the clash between what he calls Sellars' "negative ontology," i.e., the Carnapian metalinguistic deflation of category terms, and his "positive ontology," his commitment to a nominalist position. Sellars claims that the theory of picturing provides the necessary means to overcome the internality of framework assessments.

Peirce himself fell into difficulty because, by not taking into account the dimension of 'picturing', he had no Archimedian point outside the series of actual and possible beliefs in terms of which to define the ideal or limit to which members of this series might approximate.²⁹

Far from providing such a fulcrum, Rosenberg argues, the theory of picturing is caught in the "Archimedian dilemma" of either lacking metaphysical significance or descriptivity. Since Rosenberg's discussion bears directly on the resolution of the problem of internality I suggest below, I will briefly rehearse the relevant parts of his argument.

In Rosenberg's view Sellars "characterizes the notion of correctness of picture as an Archimedian standpoint *outside* the Pericean series of actual and possible beliefs," a standpoint that is "*neutral* as among diverse conceptual structures."³⁰ However, Rosenberg argues, upon closer analysis such a standpoint is illusory since we do not have access to a framework-independent description of the structure of reality. Sellars claims that the analysis of "the purely formal aspects of logical syntax," such as, for instance, "logical criteria which differentiate, say *n*-adic from *m*-adic predicates generally," can guide us in forming "the concept of a domain of objects" which are pictured in different ways and different degrees of adequacy by different conceptual frameworks.³¹ But as Rosenberg points out, Sellars himself envisages that what is pictured as a single object in one framework is conceptualized as a system of entities in another.

If such fundamental matters as the *number* of objects available *in re* to be pictured and the polyadicities of the relations into which they enter are open to reconceptualization in successive conceptual frameworks, we must surely conclude that logical syntax alone... is inadequate to the task... The only alternative is to grant that there can be *no* system of concepts which is *both* framework-neutral *and* descriptive. The myth of the *gettable*, in that sense, must be recognized as being as pernicious as the myth of the given... This is the problem which I call the Archimedian dilemma. How, if there is no framework-neutral standpoint from which to

assess the relative adequacy as pictures of the systems of propositions generated in accordance with the semantical rules of different conceptual schemes, are we to give content to the Peircean notion of a limit toward which successive conceptual systems evolve?³²

If no framework-neutral *and* sufficiently substantial account of picturing can be given, so goes Rosenberg's argument, we lose out on two essential functions of the picturing relation – we can neither make clear, non-metaphorical sense of the notion of a limit, nor engage in “positive ontology,” i.e., formulate statements about the categorial structure of reality. The first of these two consequences can, as Rosenberg himself shows, be circumvented. There is a way to answer Quine's objection that the Peircean convergence model of truth makes

faulty use of numerical analogy in speaking of a limit of theories, since the notion of limit depends on that of ‘nearer than,’ which is defined for numbers and not for theories.³³

For on the one hand, as Rosenberg points out, the account of empirical truth as picture-correctness does admit of the required quantification of descriptive adequacy in terms of correction factors.

The degree to which two theories approach one another can be measured by the absolute numerical magnitude of the correction factors which must be introduced into applications of the strict counterparts of predecessor laws to arrive at the values determined by their successor.³⁴

On the other hand, even if we cannot attain a framework-external standpoint and cannot discern from our present vantage point the framework in the limit from which predecessor frameworks deviate at arbitrarily small amounts, we can confirm the convergence of the series of frameworks on the basis of the Cauchy criterion of convergence, namely, by showing that the members of the series get arbitrarily close to each other.³⁵ In this way, Rosenberg claims, while we have no descriptive characterization of the limit framework, we can compare the correction factors of the frameworks in the series and thus affirm from a framework-internal vantage point *that* there is a limit framework.

This solution to the convergence problem incorporates *both* the insights of Sellars *and* the insights of Quine. For we may now say, with Sellars, that it is the “purely

neutral formal aspects of logical syntax” – in the case, the framework- neutral but *descriptively empty* (content-free) concepts of pure mathematics – which enable us to give a non-metaphorical sense to the Peircean limit concept, while *also* agreeing to the Quinean contention that the notion of limit is “defined for numbers and not for theories.”³⁶

While the notion of a limit framework and thus the Sellarsian conception of empirical truth as ideal Peircean picture-correctness can be rescued in this way, the second difficulty about the impossibility of positive ontology remains, Rosenberg maintains, in full force. If there is no standpoint that is both descriptive and framework-neutral, the categorial distinctions presupposed by a theory of linguistic representation cannot be elucidated independently of the categorial distinctions they are designed to reduce:

... Sellars accepts the view that a *necessary* condition of picturing is a categorial *ontological* distinction between names and sentences. And whether that distinction be described as one between linguistic objects and linguistic facts, between natural-linguistic objects and configurations of such objects, or between names and names occurring in a certain manner, it does not alter the essential point – that the distinction is precisely the categorial ontological distinction between objects and facts with which we began ...³⁷

To put Rosenberg’s charge in a nutshell, the theory of picturing investigates the representational force of natural-linguistic objects sorted in categories of logical syntax; but the analysis of the logical syntax of representational systems (a) fails to provide us with substantial details about the stock of categories available in the Peircean framework (e.g., the -adicity of predicates), and (b) operates with unfounded or framework-dependent categorial divisions; the theory of picturing is thus “impotent to provide a path leading totally out of the jungle of traditional ontological puzzlements.”³⁸

Rosenberg’s critical observations provide a forceful lead into the problem that Sellars is up against. But it is questionable, in my view, whether Sellars’ theory of picturing indeed falls a victim to the ‘Archimedian dilemma.’ One way in which one may try to rescue the Sellarsian approach from Rosenberg’s objection is by pointing out that the argument proceeds from a wrong premise. When Sellars claims that

Pierce himself fell into difficulty because, by not taking into account the dimension of ‘picturing,’ he had no Archimedian point outside the series of actual and possible beliefs ...³⁹

he thereby does indeed seem to suggest that the theory of picturing provides us with an “Archimedian standpoint *outside* the Peircean series of actual and possible beliefs ...*neutral* as among diverse conceptual structures.”⁴⁰ However, we do not necessarily need to attribute such a claim to him. Similarly, when Sellars maintains that

the purely formal aspects of logical syntax ... give us a way of speaking which ... enables us to form the concept of a domain of objects which are pictured in one way (less adequately) by one linguistic system, and in another way (more adequately) by another

we do not necessarily need to take him as thereby aspiring to operate with categorial distinctions which would apply to “*any* mode of representation”⁴¹ or a framework-neutral comparison between the two representational systems. Sellars insists that picturing statements are object-language statements.

A statement to the effect that a linguistic item pictures a non-linguistic item by virtue of the semantical uniformities characteristic of a certain conceptual structure is, in an important sense, an object language statement, for even though it mentions linguistic objects, it treats them as items in the order of causes and effects ... The objects which are pictured by a linguistic picture can thus be genuinely extra-linguistic ... The *concepts* of these objects are, of course, relative to a conceptual scheme, but the form of these concept is not O (in our conceptual scheme).

... We must not repeat Berkeley’s mistake when he wrote, ‘... but it does not show that you can conceive it possible the object of your thought may exist without the mind: to make out this, *it is necessary that you conceive their existing unconceived or unthought-of, which is manifest repugnancy.*’⁴²

I take Sellars here precisely to deny that picturing relationships are ever formulated from a standpoint *outside* the series of conceptual frameworks or in any sense “neutral among diverse conceptual structures.” Moreover, the passage effectively undercuts Rosenberg’s Archimedian dilemma: loss of descriptivity vs. loss of framework-neutrality. While picturing statements are inexorably relative to a conceptual structure, they can be taken to articulate a ‘perspectival’ description of extra-linguistic reality. Sellars’ strategy for overcoming the problem of internality thus is, I submit, not

to search for an external standpoint or framework-neutral descriptions, but to rely upon the possibility of ‘transcendence from within’: upon the *metaphysical significance of framework-relative or ‘perspectival’ characterization of picturing relationships*. This thesis I will now elaborate.

III

If Sellars’ Archimedian fulcrum is not located outside the series of conceptual frameworks but can be found within each of the frameworks in this series, namely, in the picturing theory developed within that framework, two questions immediately arise. First, how can Sellars claim that framework-relative descriptions of picture-makers have any degree of descriptive adequacy with respect to the Peircean framework? Second, precisely what is the role of the envisaged analysis of the “purely formal aspects of logical syntax” for the business of positive ontology? Did Sellars indeed think that the analysis of the logical resources of *a* framework could yield a framework-transcendent description of the logical resources of *any* framework, and did he take the categories of logical syntax to reflect the definitive stock of ontological categories?

The first question can be answered quickly, I believe, drawing on Rosenberg’s proposal for a non-metaphorical definition of the Peircean limit of scientific development in terms of the numerical sequence of correction factors. To the extent to which the actual sequence of correction factors increases the inductive probability that this sequence satisfies the Cauchy criterion of convergence, to this extent it would appear legitimate to claim *that* a limit exists (even though we are unable to specify it) and, accordingly, *that* every element in the series of conceptual frameworks enjoys relative picture-correctness (even though we are unable to specify to which degree).

The second question requires a more detailed investigation into Sellars’ views on the methodology of positive ontology and his actual procedure. The Carus Lectures, Sellars’ latest contribution to ‘positive ontology,’ provide here the essential clues.

As most of Sellars’ texts, the Carus Lectures (hereafter: CL) answer to a complex dialectical matrix and thus allow for read-

ings with rather different accentuations. According to what might be called the standard reading the general thrust of the CL is in the philosophy of mind: their purpose is to address the sensory-body problem “thematized in a single question ‘What is the place of color(s) in the scheme of things?’” which branches into the double task of determining the ontological and conceptual place of color in both the manifest and the scientific image.⁴³ The reading of the CL I will offer here is not intended to rival the standard reading but to supplement it in the way in which the duck supplements the duckrabbit. According to the standard reading Sellars introduces in the CL the new categorial framework of absolute processes in order to accommodate sensory qualities in the scientific image. I inverse the teleology and suggest that Sellars in the CL describes the recategorization of sensory qualities in the scientific image *in order to exemplify the introduction of a new categorial scheme and thus to convey a general piece of the methodology of metaphysical theory construction*. In my reading, then, the CL are primarily a contribution to metaphilosophy, not to the philosophy of mind, and *their purpose is to illustrate a method on the basis of which the problem of internality can be undercut*. The method illustrated I will call ‘category projection,’ a category theory operating with it ‘projective category theory,’ and a metaphysics which bestows reality or representationality upon categorial structures gained by category projection I will call ‘projective metaphysics.’

Before looking at the concrete procedure of category projection in the CL, let me briefly clarify two general aspects of the procedure, namely, first, why, in Sellars’ view the business of category theory cannot merely consist in the analysis of logical syntax, and second, the significance of Sellars’ rejection of the Myth of the Given in category projection.

(i) As Sellars presents it, a theory of picturing P_L for language L makes claims about the picturing relationships of *specific* natural-linguistic objects and natural objects:

- (1) ‘a’s (in L) represent O .
- (2) ‘fa’s (in L) correctly picture O as Φ .
- (3) [natural-linguistic objects] O_1 , O_2 ... O_n ’ make up a picture of [natural] objects O_1 , O_2 , ... O_n by virtue of such and such facts about O_1 , O_2 ... O_n .⁴⁴

Besides example for specific correlations, Sellars offers in places statements about the representational functions of classes of expressions:

- (4) [N]ot only are predicative *expressions* dispensable, ...the very *function* performed by predicates is dispensable ...The presence of the predicate gives the names which occur in the statement distinctive character by virtue of which *they* are connected with extralinguistic reality.⁴⁵
- (5) [E]xpressions which function as names but not as statements have the form of a statement.⁴⁶
- (6) To put it bluntly, propositional form belongs *only* in the linguistic and the conceptual orders.⁴⁷
- (7) For ... the natural-linguistic objects which, by virtue of standing in certain matter-of-factual relationships to one another and to these nonlinguistic objects, constitute a picture of them in the desired sense, are the linguistic counterparts of nonlinguistic *objects* (*not* facts), and it is not too misleading to speak of them as 'names.'⁴⁸

These general statements about picturing relationships are reflected in the content of P_L , but they are not part of P_L . Rather, they belong to the general theory about linguistic representation, a theory which makes use, on the one hand, of the of the categories of logical syntax to describe the resources of conceptual frameworks, and, on the other hand, describes the parts of reality that are pictured, i.e., the 'picture-makers' of a conceptual framework, in terms of the traditional categories 'object,' 'fact,' 'relationship' etc. It is in this general theory of linguistic representation where we find Sellars' "positive ontology." Commitments to 'what there is' here take the form of an affirmation or denial of representational functions for certain logical categories – the claim that predicates do not picture anything, or that there are no picture-makers which have propositional form, amounts to the familiar nominalist rejection of abstract entities.

But while the categories of logical syntax (names, predicates, sentences etc.) may provide a suitable heuristics for the formulation of ontological claims about picture-relationship we should not, I believe, follow Rosenberg and attribute to Sellars the double thesis that (a) that the ontological categorization of picture-makers can be 'read off' the syntactical categorization of the logical resources of a framework; (b) that we can extrapolate the logical resources of the Peircean conceptual framework from the resources of our present conceptual structure, thus, via logical analysis, gaining access to the

correct and complete ontological categorization of picture-makers. Sellars' remark, to requote from above, that

- (8) the purely formal aspects of logical syntax ... give us a way of speaking which ... enables us to form the concept of a domain of objects which are pictured in one way (less adequately) by one linguistic system, and in another way (more adequately) by another

does not, I submit, articulate a commitment to either claim (a) or (b). For consider the following examples of metalinguistic reductions of traditional ontological categories:

- (9) *a* is a thing (person, sensory impression, event, fact) – '*a*' is an individual constant of L
 (10) *F-ness* is a quality (relation) – '*F*' is a predicate constant of L
 (11) that *p* is a proposition (fact, event) – '*p*' is a sentence of L

The reductive relationship between categories in the material and categories in the formal mode, i.e., between ontological and syntactical categories, is clearly a *many-one relationship*. In other words, retranslating the formal mode expressions into the material mode we either must operate with a disjunction or acknowledge that the relation of metalinguistic reduction actually does not hold between traditional ontological categories and syntactic categories but between *genera* of traditional ontological categories and syntactical categories:

- (12) '*a*' is an individual constant of L – *a* is a particular
 (13) '*F*' is a predicate constant of L – *F-ness* is an accident
 (14) '*p*' is a sentence of L – that *p* is a complex

Thus, any attempt to 'read off' the ontological categorization of picture-makers from the syntactical inventory of a language at best can lead to indeterminate ontological descriptions. In the CL Sellars distinguishes between "determinable" and "determinate" ontological categories and clearly requires a proper description of picture-makers to employ the latter.

Now the concept of a particular does indeed belong to a network of concepts of essential concern to metaphysics. But in absence of a theory with *factual* content ... the concept of a 'particular' is the empty or 'formal' concept of an ultimate subject of predication, and is of a piece with Kant's unschematized category of substance... [W]hile the thinnest categories are subject matter independent, categories which are not bloodless are functions of the factual content of theories ... [By abstracting from the thinghood of a red expanse] we simply abstract from

such determinate categorial status it has, and construe it merely as a *particular* having *some determinate categorial status or other* (CL III §§, pp. 79–84).

The “purely formal aspects of logical syntax” thus by themselves do not *provide* us with the categories in terms of which to “form the concept of a domain of objects which are pictured in one way (less adequately) by one linguistic system, and in another way (more adequately) by another,” but they – cf. (8) above – ‘*give us a way of speaking*’ which enables us to do so. Generic or determinable categories like ‘particular’ or ‘accident,’ and even more so “category-neutral (i.e., in scholastic terminology, *transcendental*)” expressions, like ‘actual entity,’ allow us to conceive of a domain of items *without attributing to them some determinate categorial form*.

In short, according to Sellars the point of the analysis of the logical syntax of a language and the conceptual framework embedded in it is not to replace ontological inquiry but to assist it; logical analysis provides a generic or category-neutral characterization of the domain of a conceptual framework which facilitates conceiving of the domain items as items with variable categorial form. And precisely this, the recategorization of entities, is the business of positive ontology – to “relocate the truth” of the familiar categorization within another, new categorial scheme.

(ii) While Sellars in earlier publications stresses the complexity of the epistemological premise he calls the Myth of the Given and offers various versions and accentuations,⁴⁹ the CL present a single and apparently definitive formulation which differs markedly from earlier characterizations in terms of self-authenticating knowledge or the direct awareness of kinds of repeatables.

To reject the Myth of the Given is to reject the idea that the categorial structure of the world . . . imposes itself on the mind as a seal imposes an image on melted wax (CL I 45).

Here we must bear in mind what I have had to say about the Myth of the Given. Thus, we must not suppose that if the true theory of the status of expenses and volumes of color stuff is one according to which they have categorial status C, then they present themselves phenomenologically *as having this status* (CL I 78).

Thus, not only do we find here the *Myth of the Given reduced to a thesis about categorial status*, Sellars explicitly *commits himself to a dimension of givenness* which limits to some extent the constructive *Spielraum* of conceptualization.

Needless to say, when we respond to an expanse of red with a concept of having [sic] a new categorial structure, we do not, *eo ipso*, change that to which we are responding. There are items, e.g., expanses of red *sub specie Peirceii*, to which we respond i[n] a dimension of givenness (or takenness) which is not in dispute (CL I 87).

The [concept of redness as a physical stuff] must serve as the *fundamentum* from which analogical thinking can form a proto-concept of red which has a *new categorial structure*. (CL I 93).

The pinkness of a pink sensation is ‘analogous’ to the pinkness of a manifest pink ice cube . . . by being the same ‘content’ in a different categorial ‘form’ (CL III 47).

As these passages convey, despite Sellars’ anti-foundationalist epistemology ontological categorization is not a matter of mere construction or pure choice. On the one hand, ontological theories do not create their domains wholesale, form *and* content; rather, there is a content: reality as given *sub specie Peirceii*, which they share. On the other hand, the form-content distinction that is in place here should also not be taken to imply that we may freely devise different categorial forms for a given content. Rather, there are two constraints on the construction of categorial forms. First, categorization for Sellars is always *recategorization*; new categories are formed by analogical extrapolation of features of the old category. This is more than a heuristic constraint since, second, ontological theories are in Sellars’ view *explanatory* theories – the goal of constructing a new categorization is to increase the explanatory force beyond that of the old categorization.⁵⁰ What it is that is given, and how analogical reasoning may be used to increase the explanatory functions of a category, shall become clearer as we now look at the specifics of Sellars’ illustration of category projection in the CL.

(iii) The first Carus Lecture begins with the thesis, familiar from “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind, that the “ur-concept” of a “sensible item” such as redness “is not the concept of a *kind* of experience or a *manner* of experiencing, but of something which is an *object* of experience” (CL I 39). Adding to his earlier exposition Sellars now stresses that

our basic concept pertaining to red [has] the form of a mass term, the predicative concept *is red* having the form. . . ‘[is] an expanse of red *stuff*,’ where ‘stuff’ carries with it implications concerning the causal role of determinate portions of stuff in the physical world (CL I 45, 47).

The original categorization of redness as red stuff in the physical world has a variety of explanatory virtues. For instance, it explains why we are entitled to hold a physical object causally responsible for the occurrence of an observer's experience of that object. Further, insofar as all sensory contents are taken to be stuff-like physical constituents of physical objects, the account readily explains the "seamlessness" or categorial homogeneity of sensory experience, i.e., the fact that "the perceptual object is not a mixture in which *some* items are experienced in the mode of sensing and *others* in the mode of conceptualization" (CL I 118). But the account cannot explain the difference between veridical and ostensible experiences, between seeing and merely seeming to see of an object that it is red. *Prima facie* there are two ways in which one may recategorize sensible items in order to remedy this explanatory deficiency: 'intentional accounts' which treat sensible items as contents or manners of contents of an experience, and 'ontic accounts' which, like the original categorization, present sensible items as concrete items in the world. Sellars argues however that intentional recategorizations would decrease the explanatory force of the original categorization. The task of an ontological theory is to explain, in terms of a categorial description of picture-makers, why we are justified in drawing certain inferences. Intentional accounts of sensible items fail to "satisfy an axiomatics of shape and color" (CL I §93), since the sensory impression of a red triangle is itself neither red nor triangular. Because such an axiomatics is based on the inferential roles of our expressions for sensible items, any failure to satisfy the relevant axiomatics amounts to a decrease of the explanatory force of the ontological description. Thus a recategorization of sensible items must take its bearing from the original ontic categorization and analogically extend the concepts of items which do satisfy the relevant inferential constraints. For instance, Sellars suggests, we may introduce such "quasi-stuffs" as

states of the perceiver which satisfy an axiomatics of shape and color and which are brought [about] in standard conditions by physical objects which actually consist of volumes of color stuff and, in non-standard conditions, by physical objects of other colors, or by bodily states with no external cause (CL I §94).

This account, well familiar as "Jones' theory" of impressions, can, in a first approximation, qualify as a recategorization which

increases the explanatory force of the original account, since it retains the explanatory functions of the ontic ‘ur-concept’ yet allows for ostensible experiences.

The first Carus Lecture thus can be taken as an illustration of three different elements of ontological theory construction. First, the lecture highlights the explanatory *aims* of an ontological theory and the ways in which these aims constrain the construction of new categories. What is ‘given’ in ontological theory construction is not some directly apprehended content of experience but certain inferential constraints as embodied in the kind terms applying to the domain items (here color and shape). Since the original categorization abides by these inferential constraints, the ontologist’s task is to sort the features of the original categorization into two groups: into features which warrant that items of this category fulfill the relevant inferential constraints, and features which have no impact on the latter.

Second, the first lecture also illustrates the *means* of category construction. Like a scientific theory, an ontological theory characterizes the theoretical constructs it introduces in terms of a model; the specific relationship between theoretical construct and model, however, differs in the two cases.

When one comes to think, as we eventually must, of sense impressions as theoretical constructs, it is tempting to follow a familiar paradigm and to think of the theory as reintroducing a new domain of entities, e.g., sensations of volumes of pink, as microphysics introduces a new domain of entities, e.g. molecules . . . One would, therefore, be disposed to think of the pinkness of a pink sensation as *analogous* to the pinkness of a manifest pink ice cube, as the elasticity of a molecule is it analogous to the elasticity of a tennis ball . . . [But] the theory of sense impressions does not *introduce*, for example, cubical volumes of pink. It reinterprets the *categorial status* of the cubical volumes of pink of which we are perceptually aware . . . The pinkness of a pink sensation is ‘analogous’ to the pinkness of a manifest pink ice cube, not by being a *different quality* which is in some respect analogous to pinkness (as the quality a Martian experiences in certain magnetic fields might be analogous to pink with respect to its place in a quality space), but by being the same ‘content’ in a different categorial [sic] ‘form’ (CL III 36–47).

Ontological theory construction thus follows neither of the methodologies of the two types of theory formation Sellars calls the “Scientific Image” and the “Manifest Image.” It goes beyond the

correlational techniques of the Manifest Image in introducing theoretical constructs by means of a model; however, unlike theoretical constructs of the Scientific Image the concepts of ontology do not postulate a new domain of entities but merely new ‘formal’ properties of entities while the empirical predicates applicable to the model remain to a large part directly applicable to the construct introduced by that model.

Drawing on Sellars’ role-semantics one can formulate the semantic relationships involved in the ontological categorization and recategorization of an entity more precisely.⁵¹ Let c_1 and c_2 be terms for determinate categories (‘trope,’ ‘substance,’ ‘monad,’ etc.) of the ontological languages L_{O1} and L_{O2} , let $D_{c_1} = \{d_1, d_2, \dots, d_n\}$ and $D_{c_2} = \{d'_1, d'_2, \dots, d'_n\}$ be sets of categorial descriptors for c_1 and c_2 , respectively; the set of descriptors of a category consists of predicates for determinable categories (‘particular,’ ‘persistent,’ ‘concrete’ etc.) or transcendentals (‘actual,’ ‘something,’ ‘entity’ etc.). Let m_1 and m_2 be two kind terms (e.g., ‘thing,’ ‘perception,’ ‘process’ etc.) of some language L_{MI} (articulating a version) of the Manifest Image and let D_{m_1} and D_{m_2} be the set of categorial descriptors for m_1 and m_2 , respectively. D_{c_1} is the descriptor set of c_1 just in case the rule set R_{c_1} which determines the meaning of c_1 contains a set of language transition rules LTR_{c_1} which comprises rules of the following form: ‘if x is a c_1 then x is d_i ’ for every d_i in D_{c_1} , and analogously for c_2 , m_1 , and m_2 . Entities of type m_1 provide a *model* for entities of type c_1 if and only if

- (i) $D_{c_1} \subset D_{m_1}$
- (ii) some but not all of the empirical predicates F_i which apply to items of kind m_1 and thus have D_{m_1} as their descriptor set, apply also to items with descriptor set D_{c_1} .⁵²

Category c_2 is a *recategorization* of entities of category c_1 if and only if:

- (i) $D_{c_1} \cap D_{c_2} \neq \emptyset$
- (ii) some but not all of the empirical predicates F_i which apply to items of kind m_1 (where m_1 is the model of c_1) apply also to items of kind m_2 (where m_2 is the model of c_2) descriptor set of the model m_2 of c_2
- (iii) the set of explanatory functions of D_{c_1} is a subset of the explanatory functions of D_{c_2} .

Let us say that c_2 is a *direct recategorization* of c_1 just in case the models m_1 and m_2 of categories c_1 and c_2 are identical, and an *indirect recategorization* of c_1 if the models are different. For both types of recategorization it holds that $D_{m_1} \cap D_{m_2} \neq \emptyset$, i.e., the models of the old and of the new category share some of their descriptors. For later reference, let me call two concepts (or the types of entities to which these concepts apply, respectively) with overlapping descriptor sets *categorially cognate* concepts (types of entities). Recategorization, of either the direct or indirect variety, thus involves not only categorially cognate categories but also categorially cognate models.

In terms of these distinctions we can now formulate more clearly the third element of ontological theory construction illustrated by the first Carus Lecture: here Sellars presents us with a *case of direct recategorization*. The “ur-concept” of a sensible item, Sellars suggests, is modeled on the notion of a portion of physical stuff.

Thus I shall argue that the phenomena can be saved by supposing our basic concept pertaining to red to have the form of a mass term, the predicative concept *is red* having the form *is an expanse of red* . . . the latter should be reformulated as ‘an expanse of red *stuff*’, where ‘stuff’ carries with it implications concerning the causal role of determinate portions of stuff in the physical world (CL I 46f).

Like any portion of physical stuff, a portion of perceptible stuff is actual, something, somehow, concrete, possibly composite, a component of a physical object, persistent, and causally efficacious (CL I 47, 50, 90). What distinguishes this ontic ur-concept of a “sensible item” from its model, however, is the fact that a portion of physical stuff is a particular, individuated in terms of its spatio-temporal location, while a sensible item like pink or sweet is a non-particular entity, individuated in terms of its causal role. In other words, as required in the above characterization of a model, the descriptor set of the model is richer than the descriptor set of the category modeled and there is a variety of empirical predicates (primarily those pertaining to spatio-temporal location) which apply to the model but not to the category of sensible items as perceptible stuffs.⁵³ The recategorization of sensible items as perceptible stuffs in terms of states of perceivers is *direct*, since states of perceivers are introduced on the same model as the ur-categorization – sensory states of perceivers are “‘quasi-expanses of color stuff’ or

‘quasi-stuffs’ for short”. But, in contrast to the ur-categorization, the relationship between category and model is here much more noticeably one of “analogical concept formation” (CL I 95) since color and shape predicates do not directly apply to the states of perceivers; rather states of perceivers merely “satisfy an axiomatics of shape and color” (CL I 94) in a sense in which

it would be a mistake to suppose that since the *model* for the impression of a red triangle is a red and triangular wafer, the impression itself is a red and triangular wafer . . . The *essential* feature of the analogy is that visual impressions stand to one another in a system of ways of resembling and differing which is structurally similar to the ways in which the colours and shapes of visible objects resemble and differ (EPM 193).

The descriptor sets of the old and the new category clearly overlap states of perceivers share most of the descriptors of perceptible stuffs. Like perceptible stuffs, they lack the descriptor of particularity, i.e., they are not particulars (cf. EPM 191, 195). They differ from perceptible stuffs with respect to their manner of existence, namely, by being “in *some* way present to the perceiver *other than as thought of*” (CL I 91); further, while perceptible stuffs are components of physical objects, states of perceivers are not. Precisely this difference enables the new category to provide an explanation of the phenomenon of ostensible perception – they offer a description of the picture-makers of perceptual reports produced with and without proper causal antecedents in the speaker’s environment.

The second and third Carus lecture, on the other hand, illustrate the *indirect* variety of recategorization. What grounds the explanatory success of Jones’ theory of impressions, namely, the description of the manner of existence of sensible items as states of perceivers, also engenders that theory’s own demise. For the notion of a perceiver is not a likely candidate for belonging to the ultimate characterization of picture-makers – “the scientific image soon threatens to engulf the person” by dissolving the unity of a person into a system with “actual parts – micro-physical particles” (CL III 74). The model entities of the category ‘states of perceivers,’ namely, volumes of physical stuffs, are equally unlikely to survive transposition into the Peircean scientific image, judging from the conception of matter in contemporary microphysics. Thus, in a first step, Sellars chooses in the second lecture for the envisaged recat-

egorization of sensible items a model which belongs to the inventory of both, the present versions of the manifest and the present version of the scientific image. The present versions of the manifest and of the scientific image countenance both processes which are not changes in things but are the ‘pure,’ ‘subject-less’ occurrence of a dynamic feature in a (spatial and temporal, or spatio-temporal) region. In a first approximation, such pure occurrences of dynamic features can be introduced as picture-makers of sentences fulfilling the following syntactic criterion:

Broad introduces the concept of what he calls ‘absolute processes – which might also be called subjectless (or objectless) events. These are processes, the occurrence of which is, in the first instance, expressed by sentences [like ‘it is raining,’ ‘it is thundering,’ ‘it is lightening’], i.e., which either do not have logical subjects or which have dummy logical subject . . . which do not have the form S Vs, e.g., Socrates runs, nor can plausible paraphrases which have genuine logical subjects be found (CL II 50).

Somewhat surprisingly, Sellars spends little time elaborating on the notion of a “plausible paraphrase” which we are to understand as providing for an “equivalent (though not necessarily synonymous) sentence” in such a way that ‘rain rained’ counts as a plausible paraphrase of ‘it was raining,’ but ‘it was lightening’ is not in this sense plausibly paraphrased by ‘electrons jumped across the gap’ (CL II 48, 52). This makes good sense, however, if we keep in mind that the stated syntactic criterion is not to *define* a category but merely to serve as a heuristic device pointing us to the *model* of a category. While the scientific image contains a variety of specimen of processes which most uncontroversially exhibit the required ‘purity,’ such as the traveling of an electro-magnetic wave through empty space or the ‘collapse of the wave packet’ during measurement, Sellars chooses his “ostensible examples” (CL II 57) for absolute processes from within the manifest image, concentrating on sounds. A sound such as a C#-ing, however, provides a convincing example of an absolute process only if one accepts the claim that “the primary sense in which C# occurs is not that in which experiences of C# occur”; only then sounds are “out there in the environment” and thus occurrences of dynamic ‘qualities’ without logical subjects (CL II 62, 61). In other words, the new model for the recategorization of sensible items presupposes an ontic account

of sensible items. This makes it particularly easy to recognize the categorial kinship between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ model, volumes of physical stuffs and absolute processes. Like volumes of physical stuffs, absolute processes are actual, concrete entities which stand in causal relations, are components of physical objects, possibly composite, and persistent (II: 64, 71; III: 112; II: 71). Further, like volumes of physical stuffs, absolute processes are for Sellars particular entities, individuated in terms of their spatio-temporal location and causal character (II: 71). Unlike physical stuffs, however, absolute processes, insofar as they are actual, enjoy a pure or complete form of actuality – since they are not composites of a logical subject *having* (exemplifying etc.) manifest and dispositional properties but *are* the actualization of an “intrinsic character” or ‘dynamic quality,’ “there would, so to speak, be no potentialities *in* basic objects [i.e., absolute processes]” (II: 91, 99).

At the end of the second lecture Sellars sets out on the path of *projective category construction*, leading from the description of the new model towards a new categorial description of sensible items, a path which he further explores in the third lecture, but which, I think it is fair to say, he does not fully complete. The general direction of the suggested analogical extension is clear enough from the argument of the first lecture. As long as we conceive of perceptible absolute processes as having a definite spatio-temporal location outside of the perceiver – e.g., “there is a C#-ing in the corner” (II: 68) – we can categorize sensible items as perceptible absolute processes only at the expense of losing the explanatory gain of Jones’ theory *vis-a-vis* ostensible or abnormal sensation. Much as Jones’ theory analogically extends the notion of a stuff to be able to locate sensible items as “quasi-stuffs” in the perceiver, so the new task is to dissociate the concept of an absolute process from the requirement of having determinate spatio-temporal location and extent. This, I take it, is the function of Sellars’ analysis of the specious present at the end of the second lecture where he aims to show that the spatio-temporal⁵⁴ extent of processes may well be taken to be a product of human perception rather than a feature of the items perceived. The abstraction involved here also requires that we conceive of the dynamicity or “ongoingness” of absolute processes no longer in terms of motion or causal propagation (mark trans-

mission), as this is appropriate for the model processes discussed: sounds and light pulse. Rather, we are called upon to think their dynamicity as a “*continuous* coming to be and ceasing to be” which can be cognitively “responded to” in terms of spatio-temporal duration but which, as such, occurs outside of the spatio-temporal dimension, i.e., which is ontically independent of such a response (CL II 122).⁵⁵ Precisely how we are to understand the envisaged ‘continuous coming to be and ceasing to be’ remains obscure; what does become clear, however, is that the dynamicity of an absolute process involves the repeated presence of a qualitative feature.⁵⁶ This suggests that the individuation of absolute processes no longer can rely upon criteria for particular entities, namely, spatio-temporal position, but is now to operate with the criteria for non-particulars, i.e., functional or causal role. Thus we receive the notion of a dynamic entity with the following descriptor set: it is a purely or completely actual entity in the sense of consisting entirely in the production of an intrinsic character, concrete in the sense of being causally related, occurrent in space and time but not individuated by its spatio-temporal location, i.e., non-particular, possibly complex, possibly itself a constituent of (the categorial transpositions of) physical objects. Given the descriptive differences between the model and the new category gained by analogical projection, Sellars’ usage of the term ‘absolute process’ for both model and category is bound to create some confusion. ‘Absolute process’ is the label for the *new category of dynamic and non-particular items*, while the model entities of absolute processes are particulars, thus themselves not absolute processes but particular occurrences or spatio-temporal ‘amounts’ thereof.

The third lecture then puts the new category to use. When ‘Jones’ theory’ of sensible items is modified to accommodate the fact that in the scientific image “persons have actual parts,” three diversifications of the initial categorization: sensory states of the perceiver, emerge. The last of these three varieties of Jones’ theory, epiphenomenalism, operates with “nonmaterial sense-particulars” or *sensa*. A recategorization of *sensa* in terms of absolute processes has, Sellars claims, two important explanatory advantages.⁵⁷ First, the “transposition of *sensa* into a framework of absolute process,” i.e., a categorial scheme which would countenance as basic entities phys-

ical and sensory processes: “ ϕ_2 -ings” and “ σ -ings,” allows one to conceive of a person as “a bundle of absolute processes, both σ -ings and ϕ_2 -ings.” Second, if one adopts a framework of absolute processes where “objects and object-bound processes would, in traditional terminology, be ‘logical constructions’ out of, i.e., patterns of, absolute processes,” sensory processes may be assigned a causal role in the constitution of objects. Only in this way, Sellars argues, the ontic interpretation of sensible items can be given its full sense, conformant “to a basic metaphysical intuition: to be is to make a difference.” As long as *sensa* and physical objects are conceived of as particulars, causation must be thought along the lines of the impact paradigm which precludes any causal relations between material and non-material items and suggests that “the autonomy of mechanical explanation [may be extended] to the bodies of sentient beings.” Processes, on the other hand, allow for types of interaction and interpenetration which open up new avenues for assigning a causal role to sensible items. Again, as in the case of the postulated extra-spatio-temporal “continuous coming and ceasing to be,” Sellars is not forthcoming about the envisaged alternative to the impact paradigm of causation; sensory processes, we are told, can function as “ingredients” of those process-bundles which constitute neurons in the ideal successor theory of present-day science, although “not, of course, in any ordinary sense, parts” but a “qualitative dimension of neural process” emergent on physical constituents.⁵⁸

Precisely how the category of absolute processes can afford these two explanatory functions, i.e., precisely how to arrive at a definition of those complex patterns of processes which are the perceiving and ostensibly perceiving persons of the manifest image, Sellars does not elaborate. In general, one might question whether Sellars’ remarks in the third Carus Lecture suffice to reach the declared “aim . . . to solve the sensorium-body problem” (III:48). Perhaps this rather obvious shortcoming provides a good reason to search for the lecture’s primary goal elsewhere, as I have suggested here. I have tried to show in this section that the Carus Lectures can be read as an illustration of the method of analogical concept formation in ontology or, more briefly, as an illustration of category projection. On this reading the lectures exemplify the procedures of

direct and indirect recategorizations, claiming *that* certain explanatory advantages are achieved without, in each case, supplying a detailed exposition of *how* they are achieved.

IV

Let us now return to the question which launched us into the investigation of the Carus Lectures. How is ‘positive ontology’ possible within Sellars’ scheme, despite commitments to semantic holism, epistemological anti-foundationalism, and Peircean realism, all of which seem to impede the construction of a theory of the structure of reality? Sellars’ resolution to the problem of internality, so I suggested above, is to rely upon the possibility to ‘transcend’ the framework-dependence of ontological descriptions ‘from within,’ i.e., by assuming that ontological theories yield ‘perspectival’ descriptions of the structure of reality which, while incomplete and partly misleading, are nevertheless metaphysically relevant. That every framework, and every categorial scheme embedded in it, has metaphysical relevance follows from the fact that it can count as relatively picture-correct. But how can the relative picture-correctness of a framework be used to extrapolate the structure of reality? In which sense does category projection, undercut the ‘problem of internality, as I claimed above?

Let us consider once more Rosenberg’s solution to the convergence problem. The Sellarsian is entitled to claim that the development of science has a Peircean limit since there is the framework-neutral language of mathematics in terms of which we can ascertain the convergence of the series of scientific frameworks *from the point of view of any framework*. No such framework-neutral language is available to compare ontological schemes among each other. The method of ontological theory construction as illustrated in the Carus Lectures does give us a clearer sense of how we may extend the categorial resources of a framework by category projection. But it also emphasizes the complete framework-dependence of ontological theories, with respect to data, tools, and explanatory adequacy. A new category is constructed by recombining category descriptors; the possible explanatory functions of a category derive from its

'descriptors'; the explanatory tasks for an ontological theory derive from the inferential role of the targeted 'domain terms' (e.g., expressions for perceptual qualities, for events, for things, for states of affairs etc.); since the meaning of category descriptors and domain terms are framework-dependent, so are the actual explanatory functions an ontological theory fulfills. Ontology, this is the methodological lesson of the Carus Lectures, is thus essentially 'internal' in Carnap's sense: it is the project of re-routing some inferential relations within a conceptual structure to enhance the latter's degree of integration, of searching for the inferentially most economical way of taking inventory of a framework in the material mode.

And yet, even if an ontology is internal to a framework, this does not necessarily deprive it of 'external' or metaphysical significance, i.e., of any significance *vis-à-vis* the external question whether (or to which degree) a certain framework adequately represents the structure of reality. Carnap's mistake was to assume that an assertion *p* can have external significance only if *p* is a *framework-neutral* statement that is *explicitly about* the representational adequacy of a framework, *made from an external point of view*, i.e., based on a comparison of sorts between framework and reality. Sellars rejects this assumption. That we may not be able to specify or even talk about the representational adequacy of some framework does not, for Sellars, imply that we cannot say anything that has any significance with respect to the question of representational adequacy. To claim that one ontological scheme is more adequate than another is not framework-neutral talk about the representational adequacy of these schemes, but framework-dependent talk about their explanatory adequacy, i.e., about how well they fit the relevant data provided by the inferential roles of the domain terms. However, given Sellars' causal theory of linguistic representation, even a framework-dependent statement about the explanatory adequacy of some ontological scheme is externally significant. The inferential data that an ontology tries to accommodate enjoy a certain degree of relative picture-correctness by being elements of relatively picture-correct framework or conceptual structure. Accordingly, if some categorial organization of this structure captures (inferentially integrates) more of the relevant inferential data than certain others we can assign to it a *comparatively* higher degree of picture-correctness.

In ontology as in science, then, the external significance of a theory is something we assert ‘from within,’ comparing the theory with its competitors rather than with ‘reality.’ Such external significance essentially remains *comparative* significance, since it derives from the comparative explanatory force of a theory relative to a data-set whose degree of picture correctness is unknown. Moreover, it remains *projected* external significance in the following sense. Sellars claims that ideal coherence and ideal picture-correctness go hand in hand, which allows for the possibility that in the sequence of frameworks leading up to the Peircean framework increases in picture-correctness and coherence or inferential integration may be occasionally out of step. (This does nothing to revive the problem of internality: from the fact that some ontological categorizations conceivably may not have the external significance they appear to have we cannot conclude that none do, or that all our categories are “elusive” in Rosenberg’s sense.)

In sum, insofar as ontological recategorizations increase the inferential integration of a framework, they can be said, from within that framework, to have a higher degree of comparative projected external significance or representational adequacy. Following the Carus Lectures, category projection – that is, the pursuit of what is elsewhere condemned as “revisionary ontology” – proves of crucial importance for ontological research. Category projection does not enable us to peek directly into the categorial foundations of the Peircean framework. But it effectively prevents theoretical stagnation in epicycle accounts rehashing the ontological tradition. The “Metaphysics of Pure Process” Sellars presents in the Carus Lectures must be understood as a *projective metaphysics*, operating with framework-dependent claims which nevertheless can be assigned projected external significance. According to the Carus Lectures we can discern, from within our present framework, a well-motivated ‘trend’ in the series of ontological theories that leads from traditional substance-ontological schemes operating with concrete, particular, static, and ‘causally separate’ entities (as well as abstract and general entities) to schemes whose basic entities are concrete, non-particular, dynamic, and ‘causally interlaced’ or ‘overlapping.’ We can additionally observe that present-day science seems to require an ontology based on absolute processes, and we can derive

from this some additional confirmation for the expectable inferential integration the projected category could provide.⁵⁹ These insights, though framework-dependent, allow us to treat an ontology based on absolute processes as representationally more adequate than the competitors considered. It is in this sense, then, of being able to make framework-dependent claims with external significance, of having an externally significant perspective, that “we are not without a glimpse of the end.”⁶⁰

NOTES

¹ Elsewhere I propose to distinguish ‘ontology,’ the theory of truth-makers of (the sentences of) a conceptual structure C as developed from within C, from ‘metaphysics’: investigations into the reality or adequacy of C. Here, however, I follow Sellars in treating the terms as synonyms. An ontological or metaphysical category theory thus is a theory of the ultimate sorts of beings (cf. CL II: 109).

² Sellars EPH viii.

³ The contrast between “negative ontology” and “positive ontology” I adopt from Jay Rosenberg’s ECAD. Rosenberg has first drawn attention to the methodological problem I will address here, see ECAD 163–178 and below section I.

⁴ Cf. Seibt AU.

⁵ Cf. Carnap LSL 298ff.

⁶ Carnap LSL 51f; cf. also Carnap A §103.

⁷ Carnap ESO 31.

⁸ Cf. Carnap A §180, ESO 25 and 33.

⁹ *Ibid.* 24.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 24.

¹¹ Cf. e.g., Goodman WW 117f, Quine WO ch. 2, and Sellars SRLG, resp.

¹² Cf. Quine CVO 69f and Goodman WW 119.

¹³ For the relevant dates cf. Sellars AR 280 and Carnap’s lecture notes, Carnap Research Archive: RC 081–03–05, Hillman Library, Pittsburgh.

¹⁴ For a discussion of Quine’s and Goodman’s reaction to the *Aufbau* cf. Seibt AU and UCC.

¹⁵ Sellars AR 287f.

¹⁶ Cf. Sellars EAE and IAE.

¹⁷ Cf. e.g. Sellars AE 248ff. Note that within the metalanguage that Sellars envisages no strict separation between syntactical and semantical categories is possible, cf. Rosenberg SRCO, letter of Jan. 16, 1973.

¹⁸ Cf. e.g., Sellars AE, SRLG, NAO 90–95.

¹⁹ Cf. e.g., Sellars NAO 137.

²⁰ Sellars NAO 130.

²¹ Maps and geographical terrains are isomorphic in the logical space of

geographical predicates, with the spatial distance relation in Euclidean 2-space being mapped onto (a ratio of) itself; world stories and speaker environments, I take it, are isomorphic in the logical space of arbitrary empirical predicates.

²² Sellars EPM 173.

²³ Cf. e.g. Sellars SRLG, NAO 92, SM 79.

²⁴ Cf. Sellars EPM 140, NAO 74, CL I §78.

²⁵ Cf. Sellars NAO 137.

²⁶ Cf. Sellars SM 148.

²⁷ Cf. e.g. Sellars SM 148, EPM 173.

²⁸ Cf. Rosenberg ECAD and Rosenberg/Sellars SRCO.

²⁹ Sellars SM 142; cf. also PH 105.

³⁰ Rosenberg ECAD 167.

³¹ Sellars SM 139.

³² Rosenberg ECAD 169f.

³³ Quine WO 23.

³⁴ Rosenberg ECAD 175.

³⁵ Cf. Rosenberg ECAD 167ff.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 175.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 166.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Sellars SM 142.

⁴⁰ Rosenberg ECAD 167.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 177.

⁴² Sellars SM 137f.

⁴³ Cf. Rosenberg PCST 316f. The ‘standard reading’ has been provided by Rosenberg’s “roadmap” to the CL which sets out, in admirable clarity, the course of the argument, its systematic context, as well as the underlying finer methodological points.

⁴⁴ Sellars SM 137, NAO 139, SM 136.

⁴⁵ Sellars NAO 59f.

⁴⁶ Sellars NS 234.

⁴⁷ Sellars NAO 71.

⁴⁸ Sellars TC 215.

⁴⁹ Cf. e.g. EPM 140, 160.

⁵⁰ Cf. e.g. CL IIO §54.

⁵¹ For a fairly detailed characterization of Sellars role-semantics cf. Seibt PP 46ff.

⁵² Note that my characterization here simply ducks basic questions of a theory of analogical reasoning, such as ‘how many empirical predicates must two concepts be able to share in order for the one to count as an analogical extension of the other?’; ‘how much of the analogical extension depends on a partial similarity of the structure of dependence relationships among descriptors and applicable empirical predicates?’; etc.

⁵³ This difference in the descriptor sets of the ur-concept of a sensible item and its

model is easily overlooked. It is precisely because the conditions for the numerical identity of sensible items are less specific than for particulars proper that the perceiver operating with this ur-concept of sensible items will identify this portion of red stuff and that portion of red stuff, across different spatial locations and times. Only insofar as this identification is performed can Sellars claim that the ur-concept of redness is “the concept of a redness which, along with other colors, is the very stuff of which physical objects are made” (CL I 65; cf. also 54–62).

⁵⁴ Sellars announces his analysis as an attempt to “throw some light on the temptation to think of processes as items that in a basic sense have duration” (CL II 127) but the argument itself has broader scope.

⁵⁵ Note, incidentally, that Sellars here, in one of his latest writings, returns to a thought and almost even a formulation to be found in one of his earliest essays. In his Master’s thesis from 1934, which also already contains the rudiments of the later deflationary account of events, Sellars envisages a form of dynamic continuity which “is not the mathematical continuity of a compact series of moments”; cf. Sellars SCE.

⁵⁶ It is tempting to see a connection here between Sellars’ remarks on the relationship between the dynamicity of absolute processes and perceived duration on the one hand, and Leibniz’ speculations about the relationship between activity and extension, on the other: “Extension expresses nothing but a certain . . . diffusion or repetition of some particular nature [i.e., quality] . . . But this nature which is said to be diffused, repeated, and continued . . . can be found in no other principle but that of action . . .” (Correspondence with De Volder, June 30, 1704).

⁵⁷ For the following quotations cf. CL III 100–128.

⁵⁸ Cf. CL III 124, fn. 23, and SPR 105, resp.

⁵⁹ Cf. Sellars EAE 254. For a first exploration of the explanatory assets of such basic entities cf. Seibt IP, NCI, EI, DCT. A systematic investigation of a process-based ontology I offer in PNO.

⁶⁰ Cf. Sellars PH 105.

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