

CHAPTER THREE -- THE CONCEPT

. . . whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature.
(Shakespeare, *Hamlet*)

Perception being such a private business, I find it ironical that the best evidence of what to count as perceptual should be social conformity. I shall not pause over the lesson, but there is surely one there. (W. V. O. Quine, 1974, 23)

Sellars' Pragmatistic Empiricism

Becoming acquainted with Sellars' epistemology

Near the end of the last chapter, I had determined what Quine meant to accomplish in his account of the roots of reference: to establish that reference first occurs as the connection of a linguistic expression to one's experience. Given that determination, we can now evaluate what was actually accomplished and consider it in our quest for determining what the problem of meaning is. In evaluating Quine's project, there is a particularly relevant, though negative, article that will help: Sellars' "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind" (1963, 127-196). It is to the refutation of just that position which Quine espoused, i.e., *that observation could be used as a basis for accounting for referential linguistic practices*, that Sellars' paper is directed. Before discussing that paper, though, there is a much shorter one that, in its conclusion, sums up the argument relevant to my project.

In 1949, Sellars gave a synopsis of his opinion, which turns out to be contrary to the Quinean position given above, in a paper on Russell's principle of acquaintance. The synopsis of Sellars' opinion can be given without representing Sellars' treatment of Russell's principle, for Sellars manufactured a fictional representative of Russell and an empiricist alter ego to give life to an argument that never happened. In his article "Acquaintance and Description Again", Sellars attributed to the alter ego of the fictional Russell the mistake of building the logical structure of our languages on the referential relations of

names to objects (1949). Sellars suggested that there is another mistaken position which is more basic than the former mistake and on which the former is based. That allegedly mistaken position is the one which I have attributed to Quine and which Sellars argued against in "Empiricism". I will quote in full the synopsis which Sellars gave in "Acquaintance" since it sums up the position Quine held and it gives a general description of what mistake is made by those who hold that position.

It is that of taking the "designation relation" of semantic theory to be a reconstruction of being present to an experience. This mistake is the same whether combined with an adequate psychology of "experience" or associated with the pseudo-psychology of the "given". Semantic designation reconstructs neither "phenomenal givenness" nor "behavioral response to an environmental stimulus". In so far as semantic designation is a reconstruction of an aspect of man's adjustment to his environment by means of sign-behavior, it concerns rather the relation of sign habits to features of the environment in abstraction from particular acts of experiencing those features. It is the pragmatic concept of verification which constructs the meeting of language and world in a cognitive situation. . . [P]ragmatics, from which, after all, semantics is an abstraction, is concerned with the contact of a linguistic structure with the world, and this contact essentially involves linguistic tokens or sign-events. It is in pragmatics that we find the theory of demonstratives, words such as "this", "here", "now". Words of this type involve an intrinsic relation to a particular cognitive situation. (1949).

One is reminded of the sentiment expressed by Wittgenstein in a January 1914 letter to Russell: "how can I be a logician before I'm a human being" (quoted in Monk, 1990, 97). Yet, Sellars' statement is not mere soul-searching. The key point is that, whereas practical experience precedes acquisition of knowledge regarding the logical representation of experience, experience does not precede the cognitive situation. Rather, the experiential situation in which the kinds of words appropriate to making observations and confirming observation sentences are involved is already cognitive: even ostensive use of linguistic utterances (e.g., the use of demonstratives) requires a cognitive framework. The semantic relation between words and objects, then, is not something that can be established on either a dispositional basis; nor can it be established on an ostensive basis which is not cognitive. Rather, that relation, construed semantically, is an abstraction of relation belonging to the area of pragmatics. Use of the semantical relation represents abstractly the fact of language users' adjusting to

their environment. That abstraction from a cognitive situation marks designational language use as cognitive, rather than as dispositional. Dispositional "use" of language, where such use is merely a stable disposition to respond to change's in one's environment, would be mere imitation, from Sellars' perspective (Brandom, 1997). On the other hand, the association of experience with linguistic expressions would involve cognition.

In one of Sellars' major works, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind", Sellars took the thread of that statement (and much more) and wove a richly embroidered critique of traditional empiricism. While one tailor cannot clothe the world, attention to the central argument of "Empiricism" will give us the measure of "meaning", which we can then use to design its trappings. Of course, there is much more in Sellars' haberdashery than I will need. In considering what looks best under the light of my purposes, much will be left on the rack (indeed, not a few of the items are beyond my means).

In a Sellarsian spirit, "my purpose is systematic, rather than historic" (Sellars, 1949, 496). Hence, to change the metaphor, I will not trace the lines from which Sellars' painted his masterwork. Rather, I will make adjustments where necessary in adapting his philosophic and aesthetic ends to my own. To begin, a couple prefatory notes will be made.

Intuitions regarding analysis

Both Quine and Sellars wrote at a level so fundamental, philosophically-speaking, that many parts of their arguments turn on plausibility, rather than simple rigor. That is, if there is a right answer to their, and my, collective concerns, it will not be found in simple deduction. The right answer, nonetheless, will be determined by an argument whose premisses and conclusion (while lacking necessity of inference) fit together (in some sense) as tightly as do deductive arguments. The problem is that the arguments extend as far as arguments possibly can, including all concerns of human experience. Hence, there is no Archimedean resting place for an argumentative lever. Consequently, much turns on overall aesthetics for which criteria are not forthcoming, but which seem to be apparent once each story has unfolded.

Part of the manifest aesthetic is that different forms of analysis are available to inquirers; among these are logical, mathematical, physical, chemical, physiological, behavioristic, conceptual, and moral forms.

Of them, the last three are the most relevant to philosophical concerns.¹ The issue of this thesis rests on the distinction between behavior that is a result of dispositional responses (i.e., behavior which is explained by behaviorism) and that which is a result of movement within a conceptual framework and, therefore, which resists reduction to behavioristic explanation.

In this connection, we might ask the following peculiar-sounding questions. Objects have a disposition to fall at an accelerated speed when there is an unobstructed path between them and the earth; do all falling objects have the concept of "acceleration"? Do deciduous trees have the concept of "autumn"? Do certain laboratory mice, which have been observed consistently to respond by moving a lever after a circular stimulus, but not when a square one, has been presented to them, have the concept "circle"? Do adult humans have any of these concepts? We would like to answer "yes" to the last question and "no" to all the rest.²

It is important that we have intuitions to the effect that, even if complex forms of human behavior like telling stories, holding up convenience stores, and banking -- even if these things were the result of complex dispositional responses, we would like to say that the agents involved in such transactions know what they are doing. We would like to think that, even if complex human behaviors were determined wholly by dispositional responses to environmental conditions, which few would concede, "knowing" would be part of such behavior. That is, even if one were to believe there are really no such entities as concepts, one need not, and most would not, concede that there is (either as an immediate

¹ Quine would dispute the notion of there being uniquely philosophical concerns (and so might Sellars, depending on how the notion was phrased). See "Naturalized Epistemology" (1969, 69-90).

² For reasons related to space and the scope of this project, the issue with which this chapter is engaged, i.e., the distinction between conceptual, cognitive episodes and non-cognitive, non-conceptual episodes, will not be presented as the conclusion of an argument. Rather, the discussion will consist of clarifying, in light of the fact that I will be taking that distinction as a starting point, what that starting point is. Admittedly, there is a voluminous literature on the possibility of reduction of conceptual activities to non-conceptual activities such as the firing of synapses. There also has been a great deal written on the subject of whether it would be, were it obvious how to make that reduction, a good thing to do so. Were what follows to be construed as falling into either part of the literature, it should be the latter and not the former. At the same time, it is worth repeating that I will be assuming, rather than arguing, that there is a propositionality of conceptual experience that cannot be reduced to non-conceptual episodes. Within a philosophical framework which implies an irreducibility of the conceptual to the causal order, there also can be a distinction between the intentional and the scientific. What follows takes place within just such a philosophical framework.

consequence or coincidentally) nothing *conceptual* about complex human behaviors.

While it may turn out that there is something also "conceptual" (in some sense we do not know about and which is much less mysterious than the sense in which we use the word today) about a mouse's experience, we are not inclined to believe that there really is. We find it more plausible that falling rocks, deciduous trees, laboratory rodents, and such do not meet the requirements for membership in our circle. We surely respond chemically to our environment just as the sycamore does. We may even act "instinctively" much of the time, but we see ourselves as having capacities which constitute "a logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says" (Sellars, 1963, 169).

The logical space of reasons

I began by presenting prefatory notes, then suggested that our intuitions do and should play a large role in these matters, and have ended my digression with a claim whose truth is far from being intuitively clear. Taking a step backwards to see what was overlooked, we find, in the quotation above, that Sellars meant to establish a criterion for conceptual activities. In his treatment of the realm of conceptual activities, Sellars characterized these activities as resting on the form of propositions, i.e., of sentences (1963, 144). Of course, the reasons offered for what one claims can only be propositional.

It is unfortunate that we can think and talk about what experience is like only once we can think and talk about things -- otherwise sentient, but non-sapient, creatures might be able to tell us of their experience -- but there does not seem to be any other way things could be. Sellars seems to have inferred from the logic of that situation that conceptual activities must be of the nature of speech and thought,³ i.e., must be propositional. The logic behind that move is that if behavior is the result of movement within a conceptual framework, there will be a content which accounts (in some sense) for the behavior. Since that content is purportedly conceptual, then it must be possible for it to be conveyed. If one is to convey that content, there must be such a content and one must have the ability to convey it. To convey something, in this context, means for that something to have propositional

³ Sellars ultimately finds thought to be derivative of speech. "[A]fter overt speech is well established", however, but only after, "'inner speech' [can] occur without its overt culmination" (1963, 188).

form.

The notion of a logical space of reasons seems to have been conceived of as a result of a transcendental argument, i.e., one that reasons from present circumstances to conditions necessary for those circumstances. The first premise of the argument is that there is a definite realm of conceptual activity which "causes" behavior in a certain sense of "cause" which is different from the "cause" of behavior which results from dispositional responses to changes in an organisms' environment. The sense in which conceptual accounts of behavior are different from such behavioristic accounts, according to this argument, is that the former involve the notion that there is a motivation for behavior which is derived from the inferences from one propositional-concept to another. In the latter, no such inference can be found. The implication is that movements within conceptual frameworks, when described in terms of inferences, can account for certain behavior. That allows one to postulate episodes or states within the "logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says" (Sellars, 1963, 169).

The second premise of the transcendental argument is that, if some behavior is motivated within a conceptual framework, i.e., is "conceptual", rather than behavioristic, it will be possible to give an explanation for that behavior in propositional form which accurately represents that behavior and its motivation. Hence, for one's behavior to be structured by reasons, one must first have linguistic ability. The reason for that is that the acquisition of linguistic ability involves the acquisition of conceptual matter and the means to structure it. This becomes clear in considering what requirements must be met by a child trying to break into language.

Breaking into language

To demonstrate use of language ability, one must have a grasp of how a language works to such an extent that one can, of course, manipulate the mechanical aspects (e.g., the relevant muscles). In addition, however, and most importantly, one must be able to use the language in adjusting to one's environment and in adjusting one's environment. To use a language to show that one knows how to use the language involves not only learning dispositions for responding to change in one's environment, but also something else. In fact, if considered alone, dispositional responses to one's environment in which one responds by vocal utterances (e.g., parroting) are not considered genuine use of language at

all.

Infants are faced with an ongoing examination. While no one really sees it as a test, language participants routinely engage in playful activities with babies where linguistic expressions are used as game pieces. Much of the play consists in the efforts of members of a language community to engage infants in their game. Since there is a right and wrong way to use language, though the rigors and requirements for the very young are minimal, as babies begin to grasp the playing pieces, they make wrong moves and are informed that they have done so. Eventually, they begin to understand that some moves are legitimate and some moves are not. In Brandom's terms, they learn that they are responsible for what they say (1997, 140-1). That responsibility is *that "something else"*, mentioned above, which is above and beyond learning to respond merely vocally, dispositionally, and non-linguistically.

In taking seriously what they say, children begin to learn how concepts are related, i.e., to learn what it is to have concepts. Such learning involves more than non-conceptual, dispositional behavior. It also involves making "guesses", i.e., trial responses with no pre-recognition whether they are correct or not, and taking those guesses seriously enough that each child learns which behavior is appropriate under which circumstances. While that may involve acquiring stable dispositions to make certain moves within a pre-conceptual framework, one's taking seriously such pre-conceptual games is a move in that pre-language game. Eventually, one has learned enough such that every instance of vocal behavior is not a guess. Eventually one knows what one is saying when making an utterance and, therefore, is actually saying something. The preconceptual framework is thereby transformed into a conceptual one.

The description above should not be taken to mean that one gathers concepts like a child might gather daisies, one by one. Rather, "while the process of acquiring [for example] the concept of green may -- indeed does -- involve a long history of acquiring *piecemeal* habits of response to various circumstances, there is an important sense in which one has *no* concept pertaining to the observable properties of physical objects in Space and Time unless one has them all" (1963, 148). That is, if we have enough concepts to say how things are, we have a world in which we conceive of ourselves and

the things of that world. Such a world as a whole is not found in pieces, though it may be constructed that way unbeknownst to us. Hence, at that point at which it is no longer the case that every potential move (in a potential conceptual framework) is a guess, one has an entire conceptual field⁴ from which to pick one's flowers. It is at that point that one can actually choose to make a move in a conceptual framework. The difference between such conceptual behavior and non-conceptual behavior will be made more distinct below, for I have not said enough regarding what, according to Sellars, it is to demonstrate one has knowledge of a language.⁵

A little above, I made mention of the idea that children learn which behavior is appropriate under which circumstances. Presumably, it is only by taking seriously the responses their elders make to their vocal utterances and repeatedly having the opportunity to make certain sounds under certain conditions that children build up enough data to make guesses which matter. While Sellars said little in "Empiricism" on the issues I have been addressing -- the actual basis for the distinction between concept-based and non-conceptual/disposition-based behavior, the interactions of caretakers and children, the role of making "guesses" in a child's learning of a language, the move from dispositional-based behavior to activities that produce knowledge -- he does say that for a person to have some concept, for example, a color concept, "[n]ot only must the conditions be of a sort that is appropriate for determining the color of an object by looking, the subject must *know* that conditions of the sort *are* appropriate" (1963, 147-8).

This raises the issue of what it is to "know" something. Before directly addressing that, I will make one final statement on the topic at hand, i.e., the importance of knowing what conditions are appropriate as opposed to responding to appropriate conditions. In being able to offer reasons for why she thinks the conditions are appropriate, a child offers justification for the implicit fact that she is aware of her own behavior, and not just "aware" in the sense of "awake", but in the sense of taking her behavior

⁴ I have been using imagery that involves "sensation", "concepts", "conceptual field", "conceptual framework", etc. Sellars actually gives meaning to those kinds of words at the end of "Empiricism". I am not concerned with establishing what those things are. In part, this stems from a disagreement with Sellars' results. However, my opinions on that matter are not germane to the points I have been making.

⁵ In making that difference distinct, I will be elaborating on those things Sellars said in "Empiricism". Sellars is clearer and more informative on the subject in his paper "Some Reflections on Language Games" (1963, 321-358), but because of the complexity of that paper, I will not draw from it explicitly.

seriously. That is, in doing so, the child implies that she is now playing the game everybody around her had already been playing.

Epistemic activities

The activity of responding to something, where the response is motivated by reasons, purposes, and concepts, and where one does not simply report a sensation, but considers factors relevant to making the report, is called "endorsement" by Sellars, 1963, 144). The difference between a report and an endorsement of a report is that in making the latter, one conceptualizes what is required to make a report which is correct. In making an endorsement, one is doing something very much like, if not identical to, what a child does when that child has become a member of a language community. That is, a child who has taken responsibility for what she says, must consider (somehow) what is relevant to saying something correctly. Similarly, for someone to endorse a report is for one to imply that one is able to offer reasons for why the report is worth accepting. Where a report is not endorsed, no reasons can be expected for why the report is worth accepting, for a report-maker does not endorse its acceptance. In fact, a report-maker, as opposed to an endorser, may have reasons to reject the report (Sellars, 1963, 145). Thus, simple reports are non-inferential activities, while endorsements are epistemic "fact-statings" (Sellars, 1963, 143).⁶ This point requires clarification.

Where we offer no endorsement, the behavior might be construed as both a non-conceptual (i.e., behavioristic) and a conceptual response, which seems (and is, until explained) contradictory. This is what makes activities like reporting confusing. That is, a non-epistemic activity which has propositional content, like reporting, has a dual nature, where the two natures are very much distinct. Sellars is able to clarify things by making a distinction between non-inferential and inferential knowledge. Reports are non-inferential, while endorsements are inferential. The latter is made as the conclusion of an inference (Sellars, 1963, 143). The former is made in response to a perceptual judgment. Instances of both kinds of activities are moves within a conceptual framework. Activities of this sort have to do with facts because they have propositional content. In turn, they have

⁶ There are different linguistic conventions for these practices. Sellars talks of "looking" as having a reporting function and "seeing as" as having both a reporting function and an endorsing function. Although Sellars' point is an important one, I think Sellars made the mistake of ascribing, to linguistic tokens, something (i.e., functions) which is analogous, if not identical, to linguistic types. Were Sellars to have taken individual instances of "seeing as" and "looking" expressions as linguistic tokens, one would allow, not only for variations of linguistic practice (e.g., use of a "seeing as" instance as an instance of a "looking" type, rather than of a "seeing as" type as Sellars requires), but also for better terminology for what amounts to a general distinction between reporting without endorsement and reporting with endorsement.

propositional content because and only because they can be moves within a conceptual framework. That propositional content is common to both activities productive of non-inferential knowledge and those productive of inferential knowledge. The difference is that one is made in response to one's environment, as a premise, one might say. The other is made as the conclusion of an inference.

As we have seen, to make a report on something, even a first report, the child must recognize what she is doing. To make a report may involve knowing what would count as appropriate conditions for making such a report. That is so even though report-making involves withholding endorsement, i.e., as not claiming that anyone else should believe that some thing is really red (1963, 144). It is merely to offer an opinion on how things seem, even though it may yet be discovered that things are not as they seem. Still, to take something to be red presupposes having the concept of red, i.e., knowing the conditions for redness. To report that something is red, for example, one must know the appropriate conditions for that something's being red. Before one can discriminate between something's only appearing to be red (which means that it is red *to oneself*, though not necessarily that it *is* red independently of one's perception), one must already have taken something to be red. Reporting, then, presupposes that one would be willing to make an endorsement of the report were one also to know, not what the conditions should be for having that appearance, but what the conditions really are. Hence, report-making presupposes an ability for endorsement-making.

It is important to note that, even though Sellars allows for non-inferential activities like reporting, where statements are made as responses to differences in our environment to which we are sensitive, he does not allow for the possibility that an activity might both have propositional content and be performed outside of a conceptual framework. The result is that, even if such activities as reporting occur non-inferentially, they must still occur within the "logical space of reasons" if they are to be construed as having a propositional content. Hence, something is not factual knowledge if nothing can be offered as a good reason for knowing that something. Were one to ask how we know something, we would be able to reply, if that purported knowledge has a place within our conceptual framework, with an explanation for why we think such-and-such. A justification of this kind might be as tenuous as that the something, in the form of a statement, was overheard in the conversation of strangers' or it

might be a conclusion inferred from undisputed premisses. In either case, for the knowledge in question to be in the "logical space of reasons" is for it to be possible for us to provide good reasons for coming to the conclusion which is the fact in question.

Hence, to justify knowledge of a fact is to provide reasons which we think justify that knowledge. It is not merely to respond non-conceptually. That notion is what is behind Sellars' comparison (1963, 131) of Moore's naturalistic fallacy with the fallacy of conflating reason and disposition: the irreducibility of the normative aspect of epistemic facts to the descriptive aspect of non-epistemic, dispositional responses (Brandom, 1997, 141).

Intentionality

One might argue that a response to differences in one's environment, where one has faculties sensitive to such differences, is a response to an experience. Certainly, both non-propositional experience and experience proper (e.g., non-inferential knowledge), where the latter has propositional content, involve dispositional responses. Nonetheless, Sellars would take issue with the term "experience" in the context of dispositions to respond to differences in stimuli, since purported experience of that kind lacks propositional content. To address the difference between non-cognitive and conceptual experiential activities would require discussion of intentionality and that is a subject both very broad and very deep. It may be sufficient to represent and clarify the distinction that Sellars makes between the "of-ness" of epistemic activities and the "of-ness" of non-epistemic activities.

I have discussed both the logical space of reasons and the fact that epistemic activities occur within that space. Also, I have discussed the fact that accounts of activities which can be explained in virtue of reasons appeal to purposes, rather than to dispositions to respond to differential changes in one's environment. The distinction that Sellars makes is that, while both the "of-ness" of epistemic activities and that of non-epistemic activities are somehow "about", or directed toward, something, only the former are intentional (1963, 155-6). By "intentional activity", Sellars meant an activity that is directed toward something in the former sense of its having reasons and purposes in being directed toward something. That is, even were an instance of such object-directed activity to be a dispositional

response (e.g., an answer to a request to identify one's father), it would be intentional if and only if one could provide, within the logical space of reasons, a justification for the purported knowledge contained in that response (e.g., "because that's Daddy"). The implication is that something is to be considered knowledge about something of a particular sort only if one can (though it need not be the case that one actually tries to) express reasons for having purported knowledge (e.g., "the sky is blue") which, because of its propositionality, purports something (e.g., blueness) to be the case about something else (e.g., the sky).

While non-epistemic activities might be essential in making epistemic activities possible, this neither makes the former any more epistemic (i.e., does not make them into instances of propositional knowledge which can be part of an inferential structure), nor does it make them intentional. Rather, intentionality is exemplified, not by something's being an instance of aboutness-in-general, but because something, for example, the proposition above, is taken to be an epistemic fact about something else, whether the latter is a perceptual whole or an entity whose reality is not dependent on a particular mind. In that case, intentionality is a matter of *epistemic* aboutness, not a matter of aboutness-in-general. The fact that intentionality is a matter of epistemic aboutness means that for some purported knowledge to be about the world or some part of the world, three things have to be the case 1) the purported knowledge has to be propositional, 2) it must be possible to offer reasons (i.e., other facts) for holding the purported knowledge, and 3) it must be known to be a fact about one's world.

While it is fairly clear what suggestion has been offered in response to the issue of what requirements a child must meet to break into language, that suggestion does not account for how it happens that a child breaks into language. Nevertheless, Sellars did not seem to be interested in covering that subject in "Empiricism". The more important point for him was the nature of conceptual, as opposed to non-cognitive, activity. As we have seen, such activity involves 1) being responsible for one's use of language, for being able to have episodes which are motivated by a purpose-oriented, rather than a non-cognitive framework; 2) having an inferential structure in which the activity occurs; and 3) seeing the activity as having aboutness, in the sense of epistemic aboutness. This provides enough background to see how Sellars provides a critique of Quine's naturalized, genetic epistemology.

A Sellarsian Critique of Quine's *Roots of Reference* Account

The myth of the given

Sellars' construct, as I mentioned much earlier, occurs in the context of a destructive critique of certain elements of traditional empiricism.⁷ Those elements which he critiqued constitute what Sellars called "the myth of the given". The notion of the given involves an ostensibly illicit introduction of non-inferential factual knowledge by acquaintance with sense data. The most prevalent version of the given is that "knowledge of [inner] episodes furnishes *premisses* on which empirical knowledge rests on a foundation" (Sellars, 1963, 140) such that the knowledge is fixed as premisses and cannot be intelligibly challenged. That version can be seen to consist of two elements: 1) sensing and 2) a factual content which is independent of other facts. That is, the non-inferential knowledge which is to provide the foundational premisses for empirical conclusions are given in sense data, which themselves have the form of atomic facts. These atomic facts allegedly have content which is independent of all other factual knowledge.

The myth can be refuted by showing first, that sensing is either non-epistemic or epistemic, and, second, that while epistemic activities can carry a factual content, it is not possible that such content could be independent of other facts. Non-epistemic sensing can be characterized as being about, in a non-epistemic sense of aboutness, particulars. Such non-intentional activities, as we saw above, cannot contain any content about things as they are or seem. Inasmuch as sensings, whatever they might be, are about things, they simply stand in some relation to particulars. It may be that sensings causally mediate between concepts and physical objects, as Sellars argues (1963, 161), but that issue need not be discussed here.⁸

⁷ Once taken out of the dialectical structure in which they were presented, Sellars' statements, collected together as they have been in the preceding, no longer seem to be arguments. In their proper context, they have the appearance of moves and counter-moves in a game of chess. When what I have presented as statements are engaged in that context, the strategy employed by Sellars' traditional empiricist opponent fails because Sellars finds a way to check his opponent, over and over. Such a game could go on for ever, but its indefinite continuation requires that Sellars' opponent fail to concede the game, despite his lacking any advantage.

⁸ I do not go into detail because I disagree with Sellars regarding the way he resolves the distinction between sensings and knowings, by way

In light of the discussion above, it is enough to show that even if they are causally prior, sensings are not *logically* prior to epistemic activities. If sensings are non-epistemic, they cannot furnish us with a foundation for empirical knowledge. If they are non-epistemic, they cannot be about facts in such a way as to have any kind of conceptual content. If sensings are epistemic, then it no longer makes sense to talk of sensings as if they are both unanalyzable and, yet, conceptual. If sensings are epistemic activities, then we can give reasons for the propositional concepts they contain, thereby providing an analysis in terms of their inferential relations to other content. Hence, sensings cannot be both unanalyzable and conceptual. Indeed, it may be that, if we want a non-cognitive, non-conceptual place-holder to be ascribed the role of causal mediation, it would be better to keep the notion of sensings as a kind of non-epistemic activity, than to discard it. We should not, however, confuse that notion with notions of epistemic activities.

Secondly, regarding the notion of a factual content which is independent of other facts, little needs to be said given those Sellarsian arguments represented above. The notion of a non-inferential factual content which is acquired independently of other facts, reasons, etc. violates the very idea of our engaging in conceptual activities. In a sense, the notion is self-contradictory. Inasmuch as an epistemic activity occurs within the "logical space of reasons", the claim that a factual content is independent of other facts implies that such content is either not content of an epistemic activity or it must have some special status. That is, if we were to maintain paradoxically that a certain non-inferential and purportedly independent knowing occurs within a conceptual framework, it is not clear which part of this framework it occupies or even in what sense it is part of the conceptual framework. A purported fact which is independent of other facts cannot be a premise, since all other non-inferential knowledge which we take as premisses, in the sense that they also do not occur initially as the consequence of an inference, must be justifiable and, thus, be involved in a valid inference as the conclusion. On the other hand, those who idolize the given would not argue for considering a purportedly atomic non-inferential fact as being a conclusion since that would defeat the point of the given, which is to find a sure *foundation* for empirical knowledge.

of what he calls the "myth of Jones". I will, however, address this issue in detail in the next two chapters.

Alternatively, it might be that the knowing in question is somehow derived from the purposes of an agent whose behavior is motivated within a purposive framework, such that the purported knowledge is claimed to be, in itself, sufficient with respect to reasons, i.e., to be unquestionable. In that case, however, we would seem to be yielding some special status not just to the purported knowledge, but to the person asserting it. That is, the person who wills that the non-inferential factual content be accepted without question is being treated as an authority above and beyond the conceptual framework which defines the membership of our community. It was mentioned in the introductory chapter that there is little agreement about how to draw the distinction between behavior which is based on stable responses to differential changes and behavior which results from moves within a conceptual framework. The topography of the latter realm and all its interior is far from clear, so much so that that lack of clarity alone is sufficient motive for undertaking the current project. Much less unsettled is the territory beyond the conceptual. Hence, it would be more than presumptuous for one to claim priority for one's own knowledge on grounds of *moral* authority. We must conclude that there is no place in the currently charted lands for the notion that a factual content could be independent of other facts.

Quine's naturalized, genetic epistemology

Quine's attempt to establish that reference first occurs as the connection of a linguistic expression to one's experience can now be seen as but a version of the myth of the given. Indeed, sometimes Sellars seems to have been talking directly to Quine (though, of course, more directly to Quine's logical empiricist comrades):

The idea that observation "strictly and properly so-called" is constituted by self-authenticating nonverbal episodes, the authority of which is transmitted to verbal and quasi-verbal performances when these performances are made "in conformity with the semantical rules of the language", is, of course, the heart of the Myth of the Given.
(1963, 169)

The fact that the claim that we associate sentences with our experiences, i.e., that, in learning our first

sentences, "we only have to key [observation sentences] to current episodes" (Quine, 1974, 41),⁹ implies that our experiences are themselves somehow structured prior to learning language.¹⁰ However, even besides that worry, there are other difficulties.

First, there is the problem that for the sentences purportedly associated with experience to be taken as facts, they must be formed within a conceptual framework. Quine's account of purportedly pre-referential observational vocalizations make such associations non-cognitive. In response, Sellars would have argued that "one could not have observational knowledge of *any* fact unless one knew many *other* things as well" (Sellars, 1963, 168).

It is only in taking the pre-language baby steps toward a language, by taking vocalizations seriously, that children begin to learn how concepts are related. It is in virtue of this attitude that it becomes possible for children to develop an inferential structure through attempted use of a language. When children make progress that can be interpreted as a first move within a conceptual framework, an extensive inferential structure has already been developed. The genuine use of language, which includes genuine association of sentences with one's experiences, requires that such a framework already be developed.

Language use does begin, as Quine argued, with reporting. To learn that one is reporting is to learn that one is endorsing one's own associations of sentences to experience, i.e., allowing others to respond to what one says, while allowing nothing else. That endorsement strategy, as we have seen, implies a conceptual framework, rather than one constituted merely of dispositional responses to one's environment.

Second, there is the obstacle for Quine's view that, for some purported knowledge to be about the

⁹ We shall see if Quine's use of "current episodes" is a matter of states relative to a conceptual framework or whether they can be a matter of behavioristic response.

¹⁰ As was argued above, the acquisition of linguistic ability involves the acquisition of conceptual matter and the means to structure it. This allows language learners to conceive of their world and of themselves within that world.

world or some part of the world, it must be known to be a fact about one's world: the taking of an epistemic-aboutness attitude presupposes an intentional capacity. Now, Quine might object to my shouldering him with the idea that he was talking about epistemic activities. He made it fairly clear that he thought the activities were amenable to behavioristic description: differential response, not cognitive adjustments to one's environment. Nonetheless, it seemed clear that he was talking about activities which are ostensibly cognitive. He wrote, at one point, that "[t]he child learns some brief sentences as wholes in the obvious way, by hearing them from adults in the appropriate observable circumstances" (1974, 35). As Sellars' critique of the notion of the given shows us, such a way of "learning" is not so obvious, at least if learning is taken to be more than conditioning. Strangely, it may not be for Quine, however: "an observation sentence is one that *can* be learned by direct conditioning. It is within the scope of standard animal training" (1974, 42).

While Quine believed he was talking about differential response behavior, he was, at the same time, talking about behavior that requires something more. For example, Quine argued the following way: "Suppose [a child] has learned to respond, on demand, in distinctive verbal ways according as red is conspicuously present or not. Can we then say that he has learned to refer to red? No, this is not enough for what I mean by reference" (1974, 91-2). Were Quine to have stopped there, we would applaud what appears to be a recognition of a difference between parrot-like behavior and purposive behavior. It would appear that "learning", in Quine's sense, is not a kind of epistemic activity and would not require a logical space of reasons. To that extent, it might have been said, had Quine stopped at that point, that I have been being unfair to him in accusing him of subscribing to the myth of the given. Unfortunately for him, he continued: "We can credit the child at this point with being able to *discriminate* red, to *recognize* red. . . But to say that he refers to the color would be to impute our ontology to him" (1974, 82). Inasmuch as there really is a case of discrimination or recognition, how could Quine have been intending them to be merely differential responses? Inasmuch as they are merely differential responses, what reason is there to credit the child?

To be fair, there are two ways, then, to approach the completion of Quine's thought: first, we might continue to read him on a behavioristic interpretation, where "discriminate" and "recognize" are meant

as indicating a stable disposition to make differential responses to stimuli; or, second, we might understand "recognize" and "discriminate" to be terms not of a behavioristic vocabulary, but terms signifying that the child was making a report of its experience. Quine has written at times what appears to be consonant with the second reading: "To learn a language is to learn the meaning of its sentences, and hence to learn what observations to count as evidence for and against them" (1974, 38). One would, and should, be led to believe that Quine was, here, talking about moves within a conceptual framework since to know what counts as evidence for something is simply to be able to provide reasons for one's belief in that something. At any rate, to "*recognize* red" is to recognize something as being red and, to that extent, Quine was talking about report-making.

In making reports, one makes propositional claims which are asserted *of* something. The sense of "of-ness" with which I am presently concerned is in the sense of epistemic aboutness (i.e., intentionality). To the extent that Quine was attempting to establish a basis for reference using the training of children to associate sentences with their experiences, he failed to do so. The reason he did not succeed is that, at the time that children learn, in whatever sense of "learn" one likes, to use language to say something *about* their world, they must already have learned a great deal about their world and, hence, have a conceptual framework. Since we have seen that an attitude of endorsement is necessarily prior to mere reporting, which lacks endorsement, association of sentences and experience is not to be taken lightly (by us or by the child). In associating sentences with one's experience, if that association is not, rather, imitation, one must already have the concept of "reference".

The movement of Quine's thought in the procession to reference, cannot be seen as the move from imitative to dispositional (in the behavioristic sense) to cognitive behavior since to imitate is but a particular way of responding differentially to one's environment, and nothing more or less. Rather, the move from imitation to having an epistemic grasp of intentional use of language is a holistic one. Of course, until that move is made by the children themselves, we cannot say what they are doing. Hence, Quine's accurate comment: "to say that he refers to the color would be to impute our ontology to him" (1974, 82).

Moreover, we cannot judge accurately whether a certain child is taking his vocalizations seriously. Nonetheless, when a child has learned to associate sentences with her experience, at that time, we know that the child has already developed an extensive inferential structure, which requires the making of that pre-language move in which the child has begun to take seriously her utterances, intelligible or not. Consequently, Quine would seem to have been reducing the normative aspect of vocalizations, which really are motivated from within a conceptual framework, into natural aspects. To that extent, he was both committing something "of a piece with the so-called 'naturalistic fallacy' in ethics" (Sellars, 1963, 131) and making things difficult for himself. Were he to have recognized that non-inferential reports cannot be made independently of other facts, he would not have suggested that "[o]bservation sentences are the gateway to language" (1974, 41). In the sense in which Quine meant it, early vocalizations are interpreted as passwords which allow entrance through the gates of language. If the vocalizations are of a behavioristic sort, they are rather like passwords which we have been entrusted with prior to there being a gate at all. Once the pre-endorsement attitude is taken, perhaps the posts are then erected. However, there would seem to be no way to recognize that the child has entered the gated community until she stands within, saying, as it were: "I am, therefore, here I am".

In the case that Quine would still refuse to shoulder the burden I have tried to lay on him, his only other option is to say that standard animal conditioning is sufficient for providing language responses appropriate to given occasions. Of course, that answer is unsatisfactory since we are interested in conceptual behavior, not parrot-training. In that case, his account of language development stopped just as things were getting interesting. Moreover, were he to say that much of early language "use" consists of "standard animal training", where referential use does not, he would have had to have donned another burden, that of accounting for how the change occurs. In stopping just as things were getting interesting, he would have been committing a sin of omission. Explanation of mere technical uses of language, such as substitution of intralinguistic expressions and referential substitution, are not sufficient for explanation of that use as a cognitive activity. We should require an account of what is so very different, from discrimination and recognition uses, about that referential use.

Worse, if recognition of colors is not conceptual behavior, then one might argue that behavioristic accounts will work all the way "up". But were this terminative move to be made, we would have to

conclude that, against all appearances, we had not been engaged in fruitful discussion as we had thought. We should be unwilling to reduce interaction within a common conceptual framework (even though certain areas are under dispute) to behavioristic responses to our fellows. To make such a reduction is to end all rational discussion.

The final word

In concluding this section, I will allow Sellars the final word. This chapter has gone toward developing a framework for discussion of what must be excluded, in constructing a definition, from the connotation of meaning. Quine's view on the status of ostensibly non-epistemic and epistemic episodes, or any other variant of the myth of given, must be excluded. It is clear that a pragmatist conception of "meaning" must involve intentionality. This observation, of course, assumes the framework developed in this chapter. To that extent, my taking the notion of intentionality as the limit of "meaning" is especially significant, though perhaps recursively so. The action of taking it as the limit of "meaning" exemplifies recognition, by our being able now to notice that intentionality is part of our framework, that *"instead of coming to have a concept of something because we have noticed that sort of thing, [we find that] to have the ability to notice a sort of thing is already to have the concept of that sort of thing"* (Sellars, 1963, 176).