Conventionalism and the Impoverishment of the Space of Reasons

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> Only that which has no history can be defined.
> – *Nietzsche* (*GM* 2:13)

1   INTRODUCTION.   (**16**.09.2012)

Carnap's work on logical syntax and semantics was centrally important to Sellars's own philosophy, in ways which have not been appreciated. Sellars's sophisticated form of pragmatism is highlighted by seeing how his and Quine's respones to the insights of, and the tensions within, Carnap's logical empiricism are diametrically opposed, which reveals both the myth of givenness and Sellars's Kantian-pragmatic alternative.

2   CARNAP'S LOGICAL EMPIRICISM.

2.1   *Logic, Science and Abandoning Historical Philosophy*. Carnap's logical empiricism has three main components:

1. Pure syntactic analysis of the sentences of a (re)constructed language and their relations; *Logical Syntax of Language* (1934a).

2. Pure semantics for that same language (following Tarski); Carnap, *Introduction to Semantics* (1942), 'Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology' (1950; 'ESO').

3. Descriptive semantics: empirical identification (by *e.g.*, psychology, sociology, history) of the sentences – especially observation sentences – uttered by a specific community, especially a scientific community. (Carnap 1932–33c, 180)

Modern logic has become a science, leaving historical philosophy behind as so much metaphysical non-sense (Carnap 1931, 22). The logical analysis of science is the pure study of the logical syntax and semantics of the language of science. Thus the legitimate philosophical remainder of epistemology is a branch of applied logic.

Carnap's key task is establishing criteria of cognitive significance for various kinds of sentences (T&M 2, 420; MCTC 38). This task has two parts. One is to establish criteria of significance for observation sentences, the meaning of which can be fully specified on the basis of observation. The other is to establish criteria of significance for theoretical sentences, the meaning of which can be only partially specified on the basis of observation sentences (MCTC 40, 47). Specifying criteria of significance for a group of sentences requires specifying the acceptable logical forms of those sentences and specifying criteria of significance for their descriptive terms. After settling these questions, Carnap adopts the most liberal criteria of significance consistent with them (MCTC 60).

2.2 *Conceptual Explication.* Classical analytic philosophy aspired to

> CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS: Explicit definition by specific necessary and sufficient conditions for the proper use of a term or concept.

Due to its modal status, conceptual analysis is *a priori*. However, conceptual analysis is inadequate for understanding science. Carnap (1950b, 1–18) made explicit the method of philosophical explication, which had been implicit in his work from the outset ('quasi-analysis'; *Aufbau* §73):

> CONCEPTUAL EXPLICATION: A clarified, though *partial* specification of the meaning or significance of a term or phrase *in use*, for certain *purposes*.

Explications are thus both revisable and are rooted in actual usage and thus in linguistic practices, which are rooted within whatever practices use that term. Successful explication is to facilitate the practice from which the explicated term derives.

2.3 *Being & 'Ontology'.* Carnap's liberality about sentence forms worried many of his empiricist colleagues, to whom it seemed he countenanced all the metaphysical extravagances they had censured, both physical and platonic. Carnap responded by distinguishing two different kinds of question about the 'reality' of any alleged entity or kind of entity: internal and external. Carnap (ESO 213) claims that the question, 'Are there any xs?' is ambiguous between three questions:

1. The Internal Question: Does a linguistic framework contain variables ranging over a specified domain of objects?

2. The (1st) External Question: Shall we adopt that linguistic framework?

3. The (2nd) External Question: How useful would adopting that linguistic framework be?

If a linguistic framework contains variables ranging over a specified domain of objects, then there are such objects. The answer to the second question of whether to adopt a framework is a practical rather than a theoretical question and thus a matter for decision rather than an assertion. Thus it is no matter of proof, for proofs conclude in assertions (ESO 207–8, 213). The answer to the third question is a matter of estimate and degree; thus it lacks the bivalence required for truth and

falsehood (ESO 213). Hence the only well-formed question about the existence of any entity, or any kind of entity, is the first question, which is internal to a linguistic framework and answerable empirically.

2.4 *Physicalism & Conventionalism.* One defining shift from logical positivism to logical empiricism was the abandonment of the ego-centric predicament and the adoption of

> PHYSICALISM: Physical objects exist, we perceive them and they can be investigated scientifically.

It was widely recognized that empirical science involves scientific communication, which is hardly intelligible, not to say feasible, from any ego-centric predicament. No scientific tract opens with the second person indefinite pronoun, 'To Hume it may concern …'.

In Carnap's semantics, the question is not

> Question in the Material Mode: Do physical objects exist?   (confused)(*boo!*)

> Question in the Formal Mode: Shall we adopt 'the thing language'?   (clear)(*yeah!*)

I.e., shall we adopt a linguistic framework which has variables ranging over, and designations of, physical objects? About this question Carnap stated:

> The decision of accepting the thing language, although itself not of a cognitive nature, will nevertheless usually be influenced by theoretical knowledge, just like any other deliberate decision concerning the acceptance of linguistic or other rules. The purposes for which the language is intended to be used, for instance, the purpose of communicating factual knowledge, will determine which factors are relevant for the decision. The efficiency, fruitfulness, and simplicity of the use of the thing language may be among the decisive factors. And the questions concerning these qualities are indeed of a theoretical nature. But these questions cannot be identified with the question of realism. They are not yes-no questions but questions of degree. The thing language in the customary form works indeed with a high degree of efficiency for most purposes of everyday life. This is a matter of fact, based upon the content of our experiences. However, it would be wrong to describe this situation by saying: "the fact of the efficiency of the thing language is confirming evidence for the reality of the thing world;" we should rather say instead: "This fact makes it advisable to accept the thing language." (ESO 208)

> [The question] may be meant in the following sense: "Are our experiences such that the use of the linguistic forms in question will be expedient and fruitful?" This is a theoretical question of a factual, empirical nature. But it concerns a matter of degree; therefore a formulation in the form "real or not" would be inadequate. (ESO 213)

Carnap advises adopting the 'thing language' conventionally, as a linguistic framework to expedite communication and scientific investigation.

2.5 *Empiricism & Confirmation.* Carnap's view is empiricist, because the incomplete specification of the meaning of any law-like statement, and likewise its incomplete confirmation, are possible only insofar as the observation sentences that it implies are directly testable, where this involves their complete verification. This requires that observation sentences contain predicates, the meaning of which can be completely specified, and the instantiation of which can be completely

verified. Carnap states:

> [I]f confirmation is to be feasible at all, this process of referring back to other predicates must terminate at some point. The reduction must finally come to predicates for which we can come to a confirmation directly, *i.e.* without reference to other predicates. ... the observable predicates can be used as such a basis. (T&M 456, *cf.* 458–9)

In 'Truth and Confirmation' (1949) Carnap describes confirmation in terms of 'confronting' observation statements with observations:

> Observations are performed and a statement is formulated such that it may be recognized as confirmed on the basis of these observations. If, *e.g.*, I see a key on my desk and I make the statement: "There is a key on my desk", I accept this statement because I acknowledge it as highly confirmed on the basis of my visual and, possibly, tactual observations. (T&C 124)

That confrontation is to determine truth or falsehood Carnap makes explicit on the next page:

> Confrontation is understood to consist in finding out as to whether one object (the statement in this case) properly fits the other (the fact); *i.e.*, as to whether the fact is such as it is described in the statement, or, to express it differently, as to whether the statement is true to fact. (T&C 125; *cf.* T&M 456)

In these passages, Carnap treats correspondence not only as an account of the nature of truth, but also as the criterion of truth, for observation statements.

2.6 *Descriptive Semantics and the Empirical Psychology of Observation.* Carnap's appeal to 'descriptive semantics' is important for at least three reasons:

1. To provide meaning for Carnap's his formal syntax. (Carnap 1932–33c, 177, 178)

2. To determine which possible system of scientific knowledge is the actual system of science. (Carnap 1932–33c, 178–80)

3. To avoid an untenable coherence theory of truth. (Hempel 1935a, 1935b)

Determining which system of science is the actual system is not a matter of pure logic, but of which system or systems are compatible with those protocols actually issued by the scientists of a specific 'cultural circle'.

Carnap's appeal to descriptive semantics underlines the importance of his appeal to empirical psychology to investigate any genuine issues about human cognition not analysed by his formal syntax and semantics. Carnap treated verbal or written utterances on an exact par with meter-indications and natural signs:

> The assertions of our fellow men contribute a great deal to extending the range of our scientific knowledge. But they cannot bring us anything *basically* new, that is, anything which cannot also be learned in some other way. For the assertions of our fellow men are, at bottom, no different from other physical events. Physical events are different from one another as regards the extent to which they may be used as signs of other physical events.

4

> Those physical events which we call "assertions of our fellow men" rank particularly high on this scale. It is for this reason that science, quite rightly, treats these events with special consideration. However, between the contribution of these assertions to our scientific knowledge and the contributions of a barometer there is, basically, at most a difference of degree. (Carnap 1932–33a, 180–1, *cf.* 184, 185; 1932–33b, 221; 1932–33c, 177; Hempel 1935a, 54, 57.)

Carnap (1932–33c, 182) recognized that language is first acquired, not by learning rules, but by having one's verbal utterances selectively reinforced; any rules that could be given are intelligible only to someone who already understands language.

3   A TENSION IN CARNAP'S SEMANTICS.

Carnap's view has been widely reputed to be purely formal, and he repeatedly calls his syntax and his semantics 'pure' or 'formal', though properly speaking, the formal syntax and semantics for which he is justly famous are only two of the three components of his view. Repeatedly Carnap attempts to assimilate to his 'logical' or 'formal' or 'pure' investigations topics or subject matter which otherwise would count as extra-logical or non-formal or impure. Carnap's claims and terminology caused confusion. Bergmann (1944) and Hall (1944) both thought that the formality of Carnap's semantics entailed that his semantics could not and did not refer to spatio-temporal particulars, such as the actual city of Chicago. This follows from Carnap's (1942, §4) specification that formal studies refer only to sign-designs and not to the designata of signs. Carnap (1945) was shocked, and patiently pointed out what he took to be their confusion between the mention and the use of linguistic expressions. Carnap failed to see his lax use of the terms 'formal' and 'pure' were faulty.

Strictly speaking, formal domains are those which involve no existence postulates. Strictly speaking, the one purely formal domain is a careful reconstruction of Aristotle's Square of Opposition (Wolff 1995, 2000, 2009). All further logical or mathematical domains involve various sorts of existence postulates, including semantic postulates. We may define 'formal domains' more broadly to include all formally defined logistic systems (Lewis 1970, 10). These are many and intrinsically fascinating. The important point here was made by C. I. Lewis (1929, 298): the relevance of any logistic system to a non-formal, substantive domain rests, not on formal considerations alone, but also on substantive considerations of how helpful the use of a specific logistic system may be within a non-formal, substantive domain. A few years after his exchange with Bergmann and Hall, Carnap (ESO) seconded this same point. The 'formal' or 'pure' character of Carnap's programme proves to be important in understanding Quine's and Sellars's contrasting responses to it.

4   RECONSIDERING QUINE'S 'TWO DOGMAS OF EMPIRICISM'.

The conventional wisdom is that Quine refuted the analytic/synthetic distinction, together with Carnap's empiricism. This is mythology. Quine (1961, 22–3, 25, 26) expressly grants the distinction between analytic and synthetic statements in three cases: logical truths, Carnapian explications and explicit definitions by stipulation. However, Quine (1961, 23, 29n7) sought a univocal but general definition of cognitive synonymy which would hold for artificial and for natural languages, including those containing extra-logical pairs of synonyms. Telling replies to '2 Dogmas' were

published almost immediately by Mates (1951) and by Martin (1952), both of which Carnap cited in his article, 'Meaning Postulates' (1952a, 72 note 3), which further elaborated his reply to Quine. Seven key points emerge from this debate:

4.1 Quine's failure to find any account of analyticity for natural languages unwittingly reflects the open texture of ordinary concepts, which of course is endemic to non-formal, substantive domains and terms in natural languages, including all empirical concepts.

4.2 Taken very charitably – which required Carnap (1963b, 915–22) a few years – all of Quine's arguments to show that there is no empirically verifiable or behavioural criteria of analyticity simply demonstrate that analyticity is not an empirical concept. Hume knew this already.

4.3 The relevant semantic phenomena of interest in natural languages all belong to pragmatics, which is a non-formal domain (Carnap 1955).

4.4 Quine's demand for a non-circular account of analyticity implicitly rejects Carnap's reliance upon natural language (either English or German) as an informal meta-language in which to construct his formally defined syntax and semantics.

4.5 Quine demands that we first understand 'analytic' prior to using the term (or the concept) in any explicitly defined statement. This reveals what might be called Quine's logical foundationalism: Quine insists on first having his meta-language well-defined before using it to define any first-order language.

No wonder Quine assigns issues of language-acquisition to empirical sciences, and that he was obsessed with the mere logical possibility of empirically unverifiable indeterminacy of translation!

4.6 Quine (1961, 35) is correct that considered simply as notation, nothing distinguishes Carnap's meaning postulates from any other symbols, strings or sentences.

This point deserves emphasis, for it is made in a paragraph added to the revised edition of Quine's article, in response to Martin (1952).

4.7 Though he would be loath to acknowledge it, in contrast with Quine's logical foundationalism, Carnap's willingness to use natural languages as informal meta-languages and to explicate key terms as needed when (re)constructing a linguistic framework exhibit an important, if undeveloped element of semantic externalism and hermeneutics within Carnap's formal methodology.

In the introduction to 'Two Dogmas', Quine (1961, 20) claims that rejecting the analytic/synthetic distinction and reductionism shifts us 'toward pragmatism'. He was much closer to the mark in his penultimate paragraph, where he states:

> The issue over there being classes seems more a question of convenient conceptual scheme; the issue over their being centaurs, or brick houses on Elm Street, seems more a question of

fact. But I have been urging that this difference is only one of degree, and that it turns upon our vaguely pragmatic inclination [*sic*] to adjust one strand of the fabric of science rather than another in accommodating some particular recalcitrant experience. (Quine 1961, 46)

Much of these debates transpired in the pages of *Philosophical Studies*, under the editorial eyes of Sellars (and Feigl), and Sellars's writings, early and late, reflect his intensive engagement with Carnap's views, and with what Quine did and did not make of them.

5 The Genuine Article: Sellars's Pragmatism.

5.1 *Pragmatics: Pure or Descriptive?* To resolve the debate between Carnap and Quine, Sellars first tried to do for pragmatics what Carnap had done for syntax and semantics: to develop a formal account of it. Fascinating as they are, these efforts failed for a variety of reasons, and not merely technical ones. Sellars soon recognized that

> … Carnap's studies in pure semantics … provide the essential materials for a non-metaphysical account of abstract entities, but that, by failing to examine in more detail the relation between pure and descriptive semantics, they leave dark corners where metaphysical views can find sanctuary. (EAE ¶25)

Sellars (EAE ¶10) noted that Carnap used the philosophical jargon of perceptual givenness (*cf.* above, §2.5) without having explicitly discussed, much less rejected, the epistemological views that jargon embodies. The core problem is this: Carnap presumes that each of us can learn and can understand, and presumably their proficiency in these regards is why attending to those physical events which happen to be 'the assertions of our fellow' scientists are worth attending to. However, recognizing that humans learn to, and do, make utterances which regularly and reliably covary with their circumstances does not entail, *pace* Carnap (1932–33a, 181, 185), that the covariance manifest in competent linguistic behaviour is merely a fancy version of the covariance of barometers or tree-toads with atmospheric pressure.

Under special circumstances (Dretske 1981), regular correlations may enable one state of affairs to carry information about another covarying states of affairs, including when one of those states of affairs is a person uttering vocables. However, sheer covariance of worldly events and the audible output of a human mouth does not constitute the mouth's, nor the person's recognition or decoding or understanding of that information. Although our recognition of received information *as* informative about some event in the world is a regular response to the receipt of information, this does not entail that any regular response to a source of information is a recognition of that information having whatever content it bears. A barometer, to take Carnap's example, has a meter scale and a pointer which covaries with atmospheric pressure. However, no barometer picks out atmospheric pressure as something with which to covary, nor does it pick out the fact or even indicate the fact that its pointer covaries with atmospheric pressure. In contrast to this, we who use barometers *do* pick out the fact that their pointers covary with atmospheric pressure, and we use such devices *because* they do so covary and because we know that they do so covary. There's lots of covariance in the world, but recognizing a covariance – *i.e.*, taking it to be informative – is quite another matter. This is the crux of Sellars's criticism of merely 'regulist' views of meaning of which Carnap's is paradigmatic; regularity is necessary, but not at all sufficient, for comprehension or understanding.

Carnap (1931, 60; T&M 468–70) admits his analysis does not address this issue. Insofar as Carnap's writings are methodological tracts in the philosophy of science, such omissions are unobjectionable. However, Carnap plainly claimed and intended to have *replaced* epistemology with the logic of science *cum* the logical analysis of the syntax of scientific language, together with descriptive semantics and an unredeemed promissory note about empirical psychology of cognition. In sum, accounting for scientific knowledge requires epistemology (*cf.* Dretske 1985), and at least some core strands of an account of human understanding.

5.2 *Sellars's Kantian Insight.* Our question is, given that true statements, and especially true and (cognitively) justified statements, carry information, what constitutes – or at least suffices to indicate – *understanding* that information? This, I submit, is the crux of Sellars's Kantian epiphany. In the *Groundwork* Kant observes:

> Everything in nature works according to laws. Only a rational being has the capacity to act according to a representation of laws, *i.e.*, according to principles, and so has a will. Since deriving actions from laws requires reason, the will is nothing but practical reason. (*GS* 4:412)

Kant's observation about the human will is the practical counterpart of his theory of judgment, that we judge and resolve what to conclude or to do by recognising reasons so to conclude or to act. Language is 'fraught with ought', not because it is somehow magically non-natural, but because we exhibit – to ourselves and to others – our understanding of what we or others think or say by judging what, on that basis, we are permitted or obligated or prohibited from thinking, saying or doing next. However much our conceptual, verbal and perceptual understanding and comprehension is rooted in the proper functioning of our neuro-physio-psychology, that proper functioning – so far as it is understood strictly causally – is necessary though not sufficient to account for human intelligence in thought or in action. Sellars recognized that this insight of Kant's is altogether independent of transcendental idealism.

5.3 *Logical givenness?* We are so used to sensory notions about 'knowledge by acquaintance' that Sellars' (*) claim that there can be logical forms of givenness can be puzzling. Recall Quine's (1961, 35) point (above, §*.6), that considered simply as notation, nothing distinguishes Carnap's meaning postulates from any other symbols, strings or sentences. Sellars likewise observes that

> Carnap ... traces the *ex vi terminorum* character of the sentences of a pure syntactical system to the fact that the syntactical predicates of the system are defined in terms of the sign designs of the object calculus. (EAE ¶54, *cf. NAO* 1.31)

Sellars first (IM ¶32) criticized Carnap's semantical rules for omitting their prescriptive 'rulishness', but later argued (EAE ¶¶48, 50, 63) that Carnap had failed to recognize that semantical rules are neither descriptive nor prescriptive nor logical, but are distinctively semiotic (EAE ¶¶54, 57, 70–2). In just this connection Sellars (EAE ¶56) clarifies what Carnap had not made clear about the 'pure' status of his formal syntax and semantics (above, §3). Carnap (1963b, 923) denied his semantical rules did or should contain anything prescriptive. Their disagreement is profound but easy to miss. Any formal system contains rules governing what counts as well-formed formulae (WFFs); such composition rules are normative, so to this minimal extent, any formal system contains normative rules. The problem with Carnap's strategy is breathtakingly simple but decisive:

> 'Predicate' is a role word, and to specify the counters which are to play a role is not to define

8

the role word. (EAE ¶54)

Pointing to marks or to markers ('counters') and listing them as, *e.g.*, 'predicates' does suffice to make them predicates. Carnap's pointing to his lists of symbols is a *logical* form and fallacy of 'givenness'. At its most basic and general, the error of 'givenness' or of 'factualism' is to mistake the occurrence of a particular – even if that particular happens to be a sign or representation – for *understanding* that particular, including *understanding* that sign or representation.

Sellars' central point about 'the logical space of reasons' and about his functional or conceptual role semantics addresses the relation between what Descartes called the 'formal' and the 'objective' reality of ideas:

1. FORMAL REALITY of an idea: an occurent mental state,
                                      a mode of a mental substance.

2. OBJECTIVE REALITY of an idea: its representational or represented content,
                                      what it represents and how it represents it,
                                      what it represents it to be,
                                      what it represents it *as*.

Early on Carnap (1931, 91; 1934 [1959], 175) had used inference to specify meaning of a term or phrase by specifying which inference can, and which cannot, be drawn by using it. This is important, but *understanding* that meaning requires being able to draw those inferences. This is central to understanding in all its forms, whether it be our understanding of ordinary things, natural phenomena, signs of whatever kind (including statements) or thoughts and beliefs. This fundamental, constitutive character of human understanding Carnap together with the entire empiricist tradition neglected. Rationlists did no better by appealing to intuition. Ryle (1949, 121) was right to highlight our use of material 'inference tickets', but he too neglected what is central to our *understanding* such use, whether our own or others'. With apologies to Austin, Sellars's point might be put by saying – with Kant, Hegel, Peirce and Dewey – that our intelligent manipulation of signs consists in knowing how to do things with signs, because we know how to reason about their permissible, appropriate and inappropriate use, because we understand their various possible and actual roles in various circumstances or contexts, whether present, pending or remote. 'Meaning' consists in functional semiotic roles; *understanding* meaning consists in intelligent, reasoned use of those roles in thought and action, including both judgment and inference.

Carnap's formal semantics straddles the fence between logicism and hermeneutics. For all his stress on actual, natural languages – which is where he insistently sought analyticity in general – Quine's problems with analyticity are a logicist's nightmare about non-formal domains, *i.e.*, about dealing with the real world, with real people and real languages. Sellars's stress on the rootedness of explication in the actual use of terms, and how the use of terms is structured by rules of their correct and appropriate usage, all point to fundamental externalist aspects implicit – that is: latent – in and yet central to Carnap's semantics. Sellars put it this way:

> This brings me to the heart of the matter. The emphasis of Carnap's studies in semantics is on the formal manipulation of semantical words as defined expressions in pure semantical systems. He deals in much too cavalier a fashion with semantical words as they function in the assertions of descriptive semantics, that is to say, with semantical words functioning as such. The latter, however, is the essential concern of a *philosophical* semantics. For it, the

primary value of formally elaborated semantical systems lies in their contribution to the analysis of semantical concepts in actual usage. Now Carnap is, of course, aware that a pure semantical theory is a *semantical* theory only if it relates its vocabulary to semantical expressions in actual usage. And he undoubtedly thinks of his semantical studies as providing an explication (in his sense) of semantical discourse. My complaint is that his treatment of the relation between pure and descriptive semantics is much too perfunctory. It leaves important and relevant things unsaid, and what he does say is, by its over-simplification, misleading where it is not downright mistaken. (EAE ¶67)

Now Sellars's formal though impure semantics and pragmatics are a philosophical *tour de force*, which defy brief summary here. Several important points may be made briefly, however, which highlight Sellars's pragmatic realism.

5.4 As this last passage shows, Sellars's philosophical semantics interprets our language and symbol systems in their actual use, which is use in our practical engagements with the world, whether commonsense, professional or scientific. Quine holds our ontology hostage to our symbolic systems ('to be is to be the value of a bound variable'), which themselves are allegedly hostage to hopelessly obscure, presumptively pre-conscious though arbitrary decisions about quantification and individuation. Sellars, to the contrary, holds our symbolic systems responsible to the world, both in its commonsense and in its scientific manifestations.

5.5 Carnap's decisions to adopt one or another linguistic framework are unjustified and unjustifiable practical decisions regarding expected convenience (above, §2.4). This tenet accords with the predominant conventionalism of the period, and lives on, *e.g.*, in Quine's (1961, 4) magisterial 'preference' for ontological 'desert landscapes'; philosophical trading in 'intuitions'; in the non-method of reflective equilibrium (Westphal 2003, 101); in philosophical preoccupation with the acceptance or rejection of one or another view, rather than their justification or assessment; and in the pride many philosophers take in presenting 'my analysis' of some term or concept – whereas because that term or concept originated in some broader context of use, the account must needs be an explication (in Carnap's sense); in principle it cannot be a conceptual analysis, however much their advocates may prefer to say so.

About Carnap's treatment of decisions to adopt a linguistic framework Sellars adroitly observed:

... although a question of the form 'Shall I ...?' calls indeed for decision, it is generally sensible to ask of a decision 'Is it reasonable?' or 'Can it be justified?' and *these* questions call for assertion rather than a decision. Thus, the question inevitably arises: Is it proper to ask of a decision to accept a framework of entities, 'Is it reasonable?' 'Can this decision be justified, and if so, how?' This is the crux of the matter, and on this point, it must be remarked, Carnap's discussion is less incisive. (EAE ¶5)

In fact, Carnap's account of such decisions is inconsistent with his rejection of framework-independent facts, truths or realities (Westphal 1989, 64–7). Sellars recognized this (*cf.* EAE ¶26), though the special occasion required politesse. Too often contemporary philosophers indicate their philosophical preferences, without asking what status preferences can, do or should have in philosophy.

5.6 Sellars's emphasis on and central use and development of Carnapian explication is deeply informed by his Kantian insight into reason and reasoning, the common basis of both practical and theoretical activity – including philosophy. C. I. Lewis (1941, 94) distinguished his view from

the verification principles of logical positivists and logical empiricists by his emphasis on human agency. In stark contrast, as Wick (1951, 50) noted, although logical empiricism is a radically practical philosophy, it formulated no philosophy of the practical. Quine's (1961, 46) 'vaguely pragmatic inclination' is no improvement in this crucial regard. Like Lewis and the Classical pragmatists, human agency, practical reason and philosophical ethics are central to Sellars's philosophy.

5.7 Whereas Quine sought a univocal, general account of 'the' analytic/synthetic distinction, Sellars realized we need to acknowledge (at least) a four-fold distinction: broad and narrow senses of 'analytic' and 'synthetic', and broad and narrow senses of 'empirical' (EAE ¶¶16, 18, 43). Given that Quine sought one, univocal, general distinction between 'the' analytic and 'the' synthetic, he neglected these and other important semiotic innovations Sellars developed (*e.g.*, dot quotes).

5.8 Sellars's use of explication verges upon hermeneutics:

> It is essential … to note that the resources *introduced* (i.e. the variables and the term 'proposition') can do their job only because the language already contains the sentential connectives with their characteristic syntax by virtue of which such sentences as 'Either Chicago is large or Chicago is not large' are analytic. In other words, the introduced *nominal* resources mobilize existing *syntactical* resources of the language to make possible the statement 'There are propositions'. (EAE ¶3, *cf.* ¶28)

Yes, Sellars's explications aimed to introduce a degree of 'regimentation' into our philosophical discourse, but unlike Carnap and in sharp contrast to Quine, Sellars tied explication to the original context of use and perplexity which called for explication, and he used his explications to better articulate and understand that original context of perplexing phenomena.

5.9 These points indicate that Sellars's semantics at least begins to exploit the semantic externalism entailed – unwittingly but unavoidably – by Carnap's account of explication.

5.10 Sellars recognized that his functional role semantics involved complexly interconnected conceptual roles, and thus a form of *meaning holism*. As an empiricist, Carnap sought to preserve semantic atomism, at least for observation statements (*per* above, §2.5). However, Wick (1951) noted that Carnap's (ESO) account of linguistic frameworks entails (moderate) semantic holism. Carnap's (1963b) last semantics again sought to preserve semantic atomism for observation statements, though again it did not; Carnap graciously conceded this point (Kaplan 1971). Carnap's failure to preserve semantic atomism unwittingly corroborated C. I. Lewis's (1929, 107) view, that linguistic intension – *i.e.*, classifications of particulars and their features – is implicitly holistic, so that verbal definition is eventually circular. Consequently, logical analysis cannot involve reduction to primitive terms, but instead must and can only interrelate terms. In sum, concepts consist in relational structures of meaning. This view is adopted and further developed by Sellars's functional role semantics; his account of 'synthetic necessary truth' (*SM* 68–9) is a direct successor of C. I. Lewis' pragmatic conception of the *a priori*.

5.11 Semantic holism – whether moderate or radical – underscores the importance of these methodological questions:

1. What, if anything, can guide proper analysis or explication?

2. On what basis can an analysis or explication be assessed?

3. What can limit or counter-act the importation of linguistic or conceptual confusions from the object-level language in the material mode of speech into an analysis or an explication in a formal mode of speech?

Sellars addressed this question upon the sage advice of Aristotle: because philosophical issues are so complex, elusive and easily obscured by incautious phrasing, one must consult carefully the opinions of the many and the wise. Sellars found the wise throughout philosophical history, from the pre-Socratics to the present day, because core issues regarding the logical forms of thought and the connection of thought with things are perennial, arising in distinctive, paradigmatic forms in each era (*SM* 67–9). One result of Sellars' expansive research is a catalogue and critical assessment of philosophical locutions, that is, so to speak, of the 'ordinary language' *of philosophers*. Only by examining these can one find the most suitable, least misleading formulations of issues, specific theses, distinctions and their relations. Thus even when cast in the formal mode of speech, any philosophical analysis or explication must be systematic as well as historical; indeed an analysis or explication can only be systematic by also being historical. The semantic interconnection among philosophical issues, via the semantic relations of their central terms, provides a crucial check against inapt formulations, analyses and explications.

6   CONCLUSION.

At a time when there is much talk of 'neo-Pragmatism', which owes far more to semantic ascent than it does to the Classical Pragmatists, and when much of this talk takes Quine's fledgling steps towards an ill-defined 'pragmatism', I wish to close by quoting Sellars' opening paragraph on 'Phenomenalism':

> Once again, as so often in the history of philosophy, there is a danger that a position will be abandoned before the reasons for its inadequacy are fully understood, with the twin results that: (a) it will not be noticed that its successor, to all appearances a direct contrary, shares some of its mistakes; (b) the truths contained in the old position will be cast aside with its errors. The almost inevitable result of these stampedes has been the "swing of the pendulum" character of philosophical thought; the partial truth of the old position reasserts itself in the long run and brings the rest of the tangle with it. (PHM ¶1)

Sellars's philosophical *caveat emptor* is vital. When it comes to pragmatism, accept no substitutes: insist on the genuine article. To do this, however, requires philosophically careful history, and systematically historical philosophy, of which Sellars was a past master. Anything less condemns us to inept conventionalism which impoverishes the space of reasons.

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