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Perceptual Knowledge: Explorations and Extensions of the Sellarsian Framework

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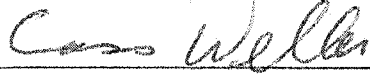
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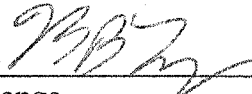
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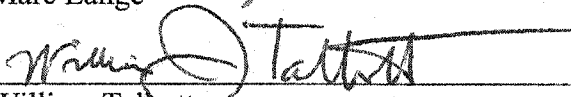

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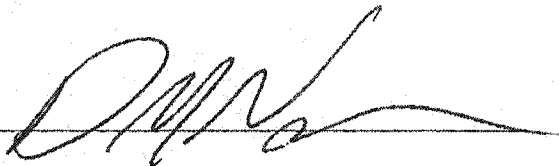

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Abstract

Perceptual Knowledge: Explorations and Extensions of the Sellarsian Framework

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The aim of my thesis is to outline a theory of epistemic justification for beliefs formed by sense perception. The project takes as its starting point the philosophical framework of Wilfrid Sellars. I begin with a discussion of the notion of the epistemological *given* that is appealed to in a wide variety of philosophical theories, and especially in theories of perceptual knowledge. Sellars famously claimed that "the given is a myth." However, there does not seem to always be common understanding about what givenness is. I construct a novel and useful way of characterizing givenness that both helps us to be able to identify different varieties of givenness in different theories, and enables us to see why Sellars thinks that it is a myth. I use this analysis to explain how Sellars would respond to some recent proponents of givenness. I also examine Sellars's own positive account of perceptual knowledge which avoids the given. I argue against common misunderstandings of Sellars's view, including the idea that Sellars is opposed to the idea of so-called "foundational" or "basic" beliefs. After separating the important insights from the parts of Sellars's view that are objectionable, I outline a theory of perceptual knowledge called *perceptual responsibilism* that is Sellarsian in spirit while diverging from Sellars's own view at some key points. At the heart of the view I defend is the idea that my being justified in believing (e.g.,) that there's a cat in front of me is due to the fact that I am epistemically responsible for its being the case that that judgment is likely to be correct. The account incorporates elements of externalism while still capturing what I take to be one of the leading insights of internalism, namely, that epistemology involves a deontological sort of normativity.

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Without her inspiration many years ago, I would likely have remained a drama major and would now be an unemployed actor instead of a philosopher.

DEDICATION

For my mother Wendy Davis whose unfailing support, encouragement, and faith in me has meant more to me than I can possibly say.

And for my father Bradford R. Nixon who was, in his own way, also an ideas person. He died in 1998 just after I finished my master's degree, but I think he would have liked this stuff.

Introduction: Explorations and Extensions of the Sellarsian Framework

This dissertation explores the issue of perceptual knowledge from a Sellarsian perspective. Let me try to say what I mean.

First of all, though I say *knowledge*, what I am really interested in is *justification*. I'll illustrate with an example, using Jones, our representative average anybody. Today Jones is on a camping trip. A deer steps out from the brush directly in front of him and he exclaims, "Wow, look at that! It's a deer!" My question is this: what is it in virtue of which Jones' belief, formed by visual perception, is epistemically justified (licensed, warranted, etc.)? What makes it epistemically reasonable for him to believe that there is a deer in front of him? That's the question I hope to have gone some way toward answering by the time this dissertation is finished.

Now when I say that I am approaching this subject from a *Sellarsian* perspective, I am of course referring to the perspective of Wilfrid Sellars. Sellars had a particular way of looking at things, a philosophical system, a framework that was intricate and vast, touching almost every sub-discipline within philosophy. Just the task of exploring and making clear even a small part of this framework would be an important and worthwhile one, not least because Sellars, for all his influence, is a notoriously difficult writer. In part this is because his views on one subject are often inextricably tied up with his views on many other subjects. It has been said that to

understand one part of the Sellarsian system, you have to understand it all.¹ And

Sellars himself said of his own articles,

...each paper, whichever its central theme, attempted to deal not only with it, but with its place in the scheme of things entire. The inevitable result was that the advantage for the reader of a detailed treatment of a specific topic was diluted by the necessity of grasping its connection with an encompassing, but highly schematic, background theory. Thus each paper presupposed all the others, as would an atlas published seriatim, or a set of dinnerware picked up piece by piece at the bank.²

But the job of setting out and making clear the entire Sellarsian system is one that would be way too big to be accomplished in a single dissertation. (In my opinion doing this adequately would take something more like an encyclopedia.) So I focus just on the issue of perceptual knowledge. And this means that I have the difficult task of trying to render intelligible one part of the Sellarsian system without tackling all of it.

But my project is not simply to explain Sellars' views on perceptual knowledge, important and worthwhile though such a project would be. For I want not only to explore this framework, but to extend it, to contribute to it. Here is the general sort of approach I take in this dissertation:

Suppose that the Sellarsian system, in its general outlines at least, is more or less on target. Suppose, for example, we agree that, as Sellars says, the given is a myth, and that holistic Sellarsian semantics is fundamentally correct, and that his motivations for rejecting reliabilism are basically sound, and that having concepts cannot be radically divorced from having a (public) language, and that epistemic justification is irreducibly normative... (etc., etc.!) Now, having adopted all this as

¹ Rosenberg (1990)

background, what are we to make of Sellars' positive view of perceptual knowledge? Are there defects that can be addressed? Can the view be modified, changed, improved upon? I will in fact suggest an extension to the Sellarsian framework -- an alternative theory of perceptual knowledge -- that is in some ways very different from Sellars' own particular view on perceptual knowledge.

The very roughest outline of the project looks something like this: First, render intelligible those parts of the Sellarsian system that bear most directly on an understanding of his view of perceptual knowledge. Explain his theory of perceptual knowledge and what I find unsatisfactory about it. Finally, develop an alternative that operates within the same general framework.

The project of exploring and extending the Sellarsian framework is very different from the project of trying to argue for it. The latter project may well have a wider appeal, since for those who think that the Sellarsian way of thinking about things is fundamentally mistaken, the task of contributing to this system may seem like a fruitless intellectual exercise. On the other hand, there are a lot of convinced Sellarsians out there who will take issue not only with the alternative theory of perceptual knowledge I develop in chapter three, but also, I feel quite sure, with the interpretation of Sellars that I give in chapters one and two. For even convinced Sellarsians disagree on how to understand Sellars. Thus there is important work to be done on that score. Of course, the task of explicating the Sellarsian system cannot be *entirely* separated from the work of defending it, since part of the work of making

² See the preface of Sellars' *Naturalism and Ontology* (1979b).

clear what Sellars thinks will necessarily involve saying *why* he thinks it. But if I do not, for the most part anyway, undertake to defend the Sellarsian framework, it is certainly not because I think it is too obvious to need defending. Indeed, I should think that many parts of this system will appear initially quite counter-intuitive. I shall assume these things not because they are too obvious to bother arguing for, but rather, for the sake of the larger argument, for the sake of exploring what we can make of such a system and to see whether a different theory of perceptual knowledge might be compatible with the rest of it. There are obviously other systems, other ways of thinking about these issues; ways which might well, at the end of the day, turn out to be superior to the Sellarsian perspective. If I neglect these other perspectives, it is not because I think them not worth discussing or obviously wrong but because (a) in a dissertation it is important to pick one's battles and not try to take on the world, and (b) to be frank, my expertise lies elsewhere. Thus my narrow focus is aimed at the Sellarsian epistemology of perception and my disputes are primarily with fellow Sellarsians, for that's what I know best. I shall, however, indicate along the way the points at which Sellars's critics take exception and try to point out some of the various explanatory costs and benefits.

Now back to the question at hand: what is it that makes Jones justified in believing that there is a deer in front of him? Prior to say, the mid-1960's³, the predominant view in epistemology was that being justified in believing something is a

³ I'm thinking of Gettier (1963) and Quine's (1951) "Two Dogma's of Empiricism" and (1969) "Epistemology Naturalized" as part of what began the naturalized epistemology

matter of having good reasons to believe it. But if having good reasons means having other beliefs that you could potentially cite in support of the target belief, then perception doesn't, initially anyway, seem to fit this model very well. If you ask Jones why he thinks it is reasonable to believe that there's a deer in front of him, he might not have any beliefs on hand that he could cite in support of it. Instead he might be apt to just point at it: "*Look, the deer is standing right there!*" Of course, there is a long tradition of trying to make perceptual beliefs fit the model by understanding them as being formed as inferences (or something *like* inferences) from, and thus justified by, some more basic level of perceptual cognition. This more basic level of perceptual cognition is of course *the apprehension of a sensory given*. The notion of the given is the primary focus of my chapter one.

I want to develop an account of perceptual knowledge that respects the intuition that there is something distinctive about the justification of perceptual beliefs, different from, for example, the justification of scientific theories.

Chapter Outline

The first two chapters are mainly devoted to getting the requisite parts of the Sellarsian framework on the table. In chapter one I discuss the notion of *the given*. Sellars' rejection of the given substantially shapes his theory of positive knowledge and mine. So it is vital that we get clear about what givenness consists in. (Part of this task is also continued in the section at the end of chapter one where I take a look at

movement that moved away from the idea that the central notion in justification is *reasons to believe*.

three recent defenders of givenness. This will both give us an opportunity to expose what I see as mistaken understandings of givenness, but also to further our understanding of givenness by demonstrating how Sellars would respond to such accounts.)

The main goal of chapter two is to get Sellars' positive theory of perceptual knowledge clearly in view and to say what parts of it I find healthy and what parts can be improved upon. But a lot of background work has to be done in that chapter before we can get there. A hefty portion of chapter two concerns a certain dilemma incarnations of which can be found in many different areas of philosophy and the avoidance of which fundamentally influences Sellars' positions in each of those areas. The dilemma represents a crucial crossbeam in the Sellarsian framework. I also here set out the general outlines of Sellarsian semantics, his views on what makes a word have meaning, what it is in virtue of which someone has a concept, why a person's sayings have cognitive content, etc.. That's a very big subject, but without having the basic gist of Sellars' thinking there, it will be difficult to fully appreciate his theory of perceptual knowledge. And since there will not be time for anything like a defense of these ways of thinking, this will be yet another instance in which we will have to assume for the sake of being able to engage in the issue at hand (perceptual knowledge).

Chapters three, four, and five are devoted to developing my alternative picture of the justification of perceptual beliefs, *perceptual responsibilism*. The basic outlines of the view are explicated in chapter three. The account I develop is heavily

influenced by the writings of Gilbert Ryle. I explain how my view is different from Sellars', and how it makes up for what I see as deficiencies in his account.

Chapter four concerns the issue of what can be perceived and what cannot. I draw distinctions that help us to understand what it would be, given the framework I develop, to call something an observational predicate.

In chapter five, I place my view within the internalist-externalist debate, arguing that once certain misconceptions are dispelled, a certain kind of externalism can in fact accommodate what I locate as a central motivation for internalism. Thus perceptual responsibilism turns out to be an externalist view motivated by internalist concerns.⁴

The last chapter is a short summary of perceptual responsibilism as it has been developed in the three preceding chapters.

⁴ The view I defend is *not* motivated by, for example, a desire to circumvent Gettier problems. Incidentally, I side step the Gettier issue by making no claims about whether something more than the justification my account outlines would be needed to convert a true perceptual belief into knowledge. Though I will often speak of "perceptual knowledge" it is really only the *justification* part I am interested in. Although it is easy to see that my account will make Gettier cases less likely than some traditional internalist accounts, the people who construct such cases are too tricky for me to have any confidence that my account would eliminate *any* possible Gettier case.

Chapter One: The Given

In this chapter and the next, I will explore the Sellarsian framework, from an insider's perspective, so to speak. The chapters beyond that are devoted to an extension of that framework. Here the goal is to understand the Sellarsian way of thinking about things, and to make it clear what a Sellarsian would say about alternatives. As I stressed in the introduction, this is not, of course, to say that the Sellarsian way of looking at things is the only way of looking at things. Not at all. But it is crucial that we have a more complete understanding of the Sellarsian perspective since my own positive account is built upon it. I must emphasize that more important to my project than defending this framework against all possible alternatives is simply rendering it intelligible, especially in light of common misunderstandings of it.⁵

Many traditional accounts of perceptual knowledge⁶ have appealed to the notion of the given. Wilfrid Sellars famously argued, in "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind" (hereafter, EPM) that the given is a myth.⁷ I agree with him. My positive account of perceptual knowledge cannot be properly understood without

⁵ Among common misunderstandings worthy of mentioning at the outset, I would include: (a) that Sellars thinks that all justification is inferential (that Sellars is, in one sense of the term, a *coherentist*), (b) that the given is just the idea of a non-propositional or non-conceptual justifier, and (c) that the given is just the idea of non-inferential justification. There are others.

⁶ Although I will often talk of *perceptual knowledge*, my interest is primarily the *justification* of perceptual beliefs.

⁷ Sellars (1956).

understanding what the given is and why it is a myth. That is the primary purpose of the current chapter.

In the recent years there has been a surge of renewed activity and interest in the issue of the given. While some philosophers⁸ have written as though it has been conclusively shown by Sellars that the given is a myth, a number of other philosophers have recently come to the defense of the given, claiming that the arguments of Sellars and his disciples⁹ do not succeed. Although I agree with Sellars, I cannot find it surprising that many others have failed to be convinced. Some of Sellars's arguments in EPM are oblique. And it has been said¹⁰ that to properly understand a part of Sellars's philosophy you have to understand all of it. And, as one defender of givenness puts it, "Sellars never specifies precisely what the Myth of the Given *is*. Tracing Sellars's dialectic, the reader gets the sense that the target repeatedly shifts."¹¹ In EPM, Sellars goes chasing down givenness in various forms as it appears in different philosophical views, some concerning the justification of perceptual beliefs, others concerning meaning and concept acquisition. If one does not isolate what the heart of the given really is, it can be hard not to think that Sellars simply castigates as an appeal to givenness any philosophical doctrine with which he disagrees. But I will

⁸ See, for example, Brandom (1994), (1998), McDowell (1994), (1998), and Davidson (1986).

⁹ In a list of Sellarsian disciples one should certainly include: Jay Rosenberg, Robert Brandom, Richard Rorty, and John McDowell. (There are many more!) This is, not of course, to say that any of these people agree with Sellars on everything. But certainly one can detect a general Sellarsian drift in their thinking about certain philosophical issues.

¹⁰ For example, by Jay Rosenberg (1990).

¹¹ Bonevac (2002).

argue that there is a unifying principle to givenness. Specifying it will allow us to see what various strains of givenness have in common. It will also help to give us the resources to challenge new theories that buy into givenness that Sellars does not explicitly consider. Once we understand the heart of givenness, and why Sellars rejects it, it will not be so easy for philosophers like Alston, Schantz, BonJour, Bonevac, Moser, Fales, Robinson, Peacocke, or Evans¹² (to name a few) to claim, "Sellars may have refuted Carnap, Schlick, and Chisholm but he never said anything about *my* brand of givenness!" And indeed, that's rather the spirit in which some of the these new proponents of givenness have been springing up.

The basic structure of this chapter is as follows. First, I will explain what the given is, what it means to say that something is given or that a theory buys into givenness. Second I will explain Sellars's reasons for thinking that the given is a myth. Third, we will take a look at three recent attempts to defend the given, and I will show why they fail. Finally, I will briefly look at a number of other varieties of givenness, some of which are not as commonly discussed in the literature. I will explain how each is an instance of givenness, and show how the general considerations about why the given is a myth apply to the specific cases. Along the way in this chapter we will pick up a number of important distinctions that will be useful in setting out Sellars's positive view of perceptual justification in the next chapter.

¹² Alston (2002), Schantz (2001), BonJour (2000), (2001), Bonevac (2002), Moser (1985b), Fales (1996), Robinson (1975), Peacocke (1998), Evans (1982).

What is givenness?

One of the things that makes it difficult to give an all encompassing characterization of givenness is that there are many different varieties of givenness, and givenness plays different roles in different theories. I want to start by suggesting that we divide the philosophical views which employ some element of givenness into two general sorts. On the one hand we have theories of knowledge, or (to focus on the aspect of knowledge in which the given is supposed to play a role) theories of epistemic *justification* (warrant, epistemic entitlement, positive epistemic status, etc.) of belief. On the other hand, to be distinguished from theories which employ the given to help answer questions about knowledge and justification, are those theories which employ the given to help answer questions such as, "How are states with intentionality (e.g., *thoughts*) possible?", "When do two words mean the same thing?", "Can dogs think?", "Is artificial intelligence possible?", and the like. We can lump these under the heading of issues of *intentionality*. One of the reasons that it is useful to make this distinction is that (as we'll shortly see) attempts to characterize the essence of givenness often fit theories employing givenness on the *knowledge and justification* side of the distinction, but do not fit as well the theories employing givenness on the *intentionality and meaning* side.

Before doing anything else, I want to give two examples of givenness. I don't want to claim that these representative samples exhaust the kinds of givenness. But it will nevertheless be helpful to have some concrete examples of givenness in front of us before launching into more abstract characterizations of it. The first example

involves givenness playing a role in the *justification* of belief, while the second is on the other side of our distinction above and involves the given playing a role in the explanation of concept acquisition.

Example 1: *A sense-datum theory*. According to the theory I have in mind, the fact that my belief that there is something red in front of me is justified is explained by the fact that I am directly apprehending, or *sensing*, a red sense-datum. The red datum itself is the object *given* to me in my visual experience. My sensing of the sense datum puts me in direct contact with it (as opposed to merely having some belief about it). My sensing or direct apprehension of the sense-datum is an episode which presupposes no conceptual capacities. This direct apprehension of it is what justifies, or in some way contributes to the positive epistemic status of, my ordinary perceptual belief that there is something red in front of me.

As a specific example of a view in this general vicinity, take the view expressed by C.I. Lewis in *Mind and The World Order*.¹³ There Lewis defends the idea that all empirical knowledge must ultimately depend on apprehensions of what is given in experience. (This much he thinks is more or less the very *definition* of empiricism.¹⁴) The view may be understood like this. Suppose Irving is staring at a ripe red tomato, and he *believes* that it is a tomato. What justifies that belief? Lewis's

¹³ Lewis (1929). Lewis's understanding of the givenness changes a bit in his later work, *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation* (1946). The earlier work sometimes stresses that the given is ineffable (e.g., p. 112) and thus apprehensions of it do not count as knowledge (p. 37), whereas in the later work apprehensions of givenness do constitute knowledge (in fact, they are known with *certainty*) and are expressible in what he calls "expressive judgments" -- judgments such as "It looks as though there is a red object here", or "I see what *looks like* granite steps before me" (p. 179).

answer is that Irving, in virtue of having his eyes open, in good light, etc., has a certain sensory event take place -- a patch of red in his visual field. Lewis calls these repeatable sensory properties the *qualia*.¹⁵ (I think it is useful to imagine Irving as though he has a little movie screen in his mind and that having a red sense-datum presented to him is a matter of a red picture being projected on his inner movie screen.) Now on Lewis's view the direct contact that Irving initially has with this sensory event is nonconceptual: the sensory event is not sensed *as* being red or *as* being like a tomato, or in any way that uses concepts. Because the sensing of the given item involves no conceptualization, it "is not the subject of any possible error."¹⁶ But then the mind *interprets* what is given to it in experience by forming a *belief* that "that is a tomato." This interpretation is justified by the direct, non-conceptual, non-representational contact with that sensory patch (the patch that Irving subsequently interprets as being tomato-like.)

Example 2: *A Russellian theory of concept acquisition*.¹⁷ Consider the theory that one acquires the general concept of, say, *resemblance* -- the concept of one thing's resembling another -- by having certain items which resemble each other (say, colored patches) *given* to one in experience. Once one is directly aware of resembling particulars in one's visual field (in virtue of their being given) , one can then abstract

¹⁴ See the opening paragraphs of Lewis (1952).

¹⁵ Lewis (1929), p, 60ff, p.121.

¹⁶ Lewis (1929), p.121.

¹⁷ Inspired by the remarks Russell makes in chapter X ("On Our Knowledge of Universals") of *The Problems of Philosophy*, (1912). It's clear that what he says there about how we "learn to come to be acquainted" with a universal F-ness can be understood as a theory about how we come to have the general concept of F.

from them the general idea of resemblance. Just as the patches and their colors are themselves are given, so their resemblances to each other are also given in experience. Imagine a baby who has a number of green patches in her visual field. She is directly aware of these patches and so is also directly aware of their resembling each other. Because of this latter direct awareness, she is able to get the idea of something's resembling something else.

I emphasize again that these examples are not meant to be exhaustive of the kinds of givenness that there are. Both of these, for example, involve a given element in perceptual experience. But theories which buy into the given needn't be concerned with sense perception. For example, a Cartesian rationalist account of our knowledge of so-called synthetic a priori truths would also most likely be a variety of givenness, though it does not concern sense perception. (We will look at such an example later in the chapter.)

As our next step toward getting an abstract characterization of givenness, let me present some (what we might call) *grammatical* considerations: *How to Appropriately Speak of the Given*. The idea of something's being given naturally goes with the idea of a *taking*. (Someone does not successfully *give* me a present unless I *take* it.) To say that some item is given is to say that the item is there for the taking. The *givenness* of some item (generally) consists in its being *available* to be taken; its givenness is its *takeability*, so to speak. Typically (but not always) a taking is understood as an *act* and the item being given is the object of that act.¹⁸ Now, of

¹⁸ See EPM §2.

course, we want to get clear on what *takings* are. Epistemologists interested in the given in fact rarely talk in terms of 'takings'.¹⁹ We are more likely to hear them talking in terms of having a *direct awareness of*, *acquaintance with*, *direct apprehension of*, *grasp of*, or simply (in the case of items given in sense perception) *sensing* the given item. Sometimes philosophers mean slightly different things by these terms, but often they mean them as different ways of getting at the same sort of relation between the mind and the given. They are different ways of talking about takings. Different takings play different roles in different theories that buy into givenness. As I mentioned above, that's another reason why it can be difficult to nail down the heart of givenness: the given and its takings are put to different uses in different theories, and that makes it hard (but not impossible) to specify the given (and its taking) by its role.

I want to start, in fact, with a very vague and metaphorical way of specifying the role of the given. Consider the simple thought, to which I think proponents and opponents alike would agree, that givenness involves the idea of an *unmoved mover*.²⁰ If we can cash out that metaphor and say in non-metaphorical terms what it is for something to *move* something and what it is to be *unmoved*, we might be able to find our way to a suitable abstract characterization of givenness. What plays the role of the

¹⁹ In fact, a word of caution: though Chisholm is a famous defender of givenness, he introduces the term *perceptual taking* to refer to something (a perceptual *judgment*) that is *not* a taking in the above sense. (See Chisholm (1957), and (1989), p.41) In place of what I will often be referring to as takings, Chisholm uses terms like 'awareness', 'apprehension', and of course the 'self-presentingness' of a self-presenting state.

²⁰ Chisholm (1977), p.25 mentions the directly evident (that is Chisholm's label for what is given) as the "prime mover that moves itself" -- that is the sort of imagery I have in mind.

unmoved mover is the taking, the apprehension of, or acquaintance with the given item.

Before getting to my own attempt to make good on the promise of this metaphor, I want to quickly set out three common understandings of the essence of givenness, each of which I think is mistaken but could be understood as ways of cashing out the metaphor of the unmoved mover.

One common interpretation of givenness is the idea of a non-justified justifier of belief.²¹ By "non-justified", I do not of course mean "poorly justified", but rather something like "not in need of justification", or perhaps "not the sort of thing which can be *either* ill or well justified".) Thus on this view to "move" is to justify and to be "unmoved" is not to require any justification from something else. I do not locate the heart of givenness here, though this can certainly be a variety of givenness. The purpose of the idea of non-justified justifiers is to play a role in a theory of *knowledge*, and presumably to stop familiar regresses of justification that theories of knowledge often face. But in trying to get at the core of givenness, it is important to keep in mind that Sellars thinks that theories of concept acquisition and theories of abstract entities and many other sorts of theories besides just a theory of *knowledge* can buy into givenness. Givenness may be employed in theories about (for instance) what it is to even *have a belief* -- whether or not that belief is justified or counts as knowledge -- just as much as it may be employed in theories about what it is for beliefs to be

²¹ BonJour (1985) p.78 is a good example of someone who identifies givenness with the idea of the non-justified justifier.

justified. This will help us to avoid focussing exclusively on the role that givenness plays in theories of knowledge or justification.

The idea of the given as an non-justified justifier is familiar in two forms, a *non-propositional justifier* and a *non-conceptual justifier*. (Sometimes these will be referred to under the heading of non-propositional or non-conceptual *knowledge*.)

The idea behind the non-propositional justifier is that if some state or episode is non-propositional (in particular, if it is not a *belief*), then it can have no truth value and neither can it have a positive or negative justificatory status. The idea here is that only propositional items can have any justificatory status at all, and thus the non-propositional justifier would fit the bill as an non-justified justifier.

The idea behind the non-conceptual justifier is the same as the non-propositional justifier:²² something which is non-conceptual is "unmoved" because it is not the sort of thing that can be ill or well justified, and thus no story needs to be told about it how it is justified, unlike the belief that it is supposed to justify. Again, the idea of the non-conceptual justifier can be one variety of givenness, (or even one *family* of kinds of givenness), and perhaps even the most common form. (In fact, it is common enough that a bit later I will devote a section to discussing it.) But when I explain what I take to be the heart of givenness, we shall see that the notion of the non-conceptual justifier is not that heart. We must remind ourselves, after all, of the many

²² Although some people use "non-propositional" and "non-conceptual" nearly synonymously, there are clearly non-propositional acts that are conceptual, for example, thinking of the square root of two.

different philosophical notions that can buy into givenness, many of which do not (directly and obviously anyway) concern justification.

Of the various attempts in the literature to characterize the given, the one provided by Willem deVries and Timm Triplett comes very close to capturing the core idea of givenness in a way that would unify the many varied kinds of givenness.²³ It is worth quoting them at length:

The relation of the given to the person for whom something is given is also described in several ways. The person, it might be said, knows the given directly or immediately. Additional locutions... are that the person *apprehends* the given, *grasps* it, is *aware of* it, or is *acquainted with* it.

The key features of this knowledge of [or apprehension of, grasp of, awareness of, or acquaintance with] the given are (1) that it is *epistemically independent*, that is, this positive epistemic status is not derived from some other epistemic state; and (2) that it is *epistemically efficacious* -- that is, that it can provide positive epistemic support to other elements within a person's epistemic system or can enhance the epistemic status of such elements.

In order to cover all the cases, this description deliberately abstracts away from (1) what the nature is of the element said to be given, (2) what it is specifically for something to have positive epistemic status or to provide such status to something else, (3) whether that which is given is propositionally structured, and of course, (4) how this knowledge, certainty, or apprehension is to be more specifically characterized. Different versions of givenism result from filling out this abstract framework.²⁴

I think the idea of a taking of the given as something which is both epistemically efficacious and epistemically independent is on the right track. These would provide the cash value for the metaphorical notions of "moving" and "being unmoved", respectively, in the idea of the given as unmoved mover. However, as refreshingly broad as this characterization is, it seems in some respects still not broad enough. deVries and Triplett are, perhaps, focusing exclusively on the given *qua* its

²³ deVries and Triplett (2000).

²⁴ deVries & Triplett (2000), p. xxvi.

role in the justification of beliefs, and not, for instance, on the given as it appears in accounts of concept acquisition and possession.

Take the following idea, which Sellars specifically says is a variety of the myth of the given:

There is a source of the Myth of the Given to which even philosophers who are suspicious of the whole idea of *inner* episodes can fall prey. [This is the idea that] the process of teaching a child to use language is that of teaching it to discriminate elements within a logical space of particulars, universals, facts, etc., of which it is already indiscriminatingly aware, and to associate these discriminated elements with verbal symbols.²⁵

The first thing to note is that Sellars doesn't seem to be specifically interested in the issue of the justification of beliefs here; that does not seem to be the crucial issue on which the idea's being an episode of the myth of the given turns. Now one might claim that even if Sellars does not come clean about his real motivations for castigating this theory as myth-ridden, the only reason that Sellars could have for thinking that this theory of language learning is an episode of the myth is the fact of the underlying connections that he sees between having a language and being able to justify beliefs. I do not deny these connections (and we will see this in more detail in the next chapter) but I think a better explanation can be given for why this theory of language learning buys into givenness than simply assimilating these indiscriminating awarenesses to nonjustified justifiers.

²⁵ EPM §30, "The Logic of 'Means'"

Secondly, deVries and Triplett characterize the takings (the knowledge or apprehensions, etc. of the given) as having *positive epistemic status*.²⁶ It is not clear what they mean by this. They might mean positive *justificatory* status, where this would mean that they think that apprehensions of the given must have a status analogous to that of a justified belief: the apprehension is an episode that it is epistemically *reasonable* to have (or something like that).²⁷ If this is what they mean, then the above example from Sellars does not well fit their model of givenness because the episode of *taking* in that example (the indiscriminated awareness) is not characterized as having anything like positive justificatory status.²⁸ The reason that this is not a happy interpretation is that deVries and Triplett rightly take apprehensions of the given to be non-propositional episodes and it is hard to make sense of the idea that something non-propositional has the sort of positive justificatory status that beliefs can have. It may be that by "positive epistemic status" they simply mean that the apprehension of the given is *epistemically efficacious*. (In this case, characterizing the

²⁶ They also seem refer to the apprehension of the given as an *epistemic state*, and we might wonder what they mean by this as well. Soon I'll introduce my own gloss on "epistemic" and it will be quite clear that takings of the given are *non-epistemic*.

²⁷ This uncharitable interpretation finds some support in the fact that in that same paragraph, when glossing epistemic efficaciousness, they use the phrase "can enhance epistemic status", where it is relatively clear that they have in mind something like "can increase the positive justificatory status." Thus it is possible to construe the reference to apprehensions of the given as having positive epistemic status to mean that these apprehensions have positive justificatory status.

²⁸ For another example where Sellars is clear that the apprehension of the given does not have to itself have positive epistemic status, see Sellars (1979) §22: "One might accordingly argue that the self-presentingness of self-presenting states is a 'prime mover unmoved' (to borrow Chisholm's useful metaphor) of epistemic authority, i.e., that the direct apprehension or apprehendability of states-of-affairs is a source of evidentness or warrant, but itself neither warranted nor unwarranted."

apprehension as epistemically *independent* amounts to saying that the apprehension's ability to confer positive justificatory status on other states or episodes is not derived from some other epistemic state.)

A couple of points about the notion of epistemic independence. Sellars is a holist about knowledge: he argues that all knowledge presupposes other knowledge. (A substantial portion of chapter two will be devoted to this issue.) One might think that this by itself would show that nothing characterized as *knowledge* -- in particular no putative taking characterized as a *knowing* of the given item -- could ever be epistemically independent. There is an ambiguity here. A person (for example deVries and Triplett above) who characterizes a taking of the given as constituting *knowledge* of the given (he might call it, for example, "knowledge by acquaintance" with the given item) does not use "knowledge" in the same sense that Sellars does when Sellars claims that all knowledge presupposes other knowledge. When Sellars espouses his holism about knowledge, he has in mind a sense of knowledge such that *knowing* implies *justifiedly believing*. But when the givenist calls the apprehension of the given a case of *knowledge* of the given, the givenist is *not* claiming that the apprehension is a *justified belief* about the given. The givenist uses a stipulated sense of *knowledge* quite different than the ordinary usage that implies belief. As Sellars notes, "the phrase 'knowledge by acquaintance' recommends itself as a useful metaphor for this stipulated sense of *know* and, like other useful metaphors, has congealed into a technical term."²⁹ He points this out in order that we not confuse the

²⁹ EPM §4 (the last sentence before §5)

givenist's stipulated sense of *know* with the ordinary sense. (Below I will introduce the notion of an *epistemic fact*, and S's directly apprehending some given item -- even if this is referred to as S's having "knowledge" of the given item -- will *not* count as an epistemic fact. If we don't keep the givenist's stipulated sense of *know* separate from the ordinary notion, it will sound paradoxical when I claim that S's having knowledge of the given is not an epistemic fact.) For these reasons I'll try to resist characterizing takings of the given as *knowings*.

Another point about epistemic independence needs to be clarified. Suppose we have a putative case of givenness in which S has a taking *t* which is supposed to be epistemically efficacious because it justifies S's belief that *p*. Obviously *t* will not be able to justify the belief that *p* unless S *has* that belief. Now suppose (as Sellars thinks, and as Alston happily concedes) that having this belief presupposes that S has lots of other beliefs and even other knowledge. A case like this might prompt one to say something like, "that taking can only be epistemically efficacious if S has all this other knowledge (since that is required for S to have the belief to be justified by that taking). Thus that taking doesn't look very epistemically *independent* to me; it presupposes other knowledge in order to justify..." That's not quite right. First of all, it is the *belief* that presupposes the other knowledge, not the *taking*. Typically the taking is held to be the sort of thing that could occur even if the person had no beliefs. Secondly, although it is true that the taking cannot justify the belief unless S *has* the belief, an explanation of why the belief is justified (if this is indeed a case of givenness) would not point to all this other knowledge that is presupposed by S's

having the belief. Rather, the explanation of why the belief is justified would point to the taking, *t*. Thus (a) it is not right to say that the taking presupposes other knowledge, and (b) it is not right to say that justificatory work is being done by this presupposed knowledge as opposed to the taking itself. Thus even if all belief presupposes other knowledge, and even if (as is obviously true) a taking cannot justify a belief unless the person *has* this belief, this does not imply that the taking is not epistemically independent. Alston provides a case that demonstrates something like this.³⁰ He agrees that takings (he doesn't use the term 'takings', but calls them *appearings* or *lookings*) are quite often "blended with subsequent conceptualization,"³¹ where this might mean (depending on one's understanding of what *conceptualization* involves) that these takings are often accompanied by or blended with states that do presuppose knowledge. Suppose for the sake of the argument that takings are *always* accompanied by states that are conceptual or presuppose knowledge. That would still not show either that the takings themselves presuppose knowledge (or conceptualized states), or that what is really doing the justificatory work is this other knowledge, as opposed to the taking itself. They could still be held to be epistemically independent. These are lessons that will be important to keep in mind when I construct my replacement notions for 'epistemically independent' and 'epistemically efficacious'.

There is something on the right track about setting up the taking of the given as something that is epistemically efficacious yet independent. However these notions

³⁰ See Alston (2002). I discuss this paper in more detail toward the end of this chapter.

seem too closely tied to the justification of beliefs, and as we have seen, this puts us in jeopardy of leaving out other views that buy into givenness. So I want to replace these notions with ones that play an analogous role but that will be able to capture the widest possible array of myth-ridden views. My way of characterizing the heart of givenness will follow Sellars³² in employing the idea of an *epistemic fact*,³³ so before I go any further, I need to spend some time saying what I mean by 'epistemic fact'.

One might guess (incorrectly it turns out) that by 'epistemic fact' I would simply mean some fact involving someone's knowing something.³⁴ But in fact, my characterization of epistemic facts will seize on the idea that epistemology for Sellars is a discipline that trades in *norms* -- epistemic norms. Epistemic norms are norms that govern epistemic behavior. And by epistemic behavior I especially mean behaviors like accepting, rejecting, and maintaining beliefs, or withholding judgment, but also behaviors like inferring, weighing evidence, seeing relations among beliefs, and thinking of creative ways to make sense of inconsistencies. Even the very notion of *belief* itself involves at least the normative idea of being *committed* to a stance or

³¹ Alston (2002), p. 83.

³² EPM §5.

³³ When I talk of epistemic *facts* here, I am not so much interested in the idea of certain states of affairs *obtaining* as I am in the idea of focusing on certain *kinds* of states of affairs, whether they obtain or not. In fact, I might use 'states of affairs' instead of 'facts' except that 'facts' is more consonant with Sellarsian terminology, and 'states of affairs' is a somewhat more awkward phrase.

³⁴ However I suspect that that standard and intuitive understanding of what an epistemic fact is will more or less coincide with my understanding of it. My alternative understanding may turn out to be more of a matter of a difference in emphasis or focus than anything else.

position. This is a way in which a belief is norm-governed that is separate from the additionally normative fact that one might be *entitled* to that commitment.³⁵

So here is how I want to understand what an epistemic fact is: An epistemic fact is one that involves someone's being sensitive to, or governed or guided by, epistemic norms in some way. (In the next chapter we'll see that there are different theories on how a norm is to be understood as *operative* in someone's epistemic behavior, so we will want to qualify this a bit and say that the norm is operative *in the right way*, or that it is *appropriately* operative in their behavior.) We will say more about the idea of epistemology's involving normativity after we've said a bit more about the myth of the given. Until then we will have to work with a somewhat intuitive notion of what it means for something to involve epistemic norms.

Now we can see that there are a whole host of concepts which we can call *epistemic* concepts in the sense that they involve epistemic norms, epistemic facts. Justification is an obvious one. The fact that someone is epistemically justified is obviously an epistemic fact about him, since being justified in believing something is a matter of being governed by standards or norms that dictate what, in that person's circumstances it is reasonable to believe.

Now before going on to say what other concepts Sellars would think are *epistemic* in this sense of involving epistemic norms, I want to stop right here and call attention to the important fact that if one is disinclined toward the Sellarsian system -- if, in particular, one wants to defend the given -- Sellars's insistence on the normativity

³⁵ The talk of belief in terms of *commitment* and justification in terms of *entitlement* is

of epistemology would be an excellent point on which to object. For the idea that epistemology is, as much as ethics, a discipline that deals in norms³⁶, is an idea that not only is a fundamental and much relied upon idea within the Sellarsian framework, it goes more or less unargued for by Sellars.³⁷ Someone who, for instance, was able to give an analysis in wholly descriptive terms of what it is to be epistemically justified, would be able to resist many of the Sellarsian conclusions.

But now let me continue with other concepts that would involve epistemic norms according to the Sellarsian system. Here is a list of the sort of things that would be considered to be epistemic facts in my regimented (but rather broad) sense, as involving epistemic norms:

(1) *John is justified in believing that P.*

(2) *John knows that P.* Obviously, if knowledge involves justification, then this will be an epistemic fact as well.

(3) *John inferred Q from P.* Inferring from P to Q is not simply a matter of believing P at one point and then later believing Q. Rather, the movement from P to Q will not be properly called an inference unless the person has some grasp of the putative fact that his believing that P *licenses* or *grounds* or *justifies* the adoption of Q; he must have some sensitivity to the norm governing the transition from believing P to

due to Brandom (1994).

³⁶ See Sellars (1953b) for an explicit comparing of epistemology with ethics. Note that Sellars not only thinks that epistemology is a discipline trading in norms, but he has a specific conception of the kinds of norms involved. (More on this in the next two chapters.) For someone with a different understanding of the norms involved in epistemology, see, for example, Pollock's (1987) "Epistemic Norms."

believing Q. These are clearly epistemically normative terms, and so facts about inferences that someone makes or is licensed to make, or about inferential connections that someone grasps, will all be epistemic facts in the sense under consideration here.

(4) *John has the concept of C.* Now for *Sellars*, though certainly not for every philosopher, having a concept involves, among other things, grasping inferential connections.³⁸ Also for *Sellars*, one's grasp of certain of these inferential connections will ground one's knowledge of so-called synthetic a priori truths like "everything red is colored", and "all events have a cause."³⁹ Thus for *Sellars* having a concept also implies having knowledge, or at least being justified in such propositions. Moreover, if 'C' is an observational predicate John's having the concept will involve whatever norms govern the reporting use of the term. I will examine *Sellars's* theory of concepts and meaning in detail in the next chapter. But again it is important to note that this way of looking at concepts is certainly not compulsory. So this is another point -- and a big, important one, I think -- at which an attack on the *Sellarsian* system would be well-aimed. Several of *Sellars's* arguments against certain varieties of givenness involve attacking the idea of non-conceptual knowledge. Many of those arguments would, I think, lose their bite if one could give an account of concept possession in descriptive terms; an account, for example, that was not in terms of inference (unless

³⁷ Perhaps the only *Sellarsian* argument in its favor simply comes from whatever merits are to be had by the overall system that incorporates this way of thinking.

³⁸ See *Sellars's* "Inference and Meaning" (1953c), as well as *Sellars* (1953b), (1964), (1969), (1973a), (1974), (1979), (1980b), and (1981).

³⁹ See "Is There a Synthetic A Priori?" (1953a).

the concept of *inference* was also given a descriptive analysis).⁴⁰ (Of course, given Sellars's insistence that conceptual episodes *are* norm-governed episodes, *he* will still see such accounts as buying into givenness -- but we'll get to that in a moment.)

(5) *John has learned language l.* For Sellars, to have learned a language is to have been initiated into a system of concepts. Thus if the previous was an epistemic fact, then this is too.

(6) *John understands sentence S.* Understanding a sentence or word or phrase, for Sellars, requires having the concepts involved in it, and thus grasping the inferential relationships that the sentence/word/phrase would be involved in. Understanding a sentence is knowing the meaning of its terms, and this is just to recognize the words as standing for concepts that one has.

(7) *John knows the meaning of that word/phrase/sentence, etc..* See previous.

(8) *John believes that P.* One could not believe that P without having the concepts involved in P. Thus if "John has concept C" reports an epistemic fact, then so does "John believes that P."

So we have as epistemically normative concepts: justification, knowledge, inference, concept, language, understanding, meaning, and belief. These concepts are mutually interdependent. (E.g., you can't be justified in believing something without having concepts, and you can't have concepts, (according to Sellars) without grasping inferential (justificatory) relationships, etc.) And, I want to say, all of those concepts

⁴⁰ Note also that a successful normative account of concept possession that didn't involve linguistic practice might also pose a threat to Sellars view.

involve sensitivity to epistemic norms.⁴¹ And because these notions are all so closely interconnected, we should not be surprised to find questions or problems raised with one of them mirrored in others. We will see in chapter two, for instance, that a dilemma McDowell finds Wittgenstein struggling with with regard to *understanding* is precisely the same dilemma Sellars tries to negotiate with regard to the justification of perceptual beliefs.⁴²

Now to my characterization of givenness. In place of the notion of epistemic efficaciousness, I shall introduce the notion of an *epistemic fact maker*, the idea of something which is that in virtue of which an epistemic fact obtains. So if Philosopher Phil gives a theory about why Jones is justified, or why Jones has a concept, or has a language or any other sort of epistemic fact, then Phil is claiming that something is an epistemic fact maker; it either explains or otherwise illuminates some epistemic fact's obtaining. If, for example, Phil gives a theory that says that the reason that Jones is justified in believing that there is something red in front of him is that he is having (sensing) a red sensation, then on this theory Jones' having (sensing) a red sensation

⁴¹ If one wanted to take *justification* to be the root notion (as, for example, Sellars seems to in "Language, Rules, and Behavior", (1949)) unifying all of these concepts, this would do no real damage to the point I am insisting on here. But many people, upon hearing "epistemic justification", think only of its role in theories of knowledge, and not, for example, of its connection to theories of conceptual content, or language acquisition, or understanding. Thus, at least for the purposes of preventing an overly narrow focus on theories of knowledge (and, for example, preoccupations with stopping justificatory regresses) I think it is more useful to think of justification as one concept among many that are unified by the idea of one's being governed by epistemic norms in some way. This theme will be developed more in the next chapter.

⁴² See McDowell (1981), (1984) (See in particular p. 242 of this essay), and Sellars (1949), (1954) (henceforth to be referred to as 'SRLG') especially §§1-5 and §11, and EPM §34-35.

will be an epistemic fact maker. And (to give an example that doesn't involve givenness) if Phil says that Jones' belief that *p* is justified by his belief that *q*, then *Jones' believing that q* is the epistemic fact-maker for the epistemic fact that Jones is justified in believing that *p*. To take another example, suppose it is an *epistemic* fact about little Dekker that before learning a language he has an "undiscriminating awareness" of the red patch that is in front of him (*à la* EPM §30). To say that this ability of little Dekker's is an *unacquired* one is, I think, to point towards an explanation that would make the epistemic fact maker a fact of his biology, so that presumably something about the kind of organism he is is responsible for his being able to have that kind of awareness. As another way of saying "x is an epistemic fact maker", I will sometimes say, "x does epistemic work."

If *epistemic fact maker* replaces the notion of something's being epistemically efficacious, then we now just need a reasonable counterpart of something's being epistemically independent. And here it is: it is the idea of something which presupposes no epistemic facts, something which is, we might say, *epistemic fact free*. Being epistemic fact free is supposed to be the companion to the notion of an epistemic fact maker (just as epistemic independence was the companion notion to epistemic efficaciousness) in the sense that if *P* is some fact that is epistemic fact *free*, then there were no epistemic facts that *made P true*.

Now to the heart: The heart of givenness is the idea of something which can be an epistemic fact maker and yet be epistemic fact free. Within the metaphor of the "unmoved mover," to be unmoved is to be epistemic fact free, while to move is to be

an epistemic fact maker. On this view, the *taking* is properly understood as the unmoved mover, since the occurrence of a taking is generally what is supposed to do epistemic work in some theory, and the taking itself presupposes no epistemic facts.⁴³

Now when I say "presupposes no epistemic facts", we must keep in mind the lesson learned from deVries and Triplett and from Alston -- that even if takings may be blended with or accompanied by epistemic facts, this does not prevent those takings from being (in my terms) epistemic fact free. And even if a taking cannot do epistemic work unless there are epistemic items having epistemic work done to them (say, *beliefs* that are being *justified* by the taking), that does not mean that the taking is not epistemic fact free. For when we isolate *what is really doing the epistemic work* in this particular case, we will (if this is a case of givenness) point to the non-epistemic episode of taking, and not to these other epistemic facts.⁴⁴ The taking is epistemic fact free because its being able to do epistemic work is not to be explained by reference to epistemic facts.

A theory which buys into givenness buys into the idea of something which needn't rely on an epistemic fact in order to be that in virtue of which particular epistemic facts obtain; something that can do epistemic work without presupposing any epistemic facts. Another way of putting the point: the given is the idea that an epistemic fact would be made true by, explained by, analyzed in terms of, reduced to,

⁴³ Again, note that even if the taking is called a *knowing* of the given ("knowledge by acquaintance"), this will not count as an *epistemic* episode in my sense.

⁴⁴ Of course these other epistemic facts may *also* do epistemic work. But their doing so doesn't by itself undermine the fact that the non-epistemic taking does epistemic work.

or logically implied by a set of purely non-epistemic facts. Yet another way of putting the point: If by the "rational order" we mean the domain of states and episodes governed by epistemic norms, what Sellars might call the "space of reasons"⁴⁵ we can say that givenness involves an illicit transition from the non-rational to the rational order, an attempt to explain some standing in the space of reasons from a perspective external to that space.

Before going on to explain what Sellars finds mythical about the idea of the given, I want to spend some time on a very common notion of givenness that we mentioned briefly above: the non-justified justifier. This will also give me the opportunity to set out some distinctions that will be important to have in our arsenal. Toward the end of the chapter I will also go through a number of other varieties of givenness.

A common kind of givenness: the non-justified justifier

A paradigm example of something doing epistemic work is its justifying a belief; that is, being what it is in virtue of which it is true that a belief is justified. This is why many people focus on the given as the content of an act that can justify beliefs without needing to be justified (and without presupposing any kind of epistemic fact), what I have been calling the non-justified justifier. Something which is a non-justified justifier is not the sort of thing which is properly subject to epistemic evaluation.

⁴⁵ See EPM, the last paragraph of §36.

This sort of givenness is often motivated by the well-known regress of justification: What justifies Tom's belief that p ? --His belief that q . But q can only successfully justify p if q is itself justified. So what justifies q ? --His belief that r . But r can only successfully justify q if r itself is justified. So what justifies r ?... And so on. In the face of this it will seem natural to suppose that if any beliefs are to be justified at all, there must be regress-stoppers -- items which can successfully justify other beliefs but do not themselves require a conferral of positive justificatory status (PJS) from other states. The last belief in the chain is justified not by another belief but by something non-belief-like, the direct apprehension of the given.

An example of this kind of givenness is to be found in Chisholm's notion of self-presenting states.⁴⁶ A self-presenting state ϕ is such that if you're in ϕ , and you believe that you're in ϕ , then you're justified in believing that you're in ϕ . Thus if *sensing redly* is a self-presenting state, then if you're sensing redly and you believe that you're sensing redly, the belief will be justified. (Chisholm's way of putting it is that if S is in a self-presenting state, and S believes that she is in that state, then it is *evident* to S that she is in that state.) A self-presenting state like one's sensing redly is one which can do epistemic work (that is, it is responsible for one's being justified in believing that one is sensing redly), but it is also epistemic fact free, since it is not the sort of state that presupposes any epistemic facts (at least on the standard interpretation of Chisholm). One's sensing redly is thus a taking up of the given element in experience; simply by being in that (non-epistemic) state, one can know that one is in

⁴⁶ Chisholm (1977), (1989)

that state. The knowledge that I am sensing redly can thus stop the regress, thanks to the fact that my sensing redly is a self-presenting state.

Proponents of this kind of givenness will often speak of the awareness of the given being *direct* or *immediate*. (For example, a person of Chisholmian bent might well say that one has a direct apprehension of one's self-presenting states.) So it will be useful to say something about what that usually means. And that will involve setting out two important distinctions.

First is the distinction between what justifies a belief and what brings it about. Sometimes these may coincide. It may be that what produced in me the belief that Princess Diana died in a car crash was my reading it in a certain newspaper. But it also may be that what justifies me in believing that Princess Diana died in a car crash was my reading it in that newspaper. Other times what originally produces the belief and what now justifies it come apart. What originally brought about my belief that $12+12 = 24$ was my first grade teacher telling me that it was so. But this is not what (now) justifies me in believing it. (This is demonstrated by the fact that if I were to find out that my teacher was a malicious drunk who delighted in deceiving children, this would not make me any less justified in my belief that $12+12$ is 24.)

The next distinction, which cuts across the first, is the distinction between inferential and non-inferential (justification or production). Each belief is either inferentially produced or non-inferentially produced, and if a belief is justified, it is either inferentially justified or non-inferentially justified. To say that a belief is inferentially produced is to say that one came to have the belief by having inferred it

from other beliefs. A belief that is non-inferentially produced is one that came about in some other way. To say that a belief is inferentially justified is to say that it is justified in virtue of the fact that the person has other beliefs that inferentially support it (in other words, there is a good argument whose premises are other things the person believes, and whose conclusion is the target belief). If a belief is justified but not in virtue of being inferentially supported by other things the person believes, it is non-inferentially justified.

Sometimes, then, one hears a philosopher talk of justification or knowledge which is *direct* or *immediate* in the sense that it involves a belief which is non-inferentially justified (and probably non-inferentially produced as well, but it is the former that is more important.) So, for example, on the Chisholmian view, my knowledge that I am currently sensing redly is immediate or direct in the sense that it is not justified by any other beliefs I have, but rather, because of my apprehension of the given. That belief (that I am sensing redly) is the end of the justificatory regress (or at least the last *belief* in the chain): its positive justificatory status does not accrue to it from other beliefs, but *directly* from the apprehension of the given.

But that apprehension of the given is *also* sometimes referred to as direct or immediate. We will hear philosophers talk of a *direct apprehension*, or *immediate awareness* (or other similar variations) of the given. In this case, because the apprehension is understood *not* to be another belief, and in most cases is held not to be the sort of thing which can have either a positive or negative epistemic status, it most likely is not meant to be immediate in the sense of being non-inferentially justified.

Rather, when someone talks of a direct or immediate apprehension of the given, they often mean that the apprehension involves no intermediate conceptual or doxastic state. Direct, (or immediate) access to the given (or apprehension of it, etc.) in this case means that the uptake of the given does *not* involve having a belief that it is thus and so or some other conceptual state that represents the given as being thus and so. The taking is a non-conceptual state, a state that one could, in principle, be in without having any concepts. The apprehension of the given is a *nonrepresentational* contact with it.

When the apprehension of the given (or the belief non-inferentially justified by it) plays the role of regress-stopper in the justificatory regress, it is commonly said to constitute the *foundation* of knowledge, and proponents of this sort of givenness are commonly called *foundationalists*.⁴⁷ (The fact that foundationalists have typically bought into the myth of the given is what makes it confusing to call Sellars a foundationalist, despite the fact that, as I will argue in the next chapter, Sellars, like the foundationalists, believes that perceptual knowledge can be non-inferentially justified.)

This brand of givenness looms large in the literature. It is not uncommon, in fact, to find authors treating the idea of the non-doxastic justifier of beliefs (or the related notions of the non-propositional justifier or the non-conceptual justifier) as constituting the very essence of givenness instead of being one important and central

⁴⁷ Sosa (1980, section 8) understands foundationalism so that it *must* (by *my* lights) buy into givenness: "... what makes a belief foundational (formally) is its having a property that is nonepistemic (not evaluative in the epistemic or cognitive mode), and does not involve inference from other beliefs, but guarantees, via a necessary principle,

kind of givenness. Even deVries and Triplett fall prey to this mistake. Although their initial characterization of givenness is broad enough to capture other sorts of givenness, the master argument against givenness that they attribute to Sellars seems to be aimed at this narrower version. In fact, let's now turn to arguments against the given.

Why the given is a myth

It will be worthwhile to look at the argument that deVries and Triplett take to be Sellars's master argument against the given in EPM, both because (a) it represents a common understanding (I would say *misunderstanding*) of what Sellars's argument against the given is (one that fits with the misunderstanding of givenness as the *nonpropositional justifier*), and (b) it will allow us to introduce another common misunderstanding of Sellars the correction of which will play a large role in the next chapter: this is the idea that Sellars thinks that all justification is *inferential*. This will also make for a good starting point for my saying what Sellars's real complaint with givenness is. The argument deVries and Triplett attribute to Sellars looks like this:⁴⁸

1. A taking (apprehension, grasp, etc.) of the given is something that is both epistemically efficacious and epistemically independent.

that the belief in question is justified. A belief B is made foundational by having some such nonepistemic property that yields its justification."

⁴⁸ See deVries and Triplett (2000), p. xxxi. A more detailed version, spelling out the sub-arguments for premises 2 and 3 is given on pp. 104 -105.

2. Only what is propositional (for example, a belief that p) can be epistemically efficacious.
3. Nothing propositional can be epistemically independent.
4. Therefore nothing is both epistemically efficacious and epistemically independent.
5. Therefore, there is no uptake of something given.

According to deVries and Triplett, the justification of the third premise looks something like this: First, the only relevant propositional items are *beliefs* (though, as deVries and Triplett are aware, Sellars uses the word *report*). Only justified beliefs can be epistemically efficacious, so let's focus on whether a justified belief might be epistemically independent. Justified beliefs are either inferentially justified or non-inferentially justified. If a belief is inferentially justified, then it is obviously not epistemically independent since it relies for its positive justificatory status on the premise beliefs that inferentially justify it. If a belief is non-inferentially justified, then, according to Sellars, it has its positive justificatory status partly in virtue of the fact that one can make a certain inference (what he calls a "trans-level credibility inference")⁴⁹ and thus the belief's positive justificatory status is again reliant on these other beliefs, premises of this inference. (I will discuss this in much greater detail in chapter two.) Thus whether the belief is inferentially or non-inferentially justified, it is

⁴⁹ See "The Structure of Knowledge" (Sellars (1971)) p. 342, footnote 12. Sellars first uses the term "trans-level credibility", in referring to this inference in "Phenomenalism", p. 88 of *Science, Perception, and Reality*. See also EPM §35 and SRLG §36 where Sellars sets out this requirement. Brandom calls it the "reliability

dependent for its positive justificatory status on other beliefs, and therefore not epistemically independent.

The second premise (that only what is propositional can be epistemically efficacious) is justified by the presumption that the only way that x can be epistemically efficacious with respect to y is that x serves as a reason, or premise for y . In other words, the only way that something can do epistemic work is by inferentially justifying something. And since only propositional items can stand in inferential relations it is supposed that only propositional items can be epistemically efficacious.

Inferentialism is what I shall call the view that the only kind of epistemic justification is inferential justification. Donald Davidson is a clear example of an inferentialist. His famous dictum is that nothing can justify a belief but another belief.⁵⁰ For him, justification is a matter of a belief (or set of beliefs) providing inferential support for another belief (or set of beliefs). Non-inferentialism is the view that there are at least some justified beliefs whose justification does not accrue to them in virtue of their being inferentially supported by other beliefs. That is, the non-inferentialist believes in non-inferential justification. The justification for the second premise of the above master argument against givenness presupposes inferentialism. In the chapter two, when I set out Sellars's positive view of perceptual justification, I will argue that Sellars is a non-inferentialist. So I do not think it is correct to attribute to Sellars an argument against givenness that relies on inferentialism.

inference." See p.158 of Brandom's EPM study guide, (1997), as well as Brandom (1998a).

⁵⁰ See Davidson (1986).

Perhaps deVries and Triplett may have attributed inferentialism to Sellars based on a mistaken understanding of an argument that Sellars gives in §3 of EPM. There Sellars discusses the role of sensings in sense-data theories and stresses a distinction between *particulars* and *facts*. By ‘fact’ Sellars simply means ‘true proposition’. But it’s the issue of whether something has *propositional structure* that plays a role in his argument there. What is known is a proposition, whereas what is sensed is a particular, and therefore sensing is not knowing. But pointing out that only propositional items can be known is a far cry from arguing that only propositional items can be epistemically efficacious, or that only propositional items can be epistemic fact-makers.

The real reason that Sellars thinks the given is a myth

The philosopher who I believe comes closest to accurately capturing the essence of Sellars's rejection of the given is Jay Rosenberg: “At the heart of Sellars's critique of ‘the entire framework of givenness’ is his articulate recognition of the irreducibly normative character of epistemic discourse.”⁵¹ Let’s explore this idea a little more.

Epistemic facts are normative facts. In the Sellarsian framework the root notion of epistemic discourse is *justification*.⁵² And justification can be understood, as Brandom usefully puts it, in terms of *entitlement*, a notion that is perspicuously

⁵¹ Dancy and Sosa (1992), p. 470.

⁵² Indeed, I think that Sellars would assent to the general claim that justification is the root notion of many (perhaps *all*) kinds of normativity. This is a major theme of LRB, Sellars (1949).

normative.⁵³ Being justified in believing something is a matter of being entitled, warranted, licensed to believe it. And in saying that justification (and so knowledge) is a normative notion, I am not merely saying that it is a good thing when a person manages, by hook, crook, or stroke of luck to land himself in a state of knowledge. That would make the normativity involved in “John knows that P” akin to the normativity afoot in a statement like, “It’s good when the weather cooperates with your picnic plans.” Rather, the normativity involved in saying “John knows that P” is the sort that gives John the credit for the achievement. Whereas when the sun shines on our picnic we do not congratulate the weather on having done what it ought to have. (I’ll return to this distinction in kinds of normativity in chapter three.)

But entitlements don’t come for free. They must be earned. To say that someone is justified implies that they have *merited* this entitlement. What proponents and opponents of the given alike seek (though they certainly do not all put it in these terms) is an account of what is it about a person – in particular in reference to her epistemic behavior in perception – in virtue of which she earns the right (epistemically speaking of course) to believe something.

Let’s now, employing this terminology, take a look at how the regress that motivates many varieties of givenness gets started. The first thing to note is that, roughly speaking, if S is entitled to believe that p, and p logically implies q, then S is

⁵³ See Brandom (1994). Brandom also takes the notion of belief to be a normative one, a matter of undertaking a *commitment*. I agree but want to stay focused on justification here.

entitled to believe that q.⁵⁴ (An analogy: if I am entitled to a basic education, and getting a basic education implies going to school, then I am entitled to go to school.) This is just to say that entitlement can be transmitted via inferential connections. Thus one can explain S's entitlement to q in terms of his entitlement to believe a proposition p (or set of propositions) from which q follows. If we have no trouble understanding S's entitlement to p, then this explanation of his entitlement to q, in terms of his entitlement to p, will be adequate. But if S's entitlement to p is also in question, or in need of explanation, then we are off on the regress. If for some reason one feels that an explanation of an epistemic entitlement will not be adequate unless it bottoms out in facts that do not concern entitlement -- perhaps facts that are not normative at all -- then of course we will feel the need for a regress-stopper; an account of entitlement that does not presuppose entitlement, something, for example, which can justify without needing to be justified: givenness. The attraction of the given -- at least in connection with its role as justificatory regress stopper -- is a symptom of a hankering to render intelligible the space of reasons, the realm of epistemic entitlements, from a perspective that is external to it.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ I am leaving aside, for the time being anyway, worries about whether the entitlement transmission would require that S would need also to *know* that p implies q.

⁵⁵ Options for displacing the hankering include: (a) finding an explanation for epistemic normativity that is non-reductive (many philosophers are getting used to the idea that even circular explanations can be illuminating), or (b) getting comfortable with the idea that while any particular entitlement may be explained (say, in terms of other entitlements), it makes little sense to look for an explanation of epistemic normativity *tout court*. Recall Sellars's comment from EPM §38 that "...empirical knowledge... is rational not because it has a foundation but because it is a self-correcting enterprise which can put any claim in jeopardy, though not all at once." I will return to some of these issues in chapter three.

One can begin to recognize this tendency (that is, the hankering to reduce epistemic normativity to the non-epistemic and non-normative) in familiar cases of givenness by noticing that they are generally attempts to stop the regress with states or episodes that are non-epistemic and often the sorts of things we might expect to be (at least eventually) characterizable in the language of some descriptive science. Some of the sorts of states that Chisholm clearly has in mind when he speaks of self-presenting states (e.g., the non-comparative non-conceptual visual experience of sensing redly) are, I imagine, the sorts of states which we might describe in wholly non-epistemic terms. (Though of course to describe these states *as* self-presenting states is to characterize them in epistemic terms, as the sorts of things that make a belief *evident*.) The sensory state that Chisholm supposes to be a self-presenting state is a *natural* state, a state the intrinsic description of which would involve no epistemic terms.⁵⁶ Similarly, a sense-data theorist might take the sensing of a sense-datum to be a regress-stopper and understand this sensing episode to be just the same sort that could occur in a brute who has no concepts, no epistemic states at all. The intrinsic description of the sensing of a red sense-datum no more involves normative concepts of entitlement or commitment than does the description of the existence of a red physical object. (And indeed, many sense-data theorists thought of the having of a red sense-datum as very

⁵⁶ An exception of course is *the fact that I am currently thinking that p*, which Chisholm also thinks is a self-presenting state. But the question is *why* does Chisholm think that state is self-presenting? It may be that what is *really* doing the epistemic work here (justifying my second-order belief that I'm currently entertaining the thought that p) is not simply the fact that I am currently thinking that p, but rather the fact that I have some Cartesian non-representational, non-epistemic sort of access to

much analogous to the existence of a red object in the world.) At the end of this chapter I'll examine a number of different sorts of givenness and we'll see the same themes there.

Now many discussions of givenness (especially, as we will see, in defenses of it) center around the issue of whether the putatively given item is conceptually articulated; that is, whether the apprehension of it, the *taking* of it essentially involves the exercise of concepts on the part of the person to whom it belongs. "Why," one may ask, "do many discussions of givenness concern themselves with whether the taking is conceptual or non-conceptual?" The first part of the answer is that it can be hard to resist the idea that what is conceptual is epistemic, that anything which involves the actualization of conceptual capacities will presuppose that one has many commitments and entitlements. At a very intuitive level, if John is employing his concept of an apple (say, e.g., in his visual awareness of something's looking apple-like, however exactly we are to understand such an episode) then it is hard not to think that John must, generally speaking, *know what apples look like*. This temptation can be resisted by supposing that the episode of x's looking apple-like to John does *not* involve conceptualization by John, that it does not involve his having an ability to sort apple-like things from non-apple-like things in such a way that he *knows* which is which. It should be clear why the givenist would want to resist the temptation to characterize the takings in conceptual terms. By *their* standards, an episode or state involving conceptualization should be (once properly understood as involving

the content of my thoughts. In that case the real epistemic fact maker would be

epistemic facts) unfit to play the role of regress-stopper, since it presupposes many commitments and entitlements which would be, by the standards of those who seek an end to regresses, just as much in need of explanation as the entitlements that an apprehension of the given is supposed to be explaining. If the taking involves conceptualization, and if conceptualization involves an ability to sort or classify, then there is a possibility that a taking characterized in conceptual terms involved a *misclassification*, or *misapprehension* of the given item. Takings that might be *mis-takings* are poor candidates for the role of *unmoved mover*.⁵⁷ Another way of putting the point: It is relatively easy to understand how a conceptual episode can be an epistemic fact maker but harder to see how it can be epistemic fact free. Sellars defends an account of concept possession that makes explicit the inferential (and thus *justificatory*) presuppositions of concept possession. We will see a sketch of this theory in chapter two.

Do discussions of givenness *have* to center around the issue of whether or not the taking is a conceptual episode? I see two reasons to think not.

First of all, a proponent of a regress-stopping given may defend an account of what it is to have a concept that makes it the case that conceptual items do not

epistemic fact free.

⁵⁷ The above might be seen as a reason to think that only items known with *certainty* could be unmoved movers. However, I think that the possibility of error raises the question of justification not because we require certainty but because (a) justification is a normative concept in the sense that S's being justified in believing that P involves S's getting the *credit* for believing as he ought, (this will be discussed in chapter three) and (b) we can't give S *credit* for getting something right when there is no possibility of his getting it wrong. When (and only when) there is a possibility of getting

necessarily presuppose epistemic facts about the person whose item it is. In such a case the givenist might well concede that the taking is conceptually articulated but maintain that its being conceptually articulated does not impugn its status as epistemic fact free. (Insofar as the givenist still understands the conceptual item as, in virtue of its being conceptual, the sort of thing which can be epistemically *efficacious*, that is, epistemic fact *making*, Sellars will, of course, see such an account of concept possession as also being a case of givenness.) Such accounts would make sense of our ordinary practices of attributing concepts to animals (and very young humans) to whom we don't typically attribute epistemic facts. This is something that Sellars's holistic account of concept possession does not account for very well. We will see more of this issue later in this chapter and in subsequent ones.

Secondly, although I am certainly disposed to agree with Sellars that conceptual states and episodes are not epistemic fact free, that they presuppose epistemic commitments and entitlements, I have *not* argued for the converse. That is, I have not argued that all states or episodes which presuppose epistemic facts must be conceptually structured. I have purposely left it open that there might be states or episodes that are non-conceptual but still epistemic in the sense that they involve epistemic norms. In this case, there might be episodes that are part of an explanation of entitlement (say, in the arena of perceptual knowledge) that are nonetheless non-conceptual. I will, in fact, defend an account along these lines in chapter three. (If the idea of something epistemic but non-conceptual is hard to picture, here's a hint: think

something wrong then it is legitimate to raise the question of who, if anyone, should

of the Rylean idea of *know-how*. Ryle certainly thinks of such states as involving epistemic norms, but they do not seem necessarily conceptual. For example, my knowing how to play chess or how to string together a grammatically correct sentence is not a matter of my having conceptual states (rule books) governing these activities, but neither are these blind habits of the sort that I could not be appropriately given *credit* for. Again, more on this in chapter three.)

In connection with the issue of the relation of the conceptual/non-conceptual distinction to the given, it should also be noted that although many givenists are concerned to deny that the putative taking they believe to be doing epistemic work is *conceptual*, there is no need for Sellars or anyone opposed to givenness to deny that there are *non-conceptual* elements in perceptual experience. Indeed, Sellars defends an account of sense-impressions that makes them non-conceptual, non-epistemic entities. So long as such items are not thought to be part of the explanation or analysis of some *epistemic* state -- in other words, so long as they are not epistemic fact makers -- there is no danger of givenness.⁵⁸ I will revisit this issue again when we talk about Alston's defense of givenness in the appendix to this chapter.

deVries and Triplett complain against Rosenberg's characterization of the given that, "A challenge to epistemological naturalism, however, is not yet a challenge to the given itself." (p. xxvii) In support of this they then point out, correctly, that many

get the credit for its not being wrong (or the blame for its being wrong).

⁵⁸ See EPM §60-62. Sellars posits impressions not to explain epistemic facts, but to explain the difference between seeing that *p* and it's merely looking as though *p*. How can it look like there's a pink elephant in front of me when there is none? Answer: I was having a sense impression of a pink elephant.

friends of the given are foes of epistemological naturalism. However, they are wrong to equate the claim that epistemic discourse is irreducibly normative with the rejection of epistemological naturalism. deVries and Triplett gloss epistemological naturalism as “the doctrine, associated, e.g., with Quine (1969), that the evaluative (or normative) element can be removed from epistemology, so that it becomes a purely descriptive discipline – a part of psychology that explains, for example, the processes by which beliefs are formed.”⁵⁹

I think it is fair to say of epistemological naturalism that it tends to involve the attempt to make epistemology a purely descriptive discipline.⁶⁰ But this cannot be a complete characterization for it fits other, decidedly non-naturalistic views. For example, a Platonist rationalist might hold that one’s knowledge of synthetic *a priori* truths is to be analyzed in terms of the purely descriptive fact (or what is held by the Platonists to be a fact) that a Real Connection between universals is present to the mind in a certain way (a non-representational, presumably non-epistemic way). What is missing (or at least needs to be emphasized more) in deVries and Triplett’s characterization of epistemological naturalism is that epistemological naturalism is not just the attempt to replace epistemic discourse with *any* old descriptive discourse. Rather, the naturalist has in mind a certain *kind* of discourse: *scientific* discourse. The rationalist tries to deal with epistemological problems by recasting them in metaphysical terms, while the naturalist tries to deal with epistemological problems by

⁵⁹ deVries and Triplett (2002), footnote 12 on p. xxvii

⁶⁰ However, see the footnote at the end of the paragraph for another qualification to this.

recasting them in scientific terms. Sellars's key insight is that both of them make the mistake of trying to capture epistemic facts with descriptive discourse.^{61,62} However, this is a mistake according to Sellars because, as Rosenberg puts it, the epistemic is irreducibly normative.⁶³

The moderate -- i.e., non-naturalist -- empiricists of the sort that EPM was primarily directed toward were in Sellars's view struggling to expunge the metaphysical baggage of the rationalists. Quine saw himself as clearing the way for a genuine empiricism by getting rid of elements held over from rationalism. Likewise, Sellars recognized, with Dewey, that givenness "is both the last stand and the entering wedge of rationalism."⁶⁴ But Sellars sought a different route for freeing epistemology from the metaphysical assumptions of the rationalists than simply descriptivising it.

In EPM §5, Sellars makes the point like this:

Now the idea that epistemic facts can be analyzed without remainder -- even "in principle" -- into non-epistemic facts, whether phenomenal or behavioral, public or private, with no matter how lavish a sprinkling of subjunctives and hypotheticals is, I believe, a radical mistake -- a mistake of a piece with the so-called "naturalistic fallacy" in ethics.

Although I don't think it is accurate to say that Sellars ever gives, explicitly anyway, a "Master Argument" against givenness anywhere in EPM, I think Rosenberg fairly well captures the central theme that is at the heart of Sellars's rejection of the

⁶¹ This is a major theme in Sellars's article "Language, Rules, and Behavior", Sellars (1949).

⁶² Would it be possible for there to be a naturalist who thinks that scientific discourse needn't be completely descriptive? If, according to such a naturalist, epistemic discourse were reducible to scientific discourse while remaining irreducibly normative, this naturalist might not buy into givenness.

⁶³ See also Putnam's "Why Reason Can't Be Naturalized", Putnam (1983b).

entire framework of givenness. Once recognized it can be seen to be at work behind the scenes in each of Sellars's arguments against various incarnations of givenness. It also helps us to see what Sellars might say in response to versions of givenness he doesn't consider in EPM.

The heart of Sellars's rejection of the given lies in his conviction that there can be no reduction of epistemic facts to non-epistemic facts. For example, one cannot explain the epistemic fact that John is justified in believing that there is something red in front of him in terms of the merely descriptive fact (or what is construed by many to be a non-epistemic, descriptive fact) that John is sensing redly. One cannot explain the epistemic fact that John has the concept of *red* in terms of the merely descriptive fact that he is disposed to respond to red objects with utterances of 'that's red', or that he is in some brain state or soul state that is intrinsically a capacity to be aware of something as red. Sellars's opposition to the given stems from his belief in an epistemic Is-Ought gap. Descriptive facts may be logically necessary conditions of epistemic facts, but they cannot be logically sufficient.⁶⁵

If we were to put this idea into the form of a "master argument against givenness" it might look something like this:

1. Something is given only if its taking can do epistemic work without presupposing any epistemic facts.
2. Epistemic facts are normative facts.

⁶⁴ Sellars (1949) p. 304 (reprinted in PPPW p. 144).

⁶⁵ "The task of the philosopher cannot be to show how, in principle, what is said by normative discourse could be said without normative discourse, for the simple reason that this cannot be done." Sellars (1953b), p.82 (p. 256 of Sellars (1980a).)

3. Thus if anything is given, then normative facts can be made true by non-normative facts.⁶⁶
4. But it is a fallacy to think that normative facts can be made true by non-normative facts.
5. Therefore nothing is given.

Premise one is just my characterization of givenness. I hope to make it more clear the sense in which premise two is true in the next two chapters. Premise three follows from the first two. Premise four goes unargued for by Sellars, as far as I know. That there is an epistemic Is-Ought gap, that epistemic facts cannot be “analyzed without remainder” into non-epistemic facts, is part of the Sellarsian framework that I will take for granted in this dissertation. It is a claim certainly worthy of defense, but it is not a part of this dissertation to do so. My project involves exploring the implications of this assumption, not arguing for it.

But I do the defenders of the given a favor here, for I point out precisely where a successful defense of givenness would have to be focused. If they could show either that epistemic concepts are not genuinely normative concepts, or that they can be successfully “analyzed without remainder” into descriptive concepts (whether scientific, metaphysical, or anything else) then the given has a chance. Unfortunately,

⁶⁶ -- or at least by facts which are not epistemically normative. I'm leaving aside the possibility that someone might defend a sort of givenness where a taking's ability to do epistemic work presupposes normative facts that nevertheless aren't *epistemically* normative. That is, I'm assuming for the sake of simplicity that takings do their epistemic work in virtue of non-normative characteristics, and not merely non-epistemic characteristics. I happen to think that a transition from a normative but non-epistemic fact to an epistemic fact would be just as fallacious as a transition from the descriptive to the normative. See Haugeland (1998a) section 3 for an argument that

I believe that defenses of givenness routinely miss the mark. (See the appendix to this chapter where I examine three recent attempts to defend the given.)

Other kinds of givenness

I will round out my discussion of givenness by giving a few different examples of it, some of which are much less prominent in recent discussions. Drawing on the considerations which I identified as the heart of Sellars's rejection of the given, I will say what, *qua* givenness, is wrong with each example. In the process we will get to see a few more of the crossbeams in the Sellarsian framework that this dissertation operates within. I must emphasize that these brief discussions of these different kinds of givenness are not meant to be providing knock-down arguments against givenness (they are much too short to be that), but rather are meant to give us practice seeing things from the Sellarsian perspective. They also serve to remind us of the various kinds of givenness that there are, so that we will not focus too exclusively on one sort and forget the others.

(A) *Innate Concepts*. We might also put this under the heading of "the givenness of universals." We have already seen examples of this. Picture a small child who, prior to learning a language (or having any of the sort of training Sellarsians suppose is necessary for the having of concepts) still manages to be aware of colors and shapes and the differences between them, at least when they are in front

the sort of "normativity" sometimes employed in evolutionary theory cannot ground epistemic normativity.

of her eyes. She of course has no names yet for the different colors and shapes, but her innate conceptual abilities allow her to differentiate among them, and to group the similarities. She can see, for example, a patch of red as being of all one quality, that each part of the patch belongs in the same grouping as the other parts, that the patch has *that* quality – the quality that we language users call ‘red’ – through and through.

Sellars makes a comment about this kind of givenness in section 26 of EPM:

Actually there are various forms taken by the myth of the given in this connection, depending on other philosophical commitments. But they all have in common the idea that the awareness of certain *sorts* – and by ‘sorts’ I have in mind, in the first instance, determinate sense repeatables – is a primordial, non-problematic feature of ‘immediate experience’.

The first step in seeing how this is an episode of the myth in a way that makes contact with what I identified as the heart of the myth is to see that the fact that the child has a concept is an epistemic fact (in the sense of involving epistemic norms) about her. Her conceptual ability allows her to *know*, for example, that *this* quality and *that* quality are the same, and that they are both different from the quality over there. She also knows the difference between color and shape. In fact this knowledge is at play even in the seemingly simple case of her fixing on a particular quality in an episode of awareness of *that particular quality*. This is sometimes thought of as fixing a particular quality by “pure ostension,” without the need of a characterizing description. Yet somehow the supposedly pure ostension is able to pick out that particular *color* quality, as opposed to that particular *shape* quality. Without the knowledge of the difference between shape and color being somehow in play in the awareness that fixes on some quality, the “pure ostension” could not determinately fix on any quality.

Another way that the attribution of concepts involves epistemic facts is that having a concept entails being able to recognize inferential relationships between concepts, and inferential relationships are justificatory relationships. One could not have the concept of *square* without being justified in making inferences like “that shape does not have four sides. Therefore, that shape is not a square.”

Once we see that having a concept implies having knowledge, being justified in making inferences, etc., and once we recognize that justification (and so knowledge) is a *normative* state, we can see that the idea of *innate* concepts boils down to the idea of a person being in these epistemic (and so normative) states simply in virtue of being a certain kind of organism, where this latter is meant to be a descriptive, non-normative characterization of a person. Thus this view analyzes the fact that Jill has concepts, knowledge, is justified in making inferences, etc. (where these are *normative* facts about her) in terms of the fact that she is an ordinary, properly functioning human organism (where this is understood as a *descriptive* fact⁶⁷ about Jill). It is an episode of the myth because it commits the epistemological version of the naturalistic fallacy.

Before going on, a word or two is in order about *instinct*. It is undeniable that newly born humans have, like newly born wolves, certain inborn traits and abilities that were not *learned*, and are in some sense *instinctual*, or “hardwired,” a product of

⁶⁷ It is controversial whether the biological notion of a *properly functioning* organism is normative or not. If normative, it certainly does not involve the sort of *deontological* normativity that would imply that the organism is worthy of praise or blame. (See my chapter five on the distinction between deontological and evaluative norms.) See also Haugeland (1998b) section 3 (“Biologically evolved normativity”) for an argument that this biological normativity (if such it is) cannot do any work towards an account of epistemic normativity.

evolution. There are, for example, studies demonstrating that human babies only a few weeks old have very definite physiological responses (for example, increased heart rate, sticking out the tongue) in the presence of human faces or even pictures of human faces.⁶⁸ It can be very natural to say that the baby has an inborn ability to recognize human faces, that it *knows* a human face when it sees one. Here is a quote from Alison Gopnik, one of the researchers studying this phenomenon:

We now know that babies know much more about the world than we would ever have thought possible. They have ideas about other human beings, about objects and about the world - right from the time they are born. And these are fairly complex ideas, not just reflexes or responses to sensations.⁶⁹

What would Sellars say to this? Has this scientist's empirical research shown that the given is not a myth after all? She certainly seems to be saying that babies have innate ideas -- that they have certain concepts "right from the time they are born." Presumably they have these concepts in virtue of facts about their biological, neurological, and/or physiological make-up. If she means *idea* or *concept* or *knowledge* or *cognition* or *recognition* (etc.) in the same sense that *we* have been using these concepts, and if we are right that these are normative concepts, then it looks very much like she is claiming to have discovered something that, according to my analysis of givenness, is indeed an episode of it.

Sellars would certainly not want to claim, as an *a priori* matter -- from his philosopher's armchair, so to speak -- that this research was faulty. Sellars's response

⁶⁸ Andy Meltzoff, from the University of Washington, did studies showing that babies as young as only 42 minutes old can imitate facial expressions. See also Gopnik, Meltzoff, & Kuhl (2000).

⁶⁹ Alison Gopnik, professor of cognitive psychology at UC Berkeley. The quote is from the *New Scientist* vol. 178 issue 2395 - 17 May 2003, pp. 42-45.

would be instead, I think, to claim that when the cognitive scientist uses words like 'knows', 'recognizes', 'cognition', 'concept', 'idea', 'representation', etc., to characterize small babies and non-human animals (in short, anyone who has not been initiated into a *language*) she uses these words in ways that are somewhat different from the uses they have for a philosopher who is speaking of the cognitive activity of adult humans who have learned a language. And in fact, there very likely good reasons for using these same terms to characterize creatures (like infants and non-human animals) who do not have a language. In particular, it might well be that having episodes of "cognition" in the scientist's sense are necessary conditions for having episodes of "cognition" in the sense that Sellars is interested in.

In fact, we might make a distinction⁷⁰ (similar to a distinction that McDowell (1994) makes) between *first nature* cognition and representation of the sort that small babies and some non-human animals are said to have⁷¹, and *second nature* cognition of the sort that is relevant to epistemology and involves having states and episodes that belong to "the space of reasons", where this is something that (according to Sellars) can only come about through the inherently social process of learning a language. (More on this latter idea in the next chapter.) Thus we can say that the scientists who study infant responses to faces are interested in first nature cognition. But, Sellars will

⁷⁰ This suggestion was made to me by Cass Weller.

⁷¹ This suggestion would be quite consonant with the remarks Sellars makes in "The Structure of Knowledge", (1971) lecture I, section VI, where he insists that of course there is *some* sense in which animals and babies can *think* and *see* and even *see that p*, even if these are all *nonepistemic* senses.

insist, to confuse first and second nature cognition is to fall into the myth. First nature cognition involves no normativity, and second nature cognition does.

Putting it this way also helps us to see what will be seen as a major liability of the Sellarsian system by some of those outside it: Namely, that it doesn't allow for a smooth continuum between what Sellars must separate into first and second nature cognition. That is to say, many find it intuitively plausible to suppose that there is a smooth continuum both between the cognition of humans and non-humans, and certainly between that of adult humans and infants. Whereas the Sellarsian system seems to draw a bright line between them, and to encourage the idea that first nature cognition is only called *cognition* by courtesy. Notice a similarity between this position and that of Descartes. Descartes also held that there was a bright line between humans and animals (though not between adults and infants), and the difference was for him explained by the presence or absence of a soul. Sellars of course has no truck with the notion of souls, but invites the objection, "what, if not a soul, and if not some descriptive fact, is responsible for the difference between first and second nature cognition?" It will seem a strange and mysterious fact that suddenly a child is "in the space of reasons"⁷² whereas before it was little more than a bundle of reliable differential responsive dispositions⁷³ (much like the Cartesian automaton). After

⁷² Saying that a *person* is in the space of reasons is shorthand for saying that she has states and episodes that are in the space of reasons – states and episodes with conceptual content (where this content is partly constituted out of their inferential relationships).

⁷³ Brandom (1988) calls them "RDRD's". See also chapter two of Brandom (1994). Of Gopnik quite clearly thinks that the responses of babies are not just "little more" than RDRDs, but *much more* than that. (She says, "these are fairly complex ideas, not

setting out more of Sellars's positive views on meaning and perceptual knowledge in the second chapter, we will have the resources to see what responses Sellars would make to these kind of worries. But, to say again, defending the system is not my primary goal. It is useful, however, to point out some of the advantages of a non-Sellarsian way of looking at things.

Spending extra time on this first example of givenness will help to make shorter work of the examples to come. Let's go on to the next one.

(B) *The idea that one can acquire the concept of F simply by having an experiential confrontation with instances of F.* One might reject innatism but instead insist that a child "learns by experience" in the following sense. A child can acquire the concept of *red* simply placing in front of it a number of red things and saying with each one, "look honey, its *red*."

This simple and familiar idea is nonetheless, from the Sellarsian perspective, quite confused. That way of thinking presupposes the givenness of the resemblance of resembling particulars. That is, it presupposes that the child can already see all of the items as having a certain commonality, as resembling each other in a particular way (i.e., in respect of their color). She is able to classify them as belonging together in a certain respect. And the awareness of this specific sort of similarity must be differentiated from other similarities that the items might happen to have – for example, that they are physical objects, that they are smaller than a cubic mile, that they each seem to elicit the noise 'red' from mommy. In order for the process of

just reflexes or responses to sensations.") So long as this *more* is not a normative,

putting red things in front of the child and saying "that's red" to do the trick, the child has to already have an awareness of their sharing *that* specific quality, an awareness that differentiates it from other qualities the items might happen to have, as well as from qualities that they don't have. In short, the child must already have the concept of *red*, and our training her to use the word 'red' is merely enabling her to publicly communicate about the quality of which she was antecedently "privately" aware. Thus this suggestion simply smuggles in the idea of innate conceptual awareness that we just discussed and rejected above.

There is, of course, more than a grain of truth in the idea that a crucial part of how a child learns the concept of red involves her mother's putting red things in front of her and saying "that's red." But the process does not involve the child's suddenly figuring out what mom is getting at by all her pointing and all her "that's red" noises. It is not as though a light bulb goes on and the child thinks to itself, "Oh, *that* quality. *That* must be what mom means by 'red'." What the training *does* produce in the child is a disposition to say 'red' when in front of red things. This disposition, at first anyway, needn't involve any cognitive awareness on the part of the child at all. It can be a purely stimulus-response connection.⁷⁴ Sellars's view is that at some later point, after the child can make inferential transitions involving the word 'red' (where these inferential transitions are *more* than just stimulus-response transitions, though they might also start out that way), the child's response to red things can appropriately be

epistemic *more*, Sellars will have nothing to complain about it.

⁷⁴ That is, in fact, precisely what Sellars calls it in SRLG. See, for example, §§22-24.

called a conceptual awareness of red. More on Sellars's view of concept possession and acquisition in the next chapter.

(C) *The idea of a person's having just one concept (or, correlatively, the idea that concepts can be acquired one at a time.)* For a moment forget about concept acquisition and just focus on the idea of a persons' having just one concept, his "first" concept (however he came to have it). That this is an episode of the myth is now easily seen in the fact that if Lester has only one concept, then this one epistemic fact would presumably have to be true of him in virtue of non-epistemic facts about him (for example, his being an organism of a certain kind, etc.).

We already mentioned that in the Sellarsian framework that we are exploring, having a concept entails being able to inferentially connect it to a host of other concepts. From this perspective it is simply not intelligible that Lester could, for instance, have the concept of something's being red without having the concept of something's being colored. Nor could Lester, according to Sellars, have the concept of something's being red without knowing in what circumstances one should look at things to ascertain their color, where this latter requires (again, according to Sellars) that Lester have many other color concepts as well.⁷⁵ Concepts are not acquired piecemeal but at the very least in big clumps. Sellars puts the point quite strongly:

...one can have the concept of green only by having a whole battery of concepts of which it is one element. It implies that while the process of acquiring the concept of green may – indeed does – involve a long history of acquiring *piecemeal* habits of response to various objects in various circumstances, there is an important sense in which one has *no* concept pertaining to the observable properties of physical objects

⁷⁵ See Bonevac (2002) where this requirement is challenged.

in Space and Time unless one has them all – and, indeed, as we shall see, a great deal more besides.⁷⁶

The lesson to be learned here is that *atomism* falls into the myth of the given.

Atomism comes in several varieties. Concept atomism is the view that one can have a single concept without having any others. Doxastic atomism is the view that one can have a single belief without having any others. Justificatory atomism is the view that one can have just one state with positive justificatory status without having anything else with positive justificatory state. Atomism with respect to knowledge is the view that it is possible for someone to know just *one* thing. Contrasted with each of these are of course various versions of *holism*. Roughly speaking, to be a holist about F is to think that nothing can be F without many other things being F as well. To say that a person has just a single concept, or belief, or bit of knowledge, is to say that this one epistemic fact is true of him, and it must then be true of him in virtue of non-epistemic facts about him.⁷⁷ Thus, atomism constitutes an episode of the myth.

One can also think of Sellars's attack on atomism and its relation to givenness in the following way.⁷⁸ Sellars's attack on logical atomism (in e.g., EPM part III) is meant to undermine a certain motivation for a certain kind of givenness. One might think that the content of our concepts (especially "simple" concepts like that of colors and shapes) is derived from acts of sensing (where these acts are understood as non-

⁷⁶ Sellars (1956), § 19.

⁷⁷ Unless, of course, this one epistemic fact was a *sui-generis* fact, true in virtue of nothing at all. Then the view would not be an episode of the myth, it would just be very mysterious. Of course, there is a sense in which for Sellars the *whole framework of epistemic normativity* is *sui generis* -- and this is just the sort of thing that non-Sellarsians find likewise mysterious.

epistemic acts). But the empiricists who have such a view about the content of our concepts also hold that a concept can only be derived from an act of sensing if that concept could be had independently of having any other concepts. Thus if Sellars's arguments against logical atomism show that even simple (e.g., color) concepts cannot be had independently of having other concepts, then the content of our concepts cannot be derived from acts of sensing. And if our concepts cannot be derived from acts of sensing, then the givenness of what is sensed in such acts has no job to do. That is, the motivation for accepting that sense-contents are given was supposed to be (in this case anyway) that they can help to explain how concepts can be derived from acts of sensing. But if we have reason to think that concepts cannot be derived from sensory acts (thanks to Sellars's attack on logical atomism together with the assumption that atomism must be true if sensing can fund the content of concepts), then this particular motivation for accepting this kind of givenness is undermined.

(D) *The idea that a belief might be non-inferentially, perceptually, justified in virtue of the fact that one has a non-conceptual episode of perceptual awareness.*

(This is the common form of givenness we will see versions of in Alston and Schantz in the appendix.) Suppose that both Mike and a cow are staring at an oak tree. If we're tempted to say that there is something going on in each of them that is *the same* – the visual sensation of the oak tree, we might call it – then this sensory commonality must

⁷⁸ The ideas in this paragraph come from Cass Weller.

be a non-conceptual episode, since the cow doesn't have concepts and Mike does.⁷⁹ A common enough view (though perhaps less common since, and because of, EPM) is that Mike's perceptual, non-inferentially produced belief that there is an oak tree in front of him is non-inferentially justified in virtue of that which he shares with the cow, the non-conceptual visual sensing of the oak tree (or having of an oak-tree sensation). Many (but not all) traditional foundationalist views have this general picture of perceptual knowledge. By now we should be able to see quite easily why this at-one-time common view is an episode of the myth. That Mike is having an oak tree sensation is a descriptive, non-epistemic fact about him. That he is justified in his belief that there is an oak tree in front of him is an epistemic fact about him. The sensation cannot be what it is in virtue of which he is justified.

(E) *The idea that my ordinary beliefs about physical objects in my immediate environment can be justified by those objects.* In the previous case, Mike's ordinary belief about a physical object ("there's an oak tree in front of me") was justified by his being in direct contact with some inner sensory event -- an oak tree sensation. Certain versions of *direct realism*, however, cut out the middleman of the inner sensory event, and say that Mike can be justified in believing that there's an oak tree in front of him simply in virtue of the fact that he's in direct contact with the tree itself. The tree itself is what is given in perception. On this view, Mike's belief that there's an oak tree in

⁷⁹ By "non-conceptual episode" I simply mean an episode that doesn't involve the actualization of concepts. It is the sort of event that could occur in someone (or something) that lacks concepts. We'll discuss this more in the next chapter when we discuss Sellars's theory of meaning and conceptual content.

front of him is justified in virtue of his being able to take in the tree in a direct, non-doxastic way. Here the epistemic fact that Mike is justified in believing that there's an oak tree in front of him is made true by the epistemic fact free direct apprehension of the tree. That is where the transition from a non-epistemic fact to the epistemic fact occurs.⁸⁰

(F) *A reliabilist theory of justification.* Reliabilism is the view that a belief is justified (is warranted, has its positive epistemic status, etc.) in virtue of its being the result of a reliable belief forming process. A reliable belief forming process is one that turns out a suitably high ratio of true beliefs to false ones. Clearly Sellars would think that reliabilism (at least in the simple form I've set out here) would buy into givenness. The fact that some belief is reliably produced is a non-epistemic fact (even if the fact that the belief is a *belief* is an epistemic fact), and this non-epistemic fact is supposed to be that in virtue of which the epistemic fact that a certain belief is justified obtains. Thus in the case of S's reliably produced belief that p, we might say that what is *given* is the fact that p, while the *taking* of it is S's being in a certain non-epistemic relation (the "reliability relation", we might call it) to that fact. Admittedly, the language of

⁸⁰ Note: McDowell (1994) tries to defend a version of direct realism which avoids the given by supposing that the world brought into view in perception (and against which our perceptual beliefs are measured for their truth or falsity) belongs to the realm of the conceptual. Thus "there is a tree here" would be an epistemic fact, and so there would be no illicit transition from non-epistemic to epistemic. What McDowell really defends, however, is that the facts of the world are *conceptualizable*, not that they involve the *actualization* of anyone's conceptual capacities. He argues (1994, ch. 2) that the facts of the world are *claimables*, which I need not dispute. However, this is very different than saying that the facts of the world involve someone's being sensitive

"object *given*" and the "*taking* of it" does not fit here as well as they do in some of the other views we have seen. But that reliabilism involves a transition from non-epistemic to epistemic should be clear enough to recognize this view as buying into givenness.

Now to say that reliabilism buys into givenness is not to say that reliable belief production isn't a *necessary* condition of a belief's being justified. Indeed, we will see in the next chapter that Sellars takes reliabilism (at least in the case of perceptual beliefs) to be his starting point, but makes certain additions to it to make sure that a justified perceptual belief is not *only* reliably produced but also involves a sensitivity to epistemic norms.

(G) *The idea of old-fashioned rationalist synthetic a priori knowledge.* The qualification "old-fashioned" is there because some, including Sellars himself, have tried to rehabilitate the rationalist's notion of synthetic *a priori* knowledge in a way that does not buy into givenness.⁸¹ So the "old-fashioned" model I've got in mind is one that explains one's knowledge of certain substantive claims⁸² in terms of a *non-representational grasp of necessary truth*. Laurence Bonjour is a perfect example of this sort of rationalist:

to epistemic norms, which is what they would need to be in order to be epistemic in the sense under consideration here.

⁸¹ See Sellars's (1953a) "Is There a Synthetic A Priori?".

⁸² By "substantive" or "synthetic", I mean not tautologies, truths of logic, or definitional claims, but claims like, for example, "every event has a cause", and "nothing can be red and green all over at the same time." The distinction between analytic and synthetic has widely been regarded with suspicion since Quine (1951).

Such a rational insight, as I have chosen to call it, does not seem in general to depend on any particular sort of criterion or on any further discursive or ratiocinative process, but is instead direct and immediate. ...such an apparent rational insight purports to be nothing less than a direct insight into the necessary character of reality...⁸³

This grasp of necessity involves a non-epistemic confrontation with "the necessary character of reality". Thus it is epistemic fact free, yet, according to BonJour, responsible for the fact that certain beliefs are justified. This is, then, clearly an episode of the myth. Sometimes one hears epistemologists speaking of the deliverances of rational intuition as *rationally given* (as opposed to *experientially* or *empirically* given as in examples of givenness involving sense perception).

Summary

We should by now have a pretty good grasp on the notion of givenness. We set out a characterization of it as something which is able to make epistemic facts obtain without presupposing any epistemic facts. We also discussed the essence of Sellars's rejection of the given: that the given attempts to squeeze (epistemically) normative juice from (epistemically) non-normative stones, and thus commits a version of the naturalistic fallacy. We looked at a number of different kinds of givenness. (In the next section of this chapter, three more are examined in depth.) We're now ready to start thinking about what a theory of justification would look like that *doesn't* buy into any kind of givenness. And the best place to start is with Wilfrid Sellars himself.

⁸³ BonJour (1998), pp. 106-107. BonJour says similar things throughout the book.

Contemporary Philosophers Attempt to Defend the Given: Alston, Bonevac, and Schantz

This section may be considered supplemental to the bulk of the material presented thus far in chapter one. (We can consider it an "appendix" to the chapter.) In it we will take a look at three recent articles attempting to defend the notion of the given. This will both give us an opportunity to expose what I see as mistaken understandings of givenness, but also to further our understanding of givenness by demonstrating how Sellars would respond to such accounts.

William Alston

I will start with a recent article by William Alston, "Sellars and 'The Myth of the Given'".⁸⁴ His aim is to refute Sellars's arguments against the given and to advance a version of givenness he calls the Theory of Appearing which he believes escapes Sellars's attacks.

We will first take a look at what Alston thinks that givenness is. He spends the first four of five sections defending what he considers one form of givenness, and the last section defending another form of givenness. There are many interesting details that the article goes into. But as I have said, my primary aim in examining this article (as well as the other two by Bonevac and Schantz), is to supplement and expand upon the discussion of givenness in the main part of chapter one. Thus I want to focus on two things in the article: (a) Alston's understanding (and, as we will see, *misunderstanding*) of what givenness consists in, as well as (b) in the case where what

he identifies as a case of givenness *is* in fact a case of givenness, his argument for that that brand of givenness. The latter will also give us an opportunity to further our understanding of givenness by explaining the contrasting Sellarsian perspective.

Sections I-IV: The given as non-conceptual awareness of particulars

I'll start out with some quotes from Alston that make it quite clear what he takes the heart of givenness to consist in. This is the notion of givenness that the first four sections of his article are concerned with.

Sellars is well known for his critique of the "myth of the given" in his "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind". That text does not make it unambiguous just how he understands the "myth". Here I take it that whatever else may be involved, his critique is incompatible with the view that there is a nonconceptual mode of "presentation" or "givenness" of particulars that is the heart of sense perception and what is most distinctive of perception as a type of cognition.⁸⁵

But then where do I dissent from Sellars' attack on the given? It comes over the question of whether we have a direct (nonconceptual) awareness of particulars, one that constitutes a kind of *cognition* of a nonconceptual nonpropositional sort. Sellars, as I read him, is concerned to deny this...⁸⁶

My thesis is that there is a cognitive component of perception that is non-conceptual.⁸⁷

As I have suggested, Sellars, in his attack on the given, is concerned to deny that there is any nonconceptual cognition of anything.⁸⁸

The Theory of Appearing

In order to defend the idea that "there is a cognitive component of perception that is non-conceptual," Alston puts forward his Theory of Appearing:

On this view the heart of sense perception of external objects consists of facts of "appearing", facts that some object or other looks, feels, sounds, smells, or tastes in a certain way to a perceiver. These appearings are nonconceptual in character.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Alston (2002).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.69

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.71

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.73

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.73

To say that an appearing is nonconceptual in character is to say that it does not presuppose that the individual to whom x looks F has the concept of F . Alston says,

X may look like a mango to me (present the kind of visual appearance typical of a mango from this distance and angle, in this kind of lighting, etc.) even though I have never formed the concept of a mango and hence am incapable of taking X to be a mango.⁹⁰

This nonconceptual appearance involves "an irreducible relation between the subject and the object perceived,"⁹¹ where the object, typically anyway, is an *external*, physical object, as opposed to, for example, some inner sensory event.

When objects nonconceptually appear thus-and-so to S , Alston says that these objects "are *directly presented* to your awareness. They are *given* to your consciousness. They are *present* to you."⁹² By "direct" awareness, it is clear that Alston means an awareness that is unmediated by concepts. It is *not* that sort of awareness you have of something by, for instance, having a belief about it.

Here are a few other principles (given by Alston on pp. 72-73) that help to fix the notion of nonconceptual appearance he is working with:

1. X appears ϕ to S entails X exists.
2. X appears ϕ to S does not entail X is ϕ .
3. If X appears ϕ to S and $X=Y$, it follows that Y appears ϕ to S .

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.71

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.72

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.72

⁹² *Ibid.*, p.72

Thus, as Alston says, nonconceptual appearance, "lacks some of the usual philosophical marks of an intentional relation."⁹³

Finally, Alston does not think that this nonconceptual appearance is *all* there is to a perceptual experience. He agrees that "adult human perception [is] heavily concept laden. ... Perception is, typically, a certain kind of use of concepts, even if, as I am contending, the cognition involved is not only that. My thesis is that there is a cognitive component of perception that is non-conceptual."⁹⁴ Thus when a normal adult opens their eyes and sees a tabby cat walking across the carpet, Alston is perfectly willing to admit that this perceptual episode is one that may involve the person's deployment of concepts (for example, she sees the cat *as* a cat). His point is that that perceptual episode also involves a nonconceptual component, a component that would be had in common by anyone else viewing the cat, even if this person didn't have the concept of a cat (or indeed any concepts at all). It is this nonconceptual component that makes perceptual experience distinctively different than, say, merely believing (with your eyes closed) that there is a cat walking across the rug.

Does the Theory of Appearing buy into givenness?

If the Theory of Appearing was, by itself, a commitment to givenness, then it would be incumbent on me, given the aims of this appendix, to delve into its details and say why a Sellarsian would find it to fail. Fortunately for me, the Theory of

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.72

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.73

Appearing does not, as far as I can tell, buy into givenness all by itself. So now I will turn my attention to explaining why this is so.

The given, remember, is the idea of something which can do epistemic work (that is, can be that in virtue of which some epistemic fact is true) without presupposing any epistemic facts. Presumably when Alston talks of these appearings being nonconceptual, he means them to be generally non-epistemic, and not presupposing of any epistemic facts about the person being appeared to.⁹⁵ So that is half of the formula for givenness. The other half is doing epistemic work. There is nothing in the first four sections of Alston's article where he is defending the very idea of appearings as nonconceptual cognitive components of perception that implies that they can do epistemic work. In the last section of the article Alston does defend the idea that these nonconceptual appearances can justify beliefs, and this, to be sure, is a case of givenness and we will examine it in a bit. But Alston clearly thinks that just the existence of nonconceptual cognitive components of perception is by itself an episode of the myth. That is what I am rejecting.

There is much in those first four sections of Alston's article that I think Sellars would disagree with. (For example, Alston gives an alternative analysis of 'looks' statements than the one that Sellars gives in EPM.) But I do not think that Sellars can complain against the existence of nonconceptual cognitive appearings (or the

⁹⁵ Remember that it does not follow from something's being nonconceptual that it is non-epistemic in the sense of involving epistemic norms. In chapter three I will make room for a notion of know-how that was not strictly speaking a conceptual competence but was nevertheless thoroughly bound up with epistemic norms.

nonconceptual mode of awareness or presentation that is the converse of appearing) *on the grounds that these buy into givenness.*

One way of demonstrating that Sellars would not think that this is a case of givenness is by pointing out that, as Alston fully realizes, Sellars takes it upon himself to *defend* the idea that perception involves the occurrence of nonconceptual episodes (Sellars calls them *impressions*) in EPM §60-61. And I think Sellars would agree with Alston that it is the occurrence of these nonconceptual components of perception that, in Alston's words,

...gives perception its distinctive character vis-à-vis other modes of cognition. It is this element that distinguishes perception from memory, (mere) judgment, reasoning, wondering, hypothesizing, and other forms of abstract thought.⁹⁶

If Sellars defends a nonconceptual component to perception, it is unlikely that Sellars would consider this, by itself, a case of givenness.

Now there are several terms that Alston consistently uses to characterize his nonconceptual components that Sellars does not typically use in characterizing his impressions. Sellars does not talk of impressions as involving an *awareness*, nor as being a *mode of presentation*, nor even as *cognitive* or a mode of *cognition*. Indeed, as Alston notes, Sellars typically reserves such words for *conceptual* contexts.⁹⁷ But Alston, unlike Sellars, is clearly not using those terms to indicate conceptual or propositional activity. If Alston had explicated what he meant by "awareness" or "cognition" in a way that made it clear that anything falling under such terms would thereby be able to do epistemic work, then we'd have reason to worry that these

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.73

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 71

nonconceptual components buy into givenness. Unfortunately Alston says very little about how he understands such terms. How can we tell whether this is a "mere terminological" debate or is indicative of more substantive disagreement? Alston attempts an answer:

... it is reasonably clear that [Sellars] reserves the term 'cognition' for mental states or activities that are conceptually, indeed propositionally structured. And it is that with which I take issue. To be sure, this could degenerate into an argument over how to use the word 'cognition'. Even if it should, that is no trivial dispute. In any event, I will seek to put more flesh on the dispute by adding this claim that our direct awareness of X's, and I will be thinking primarily of perception here, provides a basis (justification, warrant...) for beliefs about those X's.⁹⁸

If Alston here means to imply that the only way to make sure that this is a substantive debate (instead of a squabble about how to use words) is to defend the claim that the nonconceptual components in perception can do justificatory work, I think I agree with him. But Alston did not make *being able to justificatory work* an essential feature of the existence of those nonconceptual components in perception when he defended their existence in sections I-IV. There he simply claimed that a defense of their mere existence would constitute a defense of givenness. For Alston is quite clear that he thinks that the existence of nonconceptual cognitive components *as well as* their being able to justificatory work are each episodes of givenness that Sellars would take issue with. I have seen no reason (beyond the terminological dispute about how to use "cognition") to think that Sellars would eschew the former as given.

Here is yet another reason to think that Sellars would not necessarily be (or at least *oughtn't* be) opposed to the idea of nonconceptual *cognitive* elements in perception (so long, of course, as "cognitive" does not imply "able to do epistemic

work"). If *thinking* would be considered by Alston a kind of cognition, then Sellars admits that there is a nonconceptual sort of cognition in "The Structure of Knowledge", lecture I, section VI. For there he talks of the nonconceptual thinking of animals and human babies who can think and see despite having no concepts, as well as the musician who not only thinks *about* sound (for this would be conceptual activity) but thinks *in sound*, where this is a *nonconceptual* sort of thinking. These are, Sellars insists, legitimate kinds of thinking, even if they are nonconceptual episodes and unrelated to the learning of a language. So long as the term "cognition" is not tied (in ways that would perhaps be *ad hoc*) to the notion of being able to do epistemic work, I think it is reasonable to say that Sellars believes in nonconceptual episodes of cognition. And lest one think that these are special isolated cases that Sellars would not carry over into the realm of perceptual experience, note that Sellars says,

...visual perception itself is not just a conceptualizing of colored objects within a visual range -- a 'thinking about' colored objects in a certain context -- but, in a sense most difficult to analyze, a *thinking in color* about colored objects. (The point stands out most clearly with respect to visual imagination; for imagination at its best is not simply a thinking about things which are not at hand and, more generally, thinking which is not concerned with what really exists, i.e., thinking that takes the form of make-believe.) It is suffused with visual imagery and can also be said to be a 'thinking in color'.

What I am suggesting is that a correct theory of visual experience will throw light on the nature of visual imagination -- and this, in turn, on the unique relationship between thinking and imagery which characterizes creativity in music and the other arts.⁹⁹

It sounds to me like Sellars has in mind here an idea very much like the one that Alston has in mind. When Sellars distinguishes 'thinking about color' from 'thinking in color', I think he means to get at the very distinction that Alston does between the

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 71

⁹⁹ Sellars (1971), lecture I, §37-38, p. 305

conceptual and nonconceptual "modes of presentation" in a visual perceptual experience. And when Alston tries to plump for the existence of nonconceptual visual elements of perception by noting the difference between thinking (remembering, wondering, hypothesizing, etc.) about the items in your yard while keeping your eyes shut, and, on the other hand, being "directly aware" of these items when your eyes are open and you are looking at them, I think this is very much the same point that Sellars is getting at by talking of visual imagination *at its best*. There is a difference between simply thinking about something that is not at hand and really *imagining* it, "seeing it in the mind's eye", employing visual imagery.

To say again, I am not claiming that Sellars wouldn't have anything to complain about in Alston's Theory of Appearing. But I am claiming that far from the idea of nonconceptual "cognitive" elements of perception being an episode of the myth, Sellars fully well grants that there are such things, and for much the same reason that Alston does. A nonconceptual element becomes an episode of the myth when it is supposed that it can do epistemic work, and, to say again, I see nothing that Alston does or says in those first four sections to imply that his nonconceptual appearances necessarily do epistemic work.

Why does Alston think that Sellars's rejection of the given consists in a rejection of cognitive nonconceptual perceptual elements?

The answer to that question involves Sellars's analysis of 'looks'-statements (statements of the form "x looks F to S") in section III of EPM, "The Logic of 'looks'". There Sellars gives an analysis of what it means to say that something looks red to

someone. This analysis makes such episodes *epistemic*, and indeed, involving of conceptual activity on the part of the person looked-to. Alston, on the other hand, claims that there is not just one proper analysis of an *x looks F to S* statement, but rather, "a diversity of looks-concepts."¹⁰⁰ One of these, the *phenomenal* or *nonconceptual* one, Alston claims, captures the distinctive nonconceptual cognitive mode of presentation that is the heart of his Theory of Appearing.

The analysis of 'looks' -statements is a quagmire worth side-stepping. And fortunately I can explain why Alston thinks that Sellars's rejection of the given consists in a rejection of nonconceptual experiential cognition of objects in perception without entering into an explanation of either of Sellars's or Alston's theories of the meaning(s) of 'looks'. For Alston says that Sellars's account of meaning of 'looks'-statements is incompatible with the Theory of Appearing because,

It is crucial to Sellars' account to claim that all perceptual experience is propositionally structured; hence there can be no nonconceptual experiential cognition of objects in perception, as the Theory of Appearing maintains.¹⁰¹

The argument then is that because Sellars's analysis of the meaning of "*x looks green to S*" has it that if *x looks green to S*, then *S* has some kind of propositional episode, this means that for Sellars *all* perceptual experience is propositionally structured and hence there can be no perceptual experience involving any nonconceptual cognition.

I have two problems with this argument. First of all, Sellars is giving an account of a particular kind of perceptual experience: something's looking a certain way to someone. He does not claim to be giving an account of *all* perceptual

¹⁰⁰ Alston (2002), p.74 ff.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.77.

experiences. For example, given Sellars's analysis of 'looks', nothing can *look* some way to an animal that has no conceptual apparatus. But this does not mean that these animals cannot have any perceptual experience. Indeed, in the section from "The Structure of Knowledge" that I discussed above, Sellars says that

...there is a legitimate sense in which animals can be said to think and hence to be able, in something like the above sense, to see a pink ice cube and to see that it is pink. Furthermore, the point is important in its own right and not simply rhetorical maneuver.¹⁰²

Clearly animals, for Sellars, have perceptual experience. And given that they do not have concepts, this must be a *nonconceptual* sort of perceptual experience.¹⁰³ Thus even if it were the case (as it is not) that Sellars's analysis of 'looks' were such that lookings were episodes that could involve no nonconceptual element (on top of the conceptual element that he does require), this would still not show that this analysis of 'looks' was incompatible with there being nonconceptual elements of perceptual experience; they would just not be involved in the particular experiences Sellars calls *lookings*. But again, Sellars certainly does *not* claim that lookings or any other kind of perceptual experiences are devoid of nonconceptual elements.

Secondly, Alston himself was quick to point out that even if all adult perception is concept laden and involves propositional episodes, this is not at all incompatible with perception's also involving a nonconceptual, nonpropositional

¹⁰² Sellars (1971), lecture I, §32, p. 303

¹⁰³ Sellars says, "The most that can be claimed is that what might be called 'conceptual thinking' is essentially tied to language." As for babies and animals, "We interpret their behavior using conceptual thinking as a model but qualify this model in *ad hoc* and unsystematic ways which really amount to the introduction of a new notion which is nevertheless labeled 'thinking'." (1971), lecture I, §33, p. 304.

element.¹⁰⁴ Thus even if Sellars were arguing that *all* perceptual experiences (and not just lookings) have a propositional element, by Alston's own lights it does not follow that Sellars is thereby arguing that perceptual experience cannot also contain a nonconceptual element. And, indeed, as I have been urging, Sellars *does* think that there is a nonconceptual element (even one that may legitimately be called a kind of *cognition*) that accompanies perceptual experience and is what makes it distinctively perceptual.

In fact, in with regard to their competing theories of the meaning(s) of 'looks', without getting mired in the details of either, I think it is safe to say that there is nothing crucial in the Sellarsian system, at least as regards Sellars's rejection of the given, that would prevent him from accepting that there is indeed a diversity of looks-concepts, and even that one of these could be used to pick out the nonconceptual component distinctive of visual perception. Since his interest in EPM is in the sorts of lookings that have been taken to be able to do epistemic work, that is the sort of looks-concept that he focuses on. Of course, he would urge caution in admitting many sorts of looks-concepts, since confusing different but homophonically similar words can lead one to adopt a theory that buys into givenness. (This is one of the lessons learned in EPM section II, "Another Language".) He also might worry, as an empirically resolvable, anthropological matter of fact, whether the nonconceptual use of 'looks' is one that is ever actually used by your average person on the street (as opposed to the philosopher who invents it for some regimented purpose.) But Sellars is just that kind

¹⁰⁴ Alston (2002), p.73.

of philosopher only too willing to appropriate his opponent's terms. It would be quite in keeping with Sellarsian strategy to claim that "'looks' is said in many ways." The primary point that I have been urging, however, is that the issue of substance between Alston and Sellars is not whether there exist nonconceptual components in perception, it is not whether these should appropriately be called episodes of "cognition", or of "awareness", and it is not whether there is one or many looks-concepts, or whether one of these looks-concepts formulates the nonconceptual component of perceptual experience. Rather, the issue of substance between Sellars and Alston is whether the (non-epistemic) fact that someone has one of these perceptual nonconceptual cognitive components can do epistemic work, can, for example, be that in virtue of which someone's belief is justified. So it is time that we turn to that issue.

Section V: The given as the idea that a non-conceptual state of x's looking F to S can justify S's belief that "x is F"

Now let us look at Alston's reasons for thinking that the non-conceptual element of perception can help to justify a belief.

He says, "The basic point is this. If something looks like a computer, that provides prima facie credibility to supposing that it is a computer." Of course, "Things aren't always the way they look. ... But the principle that things are generally what they look to be, and hence that if X looks P it can be presumed to be P until it is shown otherwise is one that commends itself to reason. Therefore, if, as I have been arguing, looking P is in itself a nonconceptual mode of experience, however much it

may be blended with subsequent conceptualization, beliefs about what is perceived can be justified by a non-conceptual experience from which they spring."¹⁰⁵

First of all, the antecedent of that last sentence is misleading and too strong. Alston never argued that *all* contexts of x's looking F to S had to be understood in his noncomparative nonconceptual sense. His view was rather that there is a "diversity of looks-concepts".¹⁰⁶ If his arguments there were successful, all they showed was that there are *some* contexts in which saying "x looks F to S" implies nothing about whether S has the concept of F or if she does have it, whether she applies it to x. Alston did nothing to show that one of the contexts in which it is reasonable to employ the nonconceptual sense of 'looks' is a justificatory context. If we have a diversity of 'looks'-concepts, why should we suppose that the nonconceptual one is in play when one explains why S's belief that "that is a computer" is justified by pointing out that "it looks like a computer to S so it probably is"? Alston's argument seems to be this:

1. There is a diversity of 'looks'-concepts, one of which is the nonconceptual, noncomparative looks.
1. Sometimes it is perfectly reasonable to say things like, "S is justified in believing that x is red because x looks red to S."
2. Therefore, sometimes "x is red" is justified in virtue of the nonconceptual noncomparative red look that x has. ("...nonconceptual appearances can provide justification for beliefs about the objects that appear"¹⁰⁷)

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.82

But the conclusion does not follow. Just because there are a diversity of uses of 'x looks red', at least one of which is the nonconceptual use, does not mean that the use of 'x looks red' employed in the justificatory contexts is the non-conceptual one.

Why does Alston think that the sense of 'looks' involved in a justificatory context must be his nonconceptual sense? He doesn't say much besides giving the example of the computer: "If something looks like a computer, that provides *prima facie* credibility to supposing that it is a computer."¹⁰⁸ But this is a messy case for pumping the intuition that a nonconceptual element is doing justificatory work. For one thing, although I did not set out Sellars's analysis of 'looks', I would argue that his sense of 'looks' could just as easily explain why that statement is plausible.¹⁰⁹ For another thing, Alston admits that that the nonconceptual looking "may be blended with subsequent conceptualization,"¹¹⁰ and that the nonconceptual awareness is not "the whole of sense perception"¹¹¹ and in fact "adult human perception [is] heavily concept-laden."¹¹² His view is only that "there is a cognitive component of perception that is non-conceptual."¹¹³ So how can we tell that the part of the look that is doing the

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.83

¹⁰⁹ I should say, rather, that Sellars's analysis of 'looks' can help explain how someone's *belief* that "x looks like a computer to me" could justify their belief that x is a computer. The short story is that to believe that x looks like a computer is to believe that you are having the sort of experience that would be a *seeing that x is a computer*, if conditions of perception were standard. (See SRLG §42, EPM §16-17.) Thus if you believed that x looks like a computer and you also believed that conditions of perception are normal, then you would be (inferentially) justified in believing that x is a computer.

¹¹⁰ Alston (2002), p. 83.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

justificatory work is the nonconceptual part as opposed to the conceptual part that is blended in? What makes that question even harder to answer is that the case is in the first person. *Of course* if I say "x looks F to me" then in saying so I am categorizing my experience using my concept of F (or at least my concept of something's *looking* F). That doesn't settle whether the experience I am trying to report on in saying so is a nonconceptual one. We'll avoid some of that confusion by speaking in the third person.¹¹⁴

What we really need is a case where it is clear that, at least with regard to the particular concepts in question, the visual experience is completely non-conceptual, that there is no conceptualization blended into the look. Only with such a case could we be sure that the intuitive plausibility of saying, e.g., "the tree's looking green to Jones justifies him in believing that the tree is green", does not accrue to it in virtue of conceptualization involved in the tree's looking green to him. It's a difficult case to get because we can't simply find a case in which we're willing to say that x looks F to S but where S doesn't have the concept of F, for in that case although it would be clear that we're dealing with a nonconceptual sort of 'looks', obviously S won't be able to believe that x is F so we won't be able to check the plausibility of the justificatory connection between the appearing and the belief.

Here is my best attempt to concoct a case that will do what we need it to do and in which it is clear that the look being presented to Jones is not, at the level of that

¹¹⁴ The strategy of being on the lookout for confusions that take place when examples are in the first person (and to translate them to the third person where possible) is one that I picked up from Cass Weller.

presentation, contaminated with conceptualization. Jones has never, as far as he knows, seen a whole, unpeeled mango before. He has seen chopped up bits of mango in his fruit salad before, and he has had mango fruit smoothies, so he knows how they taste. He knows enough about mangos that we would not be hesitant to say that he has the concept of a mango, even if he isn't able to pick one out in a produce line-up. But now, unbeknownst to him, he is staring right at a mango, in good light. According to Alston, the fruit looks (nonconceptually) like a mango to Jones in the sense that it presents "the kind of visual appearance typical of a mango from this distance and angle, in this kind of lighting, etc."¹¹⁵ It presents the same look to Jones as it does to Smith, who is standing next to Jones but who visually recognizes it *as* a mango. We may suppose that Jones recognizes the object as a fruit, but his concept of mango is not at all involved in the look that the fruit presents to him. Now suppose that, since he recognizes that it is a fruit, he is trying to figure out for himself what kind of fruit it might be. He thinks to himself, "I wonder what kind of fruit that is. Maybe it's a starfruit, or a papaya, or a mango, or some kind of a melon, or maybe it's a rare kind of grapefruit..." The question now is whether there is intuitive plausibility in saying that the nonconceptual mango-look that the fruit indeed *does* have to Jones could justify him in believing that the fruit is a mango.

Now, to be clear, I am not claiming that Jones's visual experience involves *no* conceptualization. There is no need to claim that. As we have seen, Alston concedes

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.72. Some who think that appearances can be given like only to talk about *simple*, e.g., color and shape, appearances). Unlike them, Alston apparently does not mind talking about mango appearances.

that visual experience, while always containing the non-conceptual component, very often is blended with conceptualization. In Jones's case, a non-conceptual component of his visual experience (i.e., that x non-conceptually looks like a mango) is blended with conceptual components, e.g., that x (conceptually) looks like a fruit, that he sees x *as* a fruit. All I want to claim here is that although Jones's visual experience may involve the concept of fruit (and many others of course), it *doesn't* involve the concept of *mango*, even though Jones does have that concept. I want it to be the case for Jones that while x *non-conceptually* visually appears like a mango, x does not *conceptually* look like a mango. The first part is easy to establish. If Jones's eyes are working properly, they are trained on x, the lighting is adequate, the circumstances of perception are otherwise normal and x in fact *is* a mango, I am certain that Alston will agree that x non-conceptually looks like a mango to Jones. So the question is whether or not in this case x also conceptually looks like a mango to Jones. I stipulated that although Jones has the concept of a mango he has no ability to visually pick out mangos. He doesn't know what they look like. If you were to ask him if he thinks anything looks like a mango, he'd respond, "How would I know? I have no idea what mangos look like." No amount of prodding can get him to acknowledge that x appears mango-like. If his visual experience were conceptualizing x *as* a mango, one would think that it would be possible to get Jones to come to realize that. Absent any complicated story of self-deception (e.g., Jones sees x as a mango but for some reason this is too painful for him to admit) I take this as very good reason to think Jones's

visual experience does not involve conceptualization of *x* as a mango. *X* does not conceptually look like a mango to Jones.

What is useful about this case is that *if* the visual experience has any tendency to justify a belief, we can be sure that it is not because of any mango-conceptualization in the experience, since that component is lacking in this case. Thus, for example, if Jones held the belief that *x* is a mango, and if that belief was receiving justificatory support from his visual experience, then we'd have good reason to think that the non-conceptual component of his visual experience, *x*'s non-conceptually looking like a mango, was doing justificatory work. Let's explore this idea.

Jones, as we have him so far, is staring at the mango not knowing what he is staring at. As a first volley we can ask this question: Is it intuitively plausible to say that *if* Jones believed that *x* is a mango, that belief would receive justificatory support from the way that *x* looks? Is Jones's perceptual experience such as to justify him believing what he does not yet believe, that the fruit is a mango? Does he already have what would be needed to non-inferentially, perceptually justify that belief? I do not think so. Suppose that Smith tells Jones, "That thing in front of you is a mango." Jones now believes that it is mango. Nothing changes about the way the fruit looks when he comes to believe this. The belief is at least partially justified in virtue of Smith's trustworthiness. But is there any temptation to suppose that the belief also receives justificatory support from the way that the mango has looked and continues to look? My intuitions say no. Jones's belief that "that thing in front of me is a mango" is just as justified as it would be had he been blind. This example gives us some initial

reason to think that the plausibility of saying that the look something has justifies the corresponding belief significantly diminishes when we make it clear that the look involves no conceptualization. The non-conceptual look doesn't seem to do any justificatory work until the person can recognize which *kind* of look it is, which is to say, until the person's concept is at play in a classificatory way.

But this is only the initial volley, for Alston will agree that Jones's belief receives no justificatory support from the mere fact that the mango (non-conceptually) looks the way it does. Alston will insist that the look alone can do no justificatory work, but must also *cause* the belief it justifies. He says, "When the X I am looking at looks rabitty, that look leads ('causes' if you like) me to form the belief that X is a rabbit. The fact that my belief has that kind of causal explanation does, it would seem, show that and why the belief is at least *prima facie* justified."^{116, 117} So let's rewind our story a bit, and suppose that Smith never told Jones that x is a mango. But now suppose that Jones finds himself with the belief that the fruit is a mango, and that this belief is caused by the mango-look of the fruit -- the look that the fruit has had all along. Jones is not aware of this cause. From his perspective, he just suddenly started

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 84. Crucially, Alston does not require the person in question to know that the x's rabbitty-look caused her to believe that x is a rabbit.

¹¹⁷ Notice the section where Alston says, "... that look leads ('causes' if you like)...". The word 'leads' typically occurs in contexts where an individual is being swayed by evidence. E.g., "The fact that you were the only one home leads me to think that you took the last beer from the fridge." That Alston seems more comfortable with the word 'leads' here could indicate a failure on his part to sufficiently disentangle the causal from the evidential -- what causes my belief as opposed to what my reasons are for thinking that its true. (The confusion is exacerbated by the fact that the example is in the first person.) In other places, however, Alston seems quite aware of this important distinction, so it's hard to be sure if this kind of confusion is going on here.

believing that the fruit is a mango. Nothing phenomenological has changed. If we were to ask him if he thinks that the fruit *looks* like a mango, he might reply, "well I've never known what a mango looks like, but for some reason I'm pretty confident that that's a mango right there, so, given that the lighting seems to be normal, I'd wager that that fruit does look like a mango." It seems to me that adding the causal connection does nothing to increase the plausibility of saying that the non-conceptual look does any justificatory work. But perhaps this is not the *right* sort of causal connection. The passage just quoted continues, "It all depends on what kind of cause is in question. If my belief were caused by paranoia, that would not justify it. But if the belief is to the effect that a perceived object is as it perceptually appears to be, why shouldn't it be justified by the fact that it arises, in the normal way, from that object's perceptually appearing to be that way?"¹¹⁸ Alston seems more worried about what is doing the causing than what kind of causal connection there is. In the case of Jones here, we stipulated that Jones's being appeared to is doing the causing, just as Alston thinks it should. But he does say it needs to be "in the normal way."¹¹⁹ Perhaps Alston would complain that in our case the fruit's looking like a mango to Jones does not cause his belief (that the fruit is a mango) in the normal way. What makes it abnormal? In other words, what is it about this case that makes it less than intuitively plausible to say that the look justifies the corresponding belief, unlike the typical examples Alston is

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

¹¹⁹ In "Concepts of Epistemic Justification" (1985), Alston recognizes the difficulty of specifying what "the normal way" is. He says, "To make a causal account work, we would have to beef it up into 'caused by *q* in a certain way.' And what way is that?" (p.100). This is more or less the point I am trying to push in the above paragraph.

thinking of where it is plausible to say that? Perhaps it is because there is no established causal pattern linking the look to the belief.¹²⁰ Let's suppose then that this is the case. Suppose that the belief that this is a mango is a reliable product (generally speaking and not just in this one case) of the nonconceptual look. But let's also suppose that each time Jones forms the belief, he shortly afterwards forgets what a mango looks like, so that each time he is surprised to find himself believing that the thing in front of him is a mango. He is unaware of his own reliability.¹²¹ In this case it still feels odd to say that Jones is justified in believing that it is a mango.¹²² What would make the causal connection in *this* case be abnormal?

Here is my best guess: in *this* case the look is clearly non-conceptual, and in the cases Alston envisages that is not so clear. When the look is conceptually informed, "blended" with the appropriate conceptuality, it feels quite plausible to think that the look can provide justificatory support. That is reason to think that it is the conceptual part of the look that does the justificatory work.

Suppose that Alston responds: "yes, I agree that your case seems abnormal, and that Jones would not be justified on the basis of his visual experience in such a case.

¹²⁰ This suggestion was made to me by Cass Weller.

¹²¹ Note that Sellars, of course, requires that a person have access to their own reliability, at least in the case of perceptual beliefs. (See EPM §VIII.) I will discuss his view in detail in the next chapter. And, as we will see more in the next two chapters, it is my view that this requirement -- awareness of the reliability -- is meant to make sense of the idea that the agent themselves must *own* their perceptual reports in a way that is to be contrasted with the picture I am painting above, in which Jones finds himself believing "that's a mango" and is disconnected to it, has no idea why he suddenly believes it.

¹²² Alston, being an externalist, might not share this intuition. I'll return to this possibility in a moment.

But the reason is that I also require (though I didn't earlier mention this) that the person have *access* to the cause. What makes your case an abnormal cause is that the person has no idea why they suddenly believe that x is a mango. So let's require, (as a part of 'in the normal way') that the person has access to what causes the belief." But it seems that this will just add a conceptual element (my knowing that the mango-look caused my belief) which will again muddy the waters, and make us worry that that conceptual element was doing all the epistemic work. Could Alston hold that the access to the fact that the mango-look caused my belief is *non-conceptual*? I can't imagine an account of this *access* that would make it non-conceptual but would still allow it to do what it was posited to do – namely, to rule out the possibility that Jones's belief is justified even though he has no idea why he suddenly started believing it. How can he not be bewildered about why he suddenly started believing that x is a mango unless his access to the cause of that belief is *conceptual*, involving his having some conceptualized awareness of what is in fact causally responsible for his having that belief? I can't see that adding a requirement of access to the cause will help the situation. For either the access will be conceptual and we will worry that this conceptual component is doing the justificatory work, or the access will be non-conceptual and it seems like Jones will still be bewildered at his suddenly believing that x is a mango, so we will be inclined to think that he is not justified.

Why are we inclined to feel that Jones is not justified in the case where he suddenly starts believing something and has no idea why? Some might think that such a case tells in favor of internalism, the view that (roughly speaking) justification

requires that one has access to what justifies. My view, however, is that the internalist urge is better explained by the fact that we are implicitly sensitive to the fact that justification is a *normative* concept in the sense that having a justified belief is the sort of state that involves giving credit to the believer for her accomplishment, whereas in the case envisioned above Jones is too disconnected from his having gotten things right for us to feel that he has earned his entitlement. *One* way that we can come to be satisfied that Jones has earned his entitlement is if the internalist condition is satisfied, so that what justifies Jones's belief is a part of his interconnected web of commitments, what Sellars calls the space of reasons. In chapter five I will defend the idea that the motivation that I think often lurks behind internalism, the idea that epistemic norms are "deontological" ones -- involving giving *credit* to the believer --, might be satisfied in a different way, an *externalist* way.

Now a general diagnosis of what is going on in these mango cases is in order. Alston holds that there is an element of perceptual experience which is non-conceptual. Presumably he is thinking of this element in non-epistemic terms¹²³. The fact that *x* non-conceptually appears mango-like to Jones is, for Alston, a non-epistemic fact. It is the sort of fact that might obtain between the mango and some non-human animal that is wholly devoid of concepts or epistemic activity. It doubtless would be the sort of fact that could be describable in wholly non-normative terms. Alston's theory is indeed a brand of givenness because it analyses the fact that someone is justified in believing in something (in at least some cases) by appealing to

non-epistemic and non-normative facts about appearances. I have tried to argue against this sort of givenness by arguing that it only seemed plausible that the non-epistemic appearance could do justificatory work when that appearance was blended with conceptuality in ways that made it unclear which part was really doing the justificatory work. Once we isolated a clear case where the relevant conceptualization was not involved, we saw that there was little plausibility in the attribution of entitlement to Jones's belief. Jones cannot earn his entitlement to believe that *x* is a mango simply from being in a certain sort of descriptive state (i.e., the state of being non-conceptually appeared to mango-wise by *x*.)

Now it may well be that the fact of Jones's disconnectedness from his "that's a mango" beliefs, the fact that he has no idea why he suddenly started believing that it's a mango, does not produce in Alston the same intuition (i.e., that the belief would not be justified) as it does in me. After all, he is an externalist. And these might be seen as the kinds of considerations that would only move an internalist (or flush out an externalist whose heart beats with the internalists). But there are different kinds of externalists. As I will explain at the end of chapter three, I am an externalist, but I am not a naturalist, as many externalists are. To those of a naturalist bent, Sellars has not much to say.¹²⁴ Such persons will undoubtedly not buy into enough of the Sellarsian

¹²³ But see the next paragraph where I consider the possibility that Alston might allow the non-conceptual element to nevertheless be *epistemic*.

¹²⁴ To add to the terminological confusion, Sellars, in *Naturalism and Ontology*, calls himself a naturalist. But he certainly does not mean it in the sense that we used in the first chapter, to denote the sort of philosopher who thinks that all legitimate concepts must be given (at least eventually, in the fullness of the scientific enterprise) a

assumptions (for example, that epistemology is an irreducibly normative enterprise) to feel the bite of many of his arguments. But I wonder whether Alston is that kind of externalist. For he in fact *does* feel the need for an access requirement.¹²⁵ Suppose for a moment that this was indicative of his being sensitive to the fact that epistemic justification is a matter involving what I called *deontological* epistemic norms -- the sort of norms bound up with notions of praise and blame.¹²⁶ Now if that were so, then it would take just a nudge and Alston could have a view like mine which is externalist but avoids the given: He would simply have to admit that the *access* is doing the epistemic work, and that this access is an epistemic matter involving, if not conceptualization, then some other form of sensitivity to epistemic norms. But perhaps that would take more than a nudge. It would, after all, require Alston to say that the fact that the nonconceptual appearance is causing (reliably, perhaps) the belief is *not* the essential component that justifies the belief. That might be an unacceptable change.

Here is another possible way in which we might make Alston's view acceptable to a Sellarsian. Alston hasn't said very much to characterize the non-conceptual visual experience that he supposes can do justificatory work, except to say that it is non-conceptual, and this is merely a negative characterization. Now if I thought that

grounding in descriptive, scientific terms. Sellars, in LRB (1949) calls that view *descriptivism*.

¹²⁵ See Alston (1988a), "An Internalist Externalism".

¹²⁶ Unfortunately, Alston (1985), (1986), and (1988b), explicitly rejects the deontological conception of justification. One reason that he does so is on the ground that it commits one to an objectionable sort of doxastic voluntarism. I reject that connection in chapter five. See also Owens (2000).

necessarily all epistemic episodes were conceptual episodes, then the occurrence of a non-conceptual episode would necessarily be the occurrence of a non-epistemic episode and then Alston's account, so long as he still holds that that the awareness can do epistemic work, would necessarily buy into givenness. But as I will explain in chapter three, it just so happens that I do not think that necessarily all epistemic episodes are conceptual episodes.¹²⁷ Epistemic episodes necessarily involve epistemic norms, but I think that there could be an epistemic (in the sense of involving epistemic norms) yet non-conceptual episode in perceptual experience. (My notion of perceptual *know-how*, being epistemically responsible in the upkeep of one's perceptual dispositions is, I will argue, a nonconceptual skill, a skill that does not need to be explained in terms of one's acceptance of conceptual or propositional states.) If Alston could make a case that the non-conceptual component of visual experience he defends is nevertheless appropriately characterized as *epistemic*, he could avoid falling into the given. This would, of course, require saying a lot more about the character of the non-conceptual appearance.

Daniel Bonevac

Another recent attempt to defend the given, albeit indirectly, comes from Daniel Bonevac in his article "Sellars vs. the Given"¹²⁸. Like Alston, Bonevac does not, to my satisfaction, accurately capture what givenness consists in. Because of this,

¹²⁷ Though I *do* think, with Sellars, that all conceptual episodes are epistemic.

¹²⁸ Bonevac (2002).

Bonevac thinks that "...most of Sellars's arguments attack logical atomism, not the framework of givenness as such."¹²⁹ What Bonevac understands as the framework of givenness as such is indeed *an episode* of the myth, as is what Bonevac calls logical atomism, although he denies that the latter involves givenness. Thus when Sellars attacks first one sort of givenness and then moves to another, Bonevac sees this as sometimes attacking givenness as such but most of the time meandering off the subject, attacking other targets and then claiming to have been attacking givenness the whole time. But Bonevac also thinks that Sellars's attacks on logical atomism, as well as his one or two arguments that Bonevac agrees are aimed at givenness as such, all fail.

Instead of focusing on why Bonevac thinks that Sellars's arguments against "logical atomism"¹³⁰ fail, I want to examine the sort of givenness that Bonevac identifies as "the framework of givenness as such." After that I'll consider Bonevac's criticism of what he identifies as two Sellarsian arguments against this kind of givenness. I will then show that this criticism misses the mark.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹³⁰ The scare quotes are there because what Bonevac calls "logical atomism" is not, I think, what many others would call it. There are many things that one can be an atomist or a holist about. What Bonevac means by it is the thesis that non-inferential knowings presuppose no other empirical knowledge (Bonevac (2002), p.3). Some of the arguments of Sellars's that Bonevac thinks are aimed at this "logical atomism" are in fact aimed at other versions of atomism; for example, at the idea that you could have one concept without having many others. It is thus not surprising that Bonevac thinks that the arguments fail. Sellars, on the other hand, uses the term 'logical atomism' in §19 of EPM to mean the idea that "...fundamental concepts pertaining to observable fact have that logical independence of one another which is characteristic of the empiricist tradition."

One interpretive difficulty with Bonevac's paper stems from the fact that he does not push any specific theory of givenness. His strategy rather seems to be that of trying to demonstrate that immediacy theorists of all stripes can easily resist Sellars's conclusions. Sometimes Bonevac explores an externalist -- for example, reliabilist -- response to the arguments he find in Sellars. Other times he takes up the perspective of a Chisholmian internalist. Sometimes it is not clear which philosophical camp he is temporarily occupying. In the case of the latter I will have to consider multiple interpretations of his point.

Before we can see what Bonevac thinks the essence of givenness amounts to, I need to set out some of his terminology. First, *sensings* are inner episodes that "presuppose no acquired conceptual capacities."¹³¹ Bonevac does not bother to explain the sense of "inner" he has in mind. His definition leaves it open that my heart's beating -- an inner episode that presupposes no acquired conceptual capacities, on *one* understanding of "inner" -- could be a sensing. But let's assume that he means something like what Sellars means by the occurrence of a *sensation* or *impression*, or even what sense-data theorists mean by the sensing of sense-data or sense-contents. Second, *graspings* are inner episodes that "are non-inferential knowings."¹³² Not all non-inferential knowings are perceptual episodes for Sellars.¹³³ But Bonevac clearly has in mind *perceptual* episodes like *seeing* that the sky is cloudless.

¹³¹ Bonevac (2002), p. 2.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹³³ For example, Sellars defends an account of first principles that makes them out to be non-inferentially justified. See his "On Accepting First Principles" Sellars (1988).

Bonevac thinks that the following five theses constitute "...the so-called Myth of the given, or less contentiously, the Immediacy Theory (IT)."¹³⁴

1. *The Sensation Thesis*: There are sensings.
2. *The Non-Inferential Knowledge Thesis*: There are graspings.
3. *The Content Thesis*: Sensings are necessary conditions of graspings.
4. *The Evidence Thesis*: Graspings are necessary conditions of all other empirical knowledge.
5. *The Justification Thesis*: Sensings play a role in justifying graspings.

Bonevac recognizes that Sellars clearly accepts theses 1-3.¹³⁵ He also thinks that Sellars likely accepts thesis 4, in some sense anyway.¹³⁶ So Bonevac locates the nub of the issue at the Justification Thesis. He thinks that to defend this thesis is to defend givenness. And he is right insofar as a successful defense of the Justification Thesis would amount to a successful defense of *one kind* of givenness.

¹³⁴ Bonevac (2002), p. 3.

¹³⁵ As regards the third thesis, Sellars would agree that sensings are necessary conditions of non-inferential observational knowledge. But the fact that Bonevac calls this the *Content* thesis might indicate that he thinks (or that he thinks Sellars thinks) that sensings are part of the explanation for graspings having the particular contents that they do. Sellars, at least, clearly does *not* think that sensings have a role in determining the content of graspings (he would see that as an episode of the myth); *that is not* what sensings are necessary for. (However, see McDowell (1998d) where he exploits remarks made by Sellars (1967) that seem to take this back; there Sellars seems to want to reserve a "transcendental role" for sensation.)

¹³⁶ As evidence Bonevac cites this passage from §38 of EPM: "There is clearly *some* point to the picture of human knowledge as resting on a level of propositions -- observation reports -- in the same way as other propositions rest on them." It is not clear to me that Sellars would understand this "way" that human knowledge rests on observation reports as simply that observation reports are necessary conditions of all other empirical knowledge (the Evidence Thesis).

Bonevac finds two Sellarsian arguments against the Justification Thesis. One is the trilemma in section 6 of EPM. The other is attributed to Sellars by Brandom, Rorty and McDowell. Let's examine them in turn.

The EPM §6 trilemma

Sellars's section 6 trilemma consists of the following three inconsistent propositions:

- A. *X senses red sense content s entails x non-inferentially knows that s is red.*
- B. The ability to sense sense contents is unacquired.
- C. The ability to know facts of the form *x is ϕ* is acquired.

Bonevac's simple response to this argument is that the proponent of IT can easily reject proposition A. For, "A sensing can play a role in justifying a grasping without entailing it."¹³⁷ He goes on to give an example of how this might be so: "Each premise in a valid, multi-premise argument might play a role in justifying the conclusion, for example, without entailing the conclusion all by itself. The analogue of the additional premises in this case, moreover, might involve precisely the acquired conceptual capacities that mark the difference between sensings and graspings."¹³⁸

Clearly, "to play a role" in justifying the grasping, the sensing has to be more than just a necessary condition (else my being alive would play a role in justifying my beliefs). So in the example Bonevac ought to give, the multi-premise argument would be one in which although *x senses red sense content s* does not by itself entail that *x*

¹³⁷ Bonevac (2002), p.22.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

non-inferentially knows that s is red, the conjunction of *x senses red sense content s* with premises P and Q (and so on) *does* entail that *x non-inferentially knows that s is red*. And at least one of these extra premises must state or imply that x has conceptual capacities, in particular, the concept of something's being red. Later in the article, in the process of responding to the other Sellarsian argument against the Justification Thesis, Bonevac provides a hint as to what these other propositions might be.

(Although there the grasping in question concerns non-inferentially knowing that a physical object has a certain property, whereas in the case of the trilemma he is responding to here, we're focused on non-inferential knowledge that a certain sense-content *s* is red, I think it is reasonable to suppose that the premises he produces in the later argument provide a good indication of the sort of premises he might have in mind for this earlier one.) He says, "The general picture that emerges, then, is this.

Sensings by themselves do not entail graspings, since the former require no acquired conceptual capacities and the latter do. But occurrences of sensings defeasibly imply graspings for beings who already have the relevant conceptual capacities and notice the relevant features of the sensings."¹³⁹

Here is a place where I see two different interpretations for how Bonevac might intend this multi-premise argument to be employed.

The first (and, in my opinion, more likely) interpretation puts the argument in an internalist context. On this interpretation a certain episode G counts as a grasping (non-inferential knowledge) because it is inferentially justified (though still "non-

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

inferential" in the sense of being non-inferentially *produced*) by the multi-premise argument, where the premises are believed by the person doing the grasping. Let us explore this interpretation.

Bonevac says that the person must both (a) have the sensing but also (b) *notice* its features. For a Sellarsian it is clear what question to ask -- and in fact it is the same question I raised to Alston: what reason do we have to think that the non-epistemic episode of sensing is doing any justificatory work, as opposed to the conceptual episode of *noticing its features* doing the justificatory work? In other words, why is the occurrence of the sensing itself (as opposed to the noticing of its features) important to the justification of the episode which then counts as a grasping? Of course, *noticing* implies truth (you can't notice a feature of a sensing that isn't there), but typically we don't think that a premise must be true in order to provide justificatory support. Thus Bonevac should agree that Jones's "noticing" that he is having a red sensing could provide justificatory support to his belief that something in front of him is red, even if it was in fact a *mis-noticing*, something that occurred in the absence of a red sensing. In this case the sensing itself seems totally justificatorily inert, while the conceptually structured noticing (or mis-noticing as the case may be) is really what is doing the justificatory work.

Let me clarify this point by using the analogy that Bonevac gives: "A sensing plays a role in justifying a grasping in much the way that... my headache plays a role in justifying the claim that my headache is physical:

My headache exists.

My headache is spatio-temporally located.

Anything that exists and is spatio-temporally located is physical.
Therefore, my headache is physical."¹⁴⁰

The point is simply that the premises can justify the conclusion independently of whether or not the person actually had a headache. The *premise* that I have a headache indeed plays a role in justifying my belief in conclusion of this argument, but that premise belief can play that justificatory role whether or not I actually have a headache, so long as it itself is justified. Thus the actual headache itself (or lack thereof) makes no difference to the justification of the conclusion. However, it might make some difference to the justificatory status of the premise reporting the headache. For example, you might hold the (rather Cartesian) view that (i) S's believing that she has a headache entails that she has a headache and (ii) If S's believing that p entails that p then S is justified in believing that p. You could give the occurrence of the headache a justificatory role by giving *certainly* a justificatory role, and supposing that beliefs about headaches are certain. Let's explore this idea.

Suppose one claims that it is impossible to "mis-notice", to fail to correctly conceptually capture the features of one's sensings. (In the case of the headache analogy, this would be to claim that it is impossible to believe that one is having a headache without its being true.) Bonevac has not provided any argument for the incorrigibility of one's conceptual awareness of the features of one's sensings. (Nor would I guess is he inclined to.) But in any case, this objection misses the point. For even we were to agree, for the sake of the argument, that in point of fact a conceptual noticing of the features of a sensing always gets those features right, the fact that it is

the *noticing* that is doing the justificatory work, and *not* the sensing itself, is still shown by the fact that a belief does not *need* to be true to provide justificatory support (even if in point of fact the belief always is true).

As I said, Bonevac did not try to argue that a belief is justified when it is a token of a type of belief that is always true. But we can see what Sellars would find objectionable about such a view. It explains one's being justified in believing that P (a normative fact) in terms of a non-normative fact, the fact that P is 100% likely to be true.¹⁴¹ Sellars will see this as committing the epistemological version of the naturalistic fallacy. To put it another way, a person does nothing to *entitle* themselves to believe that P -- she does nothing to secure her epistemic *right* to believe that P -- merely by because she happens to believe something which is likely or even necessarily true. But let me return to the main argument, and to my claim that -- absent a view that makes certainty sufficient for justification and which makes beliefs about headaches certain -- my sensing a red sense content plays no role in justifying my belief that I am sensing a red sense content, (just as the headache plays no role in justifying my belief that I have a headache.)

The other way Bonevac could respond is to argue that although I am right to point out that the conceptual awareness (the noticing or mis-noticing) of the features of one's sensings does not have to be *correct* in order to justify the grasping, the

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

¹⁴¹ However, note that Robert Brandom does *not* take reliability to be a non-normative property. For him reliability involves someone being justified in making a certain inference. If truth-conducivity were understood likewise, the above view might avoid falling into the given. We will examine Brandom's view in the next chapter.

awareness does have to itself be *justified* in order to provide justificatory support. If the conceptual awareness (the noticing or mis-noticing) is in fact justified by the sensing, then it will be proper to say that the sensing has a role in justifying the grasping, for the sensing will justify the noticing (or mis-noticing) which in turn justifies the grasping. The problem here is that the original problem that we started out with has recurred. How does the occurrence of the sensing justify the conceptual awareness (the noticing or mis-noticing) of the features of the sensing? Does the occurrence of the sensing justify the conceptual awareness by *entailing* it? If so, then an unacquired ability entails an acquired ability, and we're again impaled on the horns of the trilemma. Suppose we try and take the same escape route Bonevac wanted to take before, and claim that the sensing doesn't entail the noticing (or mis-noticing) all by itself, but only together with other premises. What would these other premises be? Would we require higher-level conceptual noticings (or mis-noticings) of the features of the sensing to justify the first-order conceptual awareness of the features of the sensing? Down this path lies a vicious regress.

Later the article Bonevac is even more explicit about what the premises of the multi-argument would be. In that part of the article he is assuming (for the sake of the argument) that all justification is inferential, and that inference is a relation solely among propositional entities. If *s* is a non-propositional sensing, and *p* is a belief, then there can be no inference *s, therefore, p*. Bonevac's response, following Chisholm, is to take "...the premise to be not the sensing itself but the proposition asserting its

existence...[For example,] E!s, Therefore, p."¹⁴² Bonevac worries about the connection between E!s and p, and eventually expands the argument into this:¹⁴³

1. E!s
 2. Qs
 3. For all x, if E!x and Qx, then (generally) p
- Therefore, p

Translation: 1. I just had a sensing. 2. It was a red one. 3. When I have red sensings, there's generally something red in front of me. Therefore, there's (probably) a red object in front of me. Bonevac's suggestion then is that "[a] sensing plays a role in justifying a grasping without itself having propositional content by having the proposition that it exists or occurs serve as a premise from which the grasping can be inferred."¹⁴⁴

There are a number of problems with this, some of which we have just seen. Since the premises justify their conclusion regardless of whether the sensing really was red or whether it even occurs at all, it is hard to see what role the sensing itself, as opposed to the premises mentioning it, has in justifying the conclusion.

Furthermore, what justifies the first two premises? If we try to give the same sort of justificatory story that we have just given for my belief that there is something red in front of me, a regress threatens, identical to the one I gestured at above with regard to noticings of the noticings. For example, it won't do to say that my belief that I had a red sensing is inferentially justified by the following argument: 1.1. I am having an episode of awareness as of a sensing. 1.2. It is an awareness as of a *red*

¹⁴² Bonevac (2002), p.26.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

sensing. 1.3. Generally when I have an awareness as of a red sensing, I'm actually having a red sensing. 1.4. Therefore, I (probably) am having a red sensing. The regress threatens because we can ask the same questions about premises 1.1 and 1.2 as we did about premises 1 and 2: what justifies me in categorizing my experience this way? Surprisingly Bonevac doesn't say anything about how those first two premises are justified. Putting the regress-generating answer aside, I can guess at two possibilities of how Bonevac might be thinking (perhaps without realizing it) that "I'm having a red sensing" is justified. (A) He might be assimilating "I'm having a red sensing" to "Something looks red to me", and since the latter can have a kind of security that ordinary beliefs about red objects lack (e.g., we typically don't challenge someone to justify "it looks ϕ to me" statements), it might seem that "I'm having a red sensing" has a similar kind of security and thus the explanation for its justification is not as urgent. It seems unlikely that this kind of assimilation, (made explicitly by, e.g., Ayer¹⁴⁵) is being made by Bonevac. So perhaps (B) Bonevac is simply assuming, perhaps without realizing it, that the having of a red sensation justifies the belief that one is having the red sensation. This kind of givenness goes totally unargued for in the article, (and is dangerously close to the conclusion he is trying to argue for). But that Bonevac is thinking along these lines is supported by apparently approving references to Chisholm¹⁴⁶. Perhaps Bonevac thinks that having a red sensing is, in Chisholmian terms, a "self-presenting state." In any case, Bonevac has provided no argument or

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹⁴⁵ See Ayer (1940), p. 25.

¹⁴⁶ Bonevac (2002), p. 26. See Chisholm (1977).

explanation for this kind of givenness if indeed it is what he thinks justifies "I'm having a red sensing."¹⁴⁷

Now let me turn to the other interpretation of the multi-premise argument that Bonevac thinks can explain how sensings can do justificatory work. The above interpretation treated those premises as beliefs available to the agent that would inferentially justify the target (conclusion) belief (which would then count as a grasping). That is an internalist strategy. But another option open to Bonevac is to just scrap the inferentialist conception of justification and use the above argument¹⁴⁸ not as premises that the person must believe in order to inferentially justify his belief that p, but as an *explanation*, which has the form of a deductive argument, for the positive justificatory status of p.¹⁴⁹ In this case we would avoid the troubles associated with how the subject can be justified in believing the premises. The explanation for the positive epistemic status of S's belief that there is a red object in front of him would be that S just had a red sensing and generally speaking, when S has a red sensing, there is a red object in front of him. This would make the fact that p is likely to be true (or

¹⁴⁷ One interesting thing that is worth noting about the justificatory argument that Bonevac claims gives nonconceptual nonpropositional sensings a justificatory role: It takes but a twist of this argument to make it into the trans-level credibility argument that Sellars thinks is essential to the justification of perceptual beliefs. If, instead of having premises saying "I had a sensing" and "It was red", we had a premise saying, "I just tokened *that is red*", and if, instead of Bonevac's third premise we had one that said, "generally when I token *that's red*, there's something red in front of me", then we turn Bonevac's justificatory argument into Sellars's, one that does not buy into givenness. I'll leave off further discussion of the particulars of Sellars's view until the next chapter.

¹⁴⁸ I mean this argument: 1. E!s 2. Qs 3. For all x, if E!x and Qx, then (generally) p, Therefore, p.

¹⁴⁹ This idea was suggested to me by Bill Talbott.

perhaps, if the explanation was expanded a bit, the fact that *p* is the product of a reliable belief-forming mechanism, or something along those lines) the epistemic fact-maker. Put like this, it is very clear why this suggestion would involve givenness: the fact that *p* is likely to be true (or has been reliably produced) is, by itself anyway, a non-epistemic fact, which, according to this explanation, is nevertheless the epistemic fact-maker. From *Sellars's* perspective, the burden would be on Bonevac to provide a convincing story of how this transition, from non-epistemic (not involving epistemic norm-governedness) to epistemic is supposed to work. However, it would certainly open to Bonevac to point the finger back at Sellars and require *him* to justify his confidence in the idea that the (epistemic) naturalistic fallacy is a fallacy, (or what comes to the same thing, that the space of reasons, the realm of epistemic normativity, is irreducible.) Sellars gives no argument for this, as far as I can see.

Let us now turn to the other Sellarsian argument that Bonevac finds against givenness (what Bonevac identifies as the Justification Thesis).

The "only propositional items can do justificatory work" argument

The following argument against the Justification Thesis is attributed to Sellars by Brandom, Rorty and McDowell:

"(4.0.1) Only what has propositional content can play a role in justifying beliefs.

(4.0.2) Sensings lack propositional content.

(4.0.3) Therefore, sensings cannot play a role in justifying beliefs."¹⁵⁰

Bonevac thinks both premises can be objected to.

He goes after the second premise first, attempting to show that sensings can have propositional content even if they presuppose no conceptual capacities. He does this simply by pointing out that there are several different theories of propositional content and on some of these theories sensings (or any event for that matter) can have propositional content. Bonevac says:

In absence of a theory of propositions and concepts, it is difficult to address this issue precisely. ... [But in] traditional model-theoretic semantics, for example, a proposition is a set of worlds or a function from indices to worlds. We could think of sensings, or other events, for that matter, as dividing worlds into those in which they occur and those in which they do not. So, we could represent sensings as propositions. (In effect, the sensing *s* would be represented by the proposition *E!s, s exists*.)¹⁵¹

The first thing to point out is that the reader of EPM should not find themselves "in absence of a theory of propositions and concepts," since Sellars outlines a theory of meaning in part VII, "The Logic of 'Means'". And although the discussion there is quick, Sellars has written numerous articles defending his theory of semantics more thoroughly.¹⁵² Sellarsian semantics has no room for the non-conceptual propositional content that Bonevac needs in order to reject the second premise of the above argument. (This is another example where what Sellars does in EPM is not, as Bonevac might think, irrelevant to the argument against givenness.) Although Bonevac does not argue against Sellarsian semantics, and although he does not take the time to argue for model-theoretic semantics, let us take a closer look at this alternative.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁵² See for example, Sellars (1953b), (1953c), (1964), (1969), (1973a), (1974), (1979), (1980b), and (1981).

If something x can be propositional simply in virtue of the fact that worlds could be divided into the worlds where x exists and worlds where it doesn't, then literally *anything* can be propositional. That's not necessarily a reason to think that model-theoretic semantics is false, but it seems like a good reason to worry that this is *not* the sense of propositional that is being employed in the Sellarsian argument above. It seems less than charitable for Bonevac to attribute to Sellars the idea that only what has propositional content can play a role in justifying beliefs, but then to argue that Sellars failed to realize that essentially there is no distinction between what is propositional and what is not. The structure of the Sellarsian argument was this: "Only what is ϕ can play a role in justifying beliefs. Sensings are not ϕ . Therefore sensings cannot play a role in justifying beliefs." If *anything* can be propositional, perhaps it would be too uncharitable to put "propositional" for ϕ . Bonevac's reason for putting "propositional" for ϕ is straight-forward: "...the paradigm of justification is inference, and the relata of inferences have propositional form."¹⁵³ But the relata of inferences are not *just* propositional. They are propositions *accepted* by the person making the inference. It makes no sense to say that Jones inferred something from a proposition he didn't believe. Thus accepting for the moment that inference is the paradigm of justification, perhaps ϕ should be "a proposition accepted by the person the justification of whose belief is in question." In this case, even if sensings had a propositional structure, they couldn't play a role in justifying beliefs unless the sensings are themselves believings.

¹⁵³ Bonevac (2002), p. 23.

It's also worth taking a look at the more specific version of model-theoretic semantics, dynamic semantics, that Bonevac sets out:

In dynamic semantics... the meaning of a sentence is a function from contexts to contexts. One can spell out contexts in various ways, but it suffices in general to think of contexts as corresponding to mental states. ... All we need to assign a sensing propositional content, then, is to think of it as transforming a person's antecedent mental state into another mental state. We might interpret this in causal terms, but we might use the same model to understand a sensing's normative characteristics. Say that perceiver *x* is or would be justified in being in mental state *m*. *X*'s sensing in that context would justify *x* in being in mental state *m**. So, sensings map mental states (in the context of which the sensing occurs) to mental states (incorporating whatever the perceiver ought to believe, etc., after so sensing in that context). On this view, then, sensings are formally similar to assertings. They have propositional content.¹⁵⁴

This attempt to assign propositional content to a sensing by supposing that they map mental states to mental states supposes that in a given context a sensing would justify the person in being in a different mental state, presumably a belief state. This strategy is directly question-begging in a context where Bonevac is trying to establish that sensings can play a role in justifying beliefs. (Had he decided that the propositional content of a sensing would be determined by its *causal* role instead of its normative role, he would not have directly begged the question. However if we understand the sensing only non-normatively we are left without an explanation of the connection between the non-normative and the normative; the sensing and the justification of a belief. We are face to face with what I outlined as the heart of givenness, but no closer to explaining how it is possible.)

Bonevac also argues against the first premise of the Sellarsian argument. He argues that sensings can play a justificatory role even if they do not have propositional content. He thinks that Sellarsians might think otherwise on the grounds of a strict

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

inferentialist view of justification. That is, if you think that something can only play a role in justifying the belief that *p* by being a premise in an argument with *p* as the conclusion, then, since premises must be propositional, only a propositional item can play a justificatory role. Bonevac argues against this strict inferentialist view of justification.

The first thing to note is that it is not correct to attribute to Sellars a strict inferentialist view of justification. I will argue in chapter two that Sellars does *not* have a strict inferentialist view of justification.¹⁵⁵ Part of Sellars's project in EPM is to defend an account of non-inferential justification that does not buy into givenness. The difference between a justifier that buys into givenness and a justifier that does not is not the difference between a non-propositional justifier and a propositional justifier. As I have already explained, the difference is one between the non-normative and normative. But it will be instructive to follow out Bonevac's argument here in any case.

One suggestion he makes as a replacement for the strict inferentialist view of justification is the reliabilist conception of justification. "This, in effect, would give the causal role played by the sensings justificatory power. To put it crudely, sensings could play a role in justifying graspings by being part of a reliable causal process that produces the grasping."¹⁵⁶ To say that this theory of justification gives "the causal role played by the sensings justificatory power" makes it relatively easy to see why such a

¹⁵⁵ Although, as we'll see, part of Sellars's account of non-inferential justification does include a certain inferential requirement, which is why many have taken Sellars to have an inferentialist picture of justification.

theory would fall into givenness, for it would suppose that a non-normative feature of the sensing (its causal role) would be sufficient for its having an epistemically normative feature (its being able to justify a belief). Simply proposing such a theory of justification does not begin to address the issue of the connection between the normative and the non-normative, and this is, as I pointed out earlier, what would be required of a successful defense of givenness.¹⁵⁷

Bonevac's other strategy for rejecting the premise that only what has propositional content can play a role in justifying beliefs is to claim that a nonconceptual, nonpropositional sensing can play a role in justifying a belief by having a belief *about* the sensing justify the target conclusion belief. We have already seen this strategy in depth above. I claimed this strategy has two problems: there is a question about how the premise(s) that mention the sensing are themselves justified, and since the premises can do the same justificatory work whether or not the sensing occurs, it does not seem like the sensing itself (as opposed to the beliefs about it, or the conceptually structured *noticing* of it) does any justificatory work.

To summarize our discussion of Bonevac: He finds two arguments against the Justification Thesis which he takes to constitute the framework of givenness: (1) the trilemma from EPM §6, and (2) the "no nonpropositional justifiers" argument. His response to the trilemma is that a nonconceptual sensing can play a role in justifying a belief without entailing it. His example of how this can be so is that a belief *about* a

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

sensing can be a premise in an argument that inferentially justifies the target belief. We saw that in such a case the sensing itself plays no role at all in justifying the belief. Bonevac's response to the "no nonpropositional justifiers" argument is twofold. On the one hand, he argues that sensings, though nonconceptual, still might be propositional if we are employing a model-theoretic semantics. The specific variety of model-theoretic semantics, Dynamic Semantics, assigned a proposition to a sensing only by assuming the very thing Bonevac was attempting to show, that sensings can play a role in justifying beliefs. On the other hand, Bonevac argues that sensings might play a role in justifying a belief even if they are nonpropositional. Here he relies on the same device he employed in his response to the trilemma: a nonconceptual, nonpropositional sensing can play a role in justifying a belief in virtue of the fact that there is a premise mentioning the sensing in an argument which inferentially justifies the target belief. Bonevac (a) is wrong to think that this would be sufficient to give the sensing a role in justifying the belief and (b) fails to address the question of what would justify the premise that "I'm having a red sensing."

Richard Schantz

Richard Schantz is another defender of givenness. In his article, "The Given Regained. Reflections on the Sensuous Content of Experience,"¹⁵⁷ he claims to establish both (1) that "there is a given element in experience which is independent of

¹⁵⁷ We will discuss reliabilism more in the next chapter. See also Brandom (1998a).

¹⁵⁸ Schantz (2001).

thought and which is possessed of a distinctive nonconceptual content," and (2) that "this given element... is indeed fit to play an important evidential role in the justification of beliefs about physical objects."¹⁵⁹ However, like Alston and others, he devotes most of his time trying to establish the first of these claims and provides almost nothing in the way of argument for the second. After spending nearly the entire positive portion of the essay arguing for nonconceptual experiences, he simply says,

According to my alternative picture, experiences are subjective representational states with objective nonconceptual content, and yet they can serve as justifiers for our beliefs. The epistemic significance of experience does not depend on its conceptualization. If, under normal circumstances, an object appears redly to me, then, it is quite plausible to say, I am more justified in believing that it is red rather than that it is blue or yellow. In such a situation I have, in the way the object appears to me, a reason to believe that it is red. Thus, the positive epistemic status of a perceptual belief depends upon being appeared to in appropriate ways.¹⁶⁰

Insomuch as there is any argument here at all it may be, like what we get from Alston, an argument from the plausibility of our ordinary practices of saying things like, "That looks like a computer, so it probably is", which I have already discussed.

But I think also that the idea that the nonconceptual visual appearance of a red object could justify one in believing that there is a red object there has whatever intuitive plausibility that it does in part because of the unfortunate fact that it is really difficult in the case of colors to separate the nonconceptual experience from one's experiential conceptualization of the object *as red*.¹⁶¹ We have a really hard time imagining someone seeing a red patch without being able to see it *as red*, or even *as*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

¹⁶¹ The confusion is exacerbated by Schantz's use of the first person in his example. A person cannot report, in the first person, of his own experience's containing redness without conceptualizing it as red.

being a different color from the colors surrounding it, or at least as having some color or other. That this unfortunate fact -- the fact that it is hard to separate the conceptual from the nonconceptual components of color experience -- is partly responsible for whatever intuitive plausibility is behind the idea that nonconceptual experiences can justify beliefs is demonstrated by the fact that the intuitive plausibility is greatly diminished when we use an example where it is easier to separate the conceptual and nonconceptual components, just as I tried to do with Alston and the case of the mango. Suppose that Schantz had instead written, "If, under normal circumstances an object has the (nonconceptual) appearance of a Picasso painting to Jones, then, it is quite plausible to say, Jones is more justified in believing that it is a Picasso rather than that it is a Rembrandt or a Monet. In such a situation, Jones has, in the way the object (nonconceptually) appears to him, a reason to believe that it is a Picasso." Now to make the case one in which the conceptual and nonconceptual components of experience are easily separated, we simply have to imagine that Jones has no ability whatsoever to recognize Picasso paintings on sight. He cannot tell a Picasso from a Rembrandt or a Monet. With regard to the concepts of *being a Picasso*, *being a Rembrandt*, *being a Monet*, etc., the paintings all look the same to him. He cannot use any of those concepts to distinguish the paintings. If you ask him whether he likes Picassos better than Rembrandts and he grumbles, "Heck, I don't know. Those paintings all look the same to me." *Nonconceptually* speaking, of course, each painting looks different to him. In this case I don't think it is plausible at all to say that the appearance of the painting gives Jones any more reason to think that the painting is

a Picasso rather than a Rembrandt or a Monet. Suppose that he comes to believe, by reading the card next to the painting, that it is a Picasso. Would the degree to which he is justified in believing that it is a Picasso be increased any by his looking at it, his being visually presented with the nonconceptual Picasso appearance? I do not think so.

One way Schantz could respond to this would be to argue that there is a privileged set of nonconceptual appearances¹⁶² -- color and shape appearances, perhaps -- and only members of this privileged set can be given in the sense of being nonconceptual justifiers. If this were the case, it would be illegitimate for me to switch the example from being about red and blue to being about Picassos and Rembrandts. Let's put aside the question of what argument might be used to establish that simple colors and shapes can be given by the senses while Picassos and Rembrandts cannot. For even if there were a good argument, this response has a high cost. Most of our beliefs are not about colors and shapes but about ordinary objects -- trees, chairs, Picassos, and the like. Thus most of our ordinary perceptual beliefs would not be directly justified by the nonconceptual appearances, since the relevant appearances would not belong to the privileged set. As for an *indirect* justification by appeal to the privileged given appearances, I can't see any real prospects in the idea that my belief that this is a Picasso would be justified by my belief that there is a red patch here and a

¹⁶² By 'nonconceptual appearances', I have in mind the sorts of appearances that Alston took to be reported by his nonconceptual use of "x looks F".

blue patch there.¹⁶³ -- Not, in any case, without bringing in the conceptualization that would unify the patches as being the sort of patches that together look like a Picasso painting, and this would simply be to rely on the conceptual to do the justificatory work, which is not what Schantz wants.¹⁶⁴

Of course, Schantz could always switch his strategy and try a reliabilist approach. He could say that having certain color and shape appearances given in sense experience is what enables one to become (with some training) a reliable discriminator of Picasso paintings. Then he could say that one's judgment that *that is a Picasso* is justified by that reliable discriminatory ability. We have already seen what Sellars would say to this sort of view. And in fact, we will discuss it more in the next chapter, in the context of a certain dilemma the avoidance of which substantively shapes much of Sellars's own philosophizing.

¹⁶³ Even Carnap admitted that the project of radical reduction that he attempted in *Der Aufbau* (Carnap, 1928) was a failure. (Thanks to Cass Weller for this point.)

¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, even if it could be shown that there is a privileged set of nonconceptual appearances, it is my contention that the same point I made with Picassos and Rembrandts would apply to these simple (say, color and shape) appearances as well. As I stated above, however, such a case is much more difficult to make clear owing to the difficulty that we have in such cases separating the conceptual from the nonconceptual.

Chapter Two: Sellars's Positive Account of Perceptual Knowledge in EPM

The overarching goal of this chapter is to further set out the Sellarsian system and to move us closer to a point at which we are ready for the presentation of my positive account of the norm-governedness, or rulishness (if I may put it like that) a perceptual tokening must have if it is to count as perceptual knowledge. My view is a modification of the one I attribute to Sellars; understanding his account of perceptual knowledge will put us in a much better position to understand mine. I shall expend the bulk of my energies in this chapter therefore, in doing my best to elucidate those parts of Sellars's views on perceptual knowledge that will help us to better understand my own. I shall *not* claim, by the end of this chapter, to have given anything like a complete or comprehensive picture of Sellars's views on perceptual knowledge. Sellars is the kind of systematic thinker that makes such endeavors foolish to contemplate within the scope of single chapter. It has been said that one cannot fully understand one part of Sellars's philosophy without understanding it all.

Although the views I shall be setting out in this chapter I will be attributing to Sellars, my primary aim will *not* be to defend that attribution. (I will do *some* of that, especially when doing so is useful for some other reason.) Even if the views I attribute to Sellars were not in fact his, they would still be able to play the role I intend them to play in my larger project.

My discussion of Sellars's positive view of perceptual knowledge will focus almost exclusively on section 35 of EPM. There Sellars sets out his view in a way that

makes close contact with the way I have been setting things out in the introductory chapter and how I want to be thinking about things when I put my own view on the table. In those sections Sellars describes two "hurdles" a perceptual tokening must clear if it is to count as perceptual knowledge. In these two requirements -- or rather, in the ways that he thinks they must be met -- lies the kernel of Sellars's account of the rulishness of perceptual knowledge.

But before we can get into the details of §35, there are some lengthy detours that we must make. One of these detours takes us on an excursion of Sellars's view of meaning and concept possession. Although I do not have the space here for a thorough defense of Sellarsian semantics, as against all possible alternatives, having on the table at least the bare bones is requisite for an adequate understanding of his theory of perceptual knowledge. They are very much connected. Furthermore, although I am largely in agreement with the Sellarsian perspective on meaning and concept possession, I will highlight an important point on which I disagree with Sellars. My disagreement with Sellars puts me in agreement with John McDowell who criticizes Sellars on this point in his book *Mind and World*.¹⁶⁵ It is one of the principle motivations for McDowell's casting about for an alternative philosophy of mind while still respecting the Sellarsian lessons about avoiding the given. But before that detour, another one is in order. We must consider a dilemma that faces virtually any normative area of philosophy and the avoidance of which substantively shapes both Sellars's theory of meaning and his theory of perceptual knowledge (as well as mine).

¹⁶⁵ McDowell (1994).

The structure of this chapter will be this. First, I will discuss, the dilemma at a very general level. Then I will talk about how it specifically applies to theories of meaning and concept possession (which I will sometimes lump under the general heading of "intentionality"). Then I will briefly sketch Sellars's theory of meaning. Next I will discuss how the dilemma surfaces in the case of theories perceptual knowledge. That, finally, will put us in a good position to set out Sellars's positive theory of perceptual knowledge. Toward the end of the chapter I will indicate the parts Sellars's theory that I find problematic.

A Dilemma: Rule Following vs. Rule Conforming

Suppose there is some norm that says that one ought to do A in circumstances C. And suppose that just a moment ago Wendy was in C and she did A. If Wendy's doing A was the sort of behavior that makes it appropriate to give credit to Wendy for having done what she ought to have done, then her performing that action in those circumstances cannot have been an *accident*. Rather, the norm (or *rule* as I'll often call it, following Sellars preferred vocabulary¹⁶⁶) that one ought to do A in C needs to be somehow *in* the behavior such that it is no accident that Wendy does the right thing in C, and that this non-accidentalness is of the sort that makes it appropriate to praise Wendy herself for doing A. I'll call such behaviors *norm-governed* (or *rule-governed*) behaviors. The horns of our dilemma are opposing (and unsatisfactory) accounts of norm-governedness.

¹⁶⁶ See, for example, Sellars (1949), (1954).

Although I will be particularly concerned with the dilemma as it arises in connection with *epistemic* norms (as opposed to, e.g., incarnations of the dilemma in *ethics*), I will first set it out in a very general way. Then I will examine versions of the dilemma that arise in theories of meaning and concept possession on the one hand, and theories perceptual knowledge on the other. Sellars is most explicit about the dilemma in "Some Reflections on Language Games" (Sellars, 1954), but it is in the background of many of his articles.

Followism

In the first of our opposing camps we have what I will call *followism*.¹⁶⁷ The followist strategy holds that the key to norm-governedness is to be found in the notion of one's following a rule. We can think of a case of explicit rule following as involving three parts: (a) S has some kind of awareness of the rule that *one ought to do A in circumstances C*, (b) S has some kind of awareness of the fact that the circumstances are C, and (c) S does A *because* of (a) and (b).¹⁶⁸

We said earlier that if Wendy's doing A is to count as norm-governed (such that she herself would be due the credit for having done what was required of her in those circumstances) then her doing A in C cannot have been an *accident*. Followism

¹⁶⁷ Ryle spends a good portion of chapter two of *Concept of Mind* (Ryle, 1949) arguing against the view, calling it simply the Intellectualist Legend. Because I know of nowhere where the dilemma is talked about at this general level, it's hard to cite philosophers appropriately categorized as followists *in general* (as opposed to having a followist theory of understanding, for example). But Ryle certainly has Cartesians (and empiricists still under Cartesian influence) in his sights.

¹⁶⁸ Sellars (1973d), §18 cites a passage of Ernest Nagel (1954, 290) that fits this structure.

prevents accidentalness by requiring norm-governed behavior to have been *on purpose*.

There are a number of problems with followism, some of which we'll look at more closely when we look at the specific varieties of followism that arise with regard to perceptual knowledge and meaning. But for now I'll just briefly sketch a few.

First, one might object that it is implausible to think that every instance of norm-governed behavior is preceded by a bit of practical reasoning. Much of one's behavior occurs without first saying to oneself, "One ought to do A in C. I'm in C. Therefore, I shall do A now." The followist can respond by making a modification to the theory such that a behavior is the result of rule-following if either it was preceded by the practical reasoning, *or* an adequate explanation of the behavior would reconstruct it *as though* it were the result of prior practical reasoning. For example, suppose we ask Ethan to explain why he stopped at the intersection. He might say, "Well I wasn't really thinking about it at the time (because I was talking on my cell phone) but I guess I stopped because one should stop when there's a red light and there was a red light at the intersection." Ethan's response helps to make sense of his stopping by rendering it *as though* he had first thought to himself, "People should stop at red lights. Here's a red light. So I should stop."

Second, it might be claimed that the requirement that a person explicitly know the rule in question is too steep, that there are cases of norm-governed behavior where the person in question would not be able to cite the norm. Children, for example, surely are capable of norm-governed behavior, yet many could not cite the rule. The

followist can go some distance toward answering this objection by weakening the requirement slightly. Instead of requiring a person to know the rule in the sense that she could cite it on command, the followist might only require that the person know it in the sense that an idealized employment of the Socratic method could reveal to the person that she was indeed committed to the norm.

Third, there are many different possible rules that the person might try to put into play in a particular circumstance. At least one of these is the right rule for those circumstances and many are wrong or nonsensical. If a person's doing A is norm-governed in part because he put into play the *right* rule, then his putting into play the right rule needs also to be non-accidental—that is, norm-governed. Thus a regress threatens. This objection claims that followism needs to add the requirement that one's putting into play *that particular rule* (call it R1) also needs to be norm-governed. But in order for that rule selection to be norm-governed according to followism, there would have to be another rule, R2, which says, "in circumstances C, one ought to follow rule R1.", and the person would have to put R2 into play in just the same way that R1 was. But of course, the selection of R2 would also have to be norm-governed and so on. Ryle raises this objection to the version of followism (what Ryle calls *The Intellectualist Legend*) which seeks to explain the particular sort of norm-governedness that makes it appropriate to call a piece of behavior "intelligent":

According to the legend, whenever an agent does anything intelligently, his act is preceded and steered by another internal act of considering a regulative proposition appropriate to his practical problem. But what makes him consider the one maxim which is appropriate rather than any of the thousands which are not? Why does the hero not find himself calling to mind a cooking-recipe or a rule of Formal Logic? Perhaps he does, but then his intellectual process is silly and not sensible. Intelligently reflecting how to act is, among other things, considering what is pertinent

and disregarding what is inappropriate. Must we say then that for the hero's reflections how to act to be intelligent he must first reflect how best to reflect how best to act?¹⁶⁹

Our fourth objection is another regress Ryle finds in followism. Not only must the selection of the rule be norm-governed but the *application* of the rule must be rule governed as well:

Next, supposing still that to act reasonably I must first perpend the reason for so acting, how am I led to make a suitable application of the reason to the particular situation which my action is to meet? For the reason, or maxim, is inevitably a proposition of some generality. It cannot embody specifications to fit every detail of the particular state of affairs. Clearly, once more, I must be sensible and not stupid, and this good sense cannot itself be a product of the intellectual acknowledgement of any general principle. A soldier does not become a shrewd general merely by endorsing the strategic principles of Clausewitz; he must also be competent to apply them. Knowing how to apply maxims cannot be reduced to, or derived from, the acceptance of those or any other maxims.¹⁷⁰

Fifth and finally we have yet another potential regress. This one involves the requirement that one be aware of the circumstances. Being aware of the circumstances is yet another norm-governed episode. In order for the awareness to engage the rule, one must be aware of the circumstances under the description that figures in the rule. If the rule says, "when in front of the king, one ought to kneel", then one must have an awareness of the king *as* the king. That means that the awareness of the circumstances must be a conceptual episode that categorizes the circumstances as being of a certain sort, as opposed to other ways in which it might have been classified. The possibility of misclassification raises troubles not because we require conceptualizations to be infallible but because norm-governedness requires that it not be a lucky accident when the classification gets it right. We'll return to this objection when we look at the

¹⁶⁹ Ryle (1949, 31). It's worth noting that these Rylean objections have echoes in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*.

variety of followism involving perceptual knowledge. The traditional regress on premises which sometimes motivates appeals to the given can be understood as a version of this regress involving the awareness of the circumstances.

Conformism

At the opposite end of the spectrum from followism is what I'll call conformism. Whereas followism claimed that a piece of behavior is norm-governed when it is the result of following a rule, conformism claims that the norm ("one ought to do A in C") is appropriately *in* the behavior when the behavior is an instance of a general disposition on the part of the person to do A when in C. Persons who lean in the direction of conformism tend to think that it is too much to require that a person know and follow the rule that one ought to do A in C in order to be appropriately subject to praise for having just done A in C. The conformist merely requires that the person's behavior *conforms* to that rule in the sense that generally speaking, whenever she's in circumstances C she does A. Remember that if Wendy's doing A at time t is to be genuinely norm-governed in the way that would underwrite our praising her for doing the right thing, then it cannot have been a lucky accident that she just did A in C. Followism prevented accidentalness by requiring the behavior to have been on purpose. Conformism prevents accidentalness by requiring the behavior to have been part of a larger pattern of behavior, a disposition to do A in C. The reason it's no accident that Wendy did A at time t is because at time t she was in circumstances C and when she's in C, she almost always does A.

¹⁷⁰ Ryle (1949, 31)

Let's now quickly look at some of the general problems with conformism.

First of all, conformism does not require the person to be aware that she tends to do A in C. Some might worry whether it makes sense to give credit to a person for having done the right thing when that person has no idea that she's done whatever it is she's being applauded for doing. She might not even have the concepts involved in the rule (the concepts of A and C). She may in fact have been attempting to do something else entirely, perhaps something *not* worthy of applause, but it coincidentally brings it about that she always does A in C. Take the rule "one ought to kneel when in front of the king." Suppose that Elinore knows nothing about the rules of the court, but that she has a strange allergic reaction to the perfume that the king wears such that when in his presence her knees buckle. In this case her behavior conforms to the rule: whenever she's in front of the king, she kneels. But it would be a mistake to applaud her as a loyal and respectful subject. Her kneeling in front of the king has nothing to do with her being respectful and courteous; it's because of her allergies. It is true that her kneeling in front of the king last Tuesday wasn't an accident in the sense of having been a freak one-time occurrence. (After all, it happens *every* time she's in front of him.) But there's another sense in which it seems like an accident that her behavior conforms to that norm. If the king didn't happen to wear the perfume that makes her dizzy, her behavior wouldn't happen to fall in line with the rule.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ The objection would be the same even if what caused her knees to buckle was something connected, as a matter of physical necessity, with the presence of the king. Suppose we change the case, so that the rule is "one ought to be kind to creatures with

Norm governed behavior needs to be *because* of the rule in some sense. Sellars insists that behavior that merely conforms to a norm is too externally related to that norm to count as genuinely norm-governed behavior. (Sellars, 1954, §6.)

The deeper objection here is that an account that explains norm-governedness in terms of descriptive regularities will license what Sellars will find to be an illicit transition from the descriptive to the normative – the very move that is at the heart of what he finds objectionable about the given. For Sellars, an adequate account of norm-governedness must avoid falling into naturalistic fallacies (or cousins of the fallacy that involve epistemic instead of moral norms). Thus the explanation of norm-governedness must appeal to normative facts and not descriptive uniformities.

Meaning and Intentionality

Now it is time that we make the discussion of followism and conformism a bit more concrete by looking at examples of each that occur in the arena of meaning and intentionality. Later we'll look at the dilemma as it occurs in accounts of perceptual knowledge.

a heart.” Elinore knows nothing of this rule, but she likes being kind to creatures with kidneys. Her behavior will conform to the rule. And necessarily so (in one sense), since ‘creature with kidney’ is co-extensive with ‘creature with a heart’. Yet it still seems a lucky accident that her behavior conforms to the norm.

Followism in theories of meaning and intentionality: regulism

In the *Philosophical Investigations*¹⁷², Wittgenstein concerns himself with (among many other things) such issues as what it is to understand a sentence (for example, a command), what it is to know the meaning of a word or sentence, what it is to have a concept, and in general what it is to have intentional states. All these I lump under the general heading of *intentionality*. Wittgenstein and Sellars¹⁷³ recognize that intentionality is a normative domain. As Robert Brandom puts it,

"Attributing an intentional state is attributing a normative status." ...Intentional states and acts have contents in virtue of which they are essentially liable to evaluations of the "force of better reason." ...This "force of better reason" is a normative force. It concerns what further beliefs one is *committed* to acknowledge, what one *ought* to conclude, what one is *committed* or *entitled* to say or do. Talk of what is a reason for what has to do in the first instance not with how people do or *would* act but with how they *should* act, what they should acknowledge. The sophist may not in fact respond to this "force" but even the sophist *ought* to. To understand rationality and states whose contents are articulated according to their role in reasoning, one must understand the force of such 'oughts.'¹⁷⁴

Since intentional states are, in my vocabulary, norm-governed states, an analysis of intentional states will be prone to the followism-conformism dilemma. The view that the normative status of intentional states is to be understood on the model of explicit rule following we will call (following Brandom¹⁷⁵) *regulism*, a species of followism¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (1958). I'll often abbreviate this work 'PI'.

¹⁷³ And others: Dummett, Davidson, McDowell and especially Brandom.

¹⁷⁴ Brandom (1994) pp. 16-17.

¹⁷⁵ See Brandom (1994) pp. 18 ff.

¹⁷⁶ Not to be confused with what Sellars calls *regulism* in Sellars (1949). There, what Sellars calls regulism is view that epistemic concepts and problems are to be understood in terms of rules (or norms), in particular rules of language.

The idea behind regulism is that understanding a sentence or knowing the meaning of a word is to have what Wittgenstein calls an *interpretation*. For example, suppose the sentence to be understood is “that apple is red”. According to regulism, understanding that sentence, grasping its concepts, would require having an interpretation, where this consists of further sentences spelling out the meaning of the words in question: “ ‘that’ means...”, “ ‘apple’ means...”, “ ‘red’ means...”, etc. These sentences set out the rules for the proper use of the expressions. Regulism is the view that one understands the meaning of a sentence in virtue of having in mind the rules for the use of the expressions that figure in that sentence. To understand a word is to know the rules for its use. To learn a language is to learn its rules. To employ concepts (for example, in speaking a language one understands) is to follow the rules specifying the proper application of those concepts.

Wittgenstein is of course famous for saying that meaning is use.¹⁷⁷ He recognizes that this *use* is a norm-governed one. But he is quite opposed to the view that knowing the meaning of some word ‘w’ is knowing the rules for the proper use of ‘w’, that an intentional episode (say, a meaningful utterance of “that’s a w!”) must be a case of following the rules for w. Wittgenstein is no regulist.

¹⁷⁷ See *PI* §43: “For a large class of cases – though not for all – in which we employ the word ‘meaning’ it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language.” Sellars agrees: “To think of a system of qualities and relations is, I shall argue, to use symbols governed by a system of rules which, we might say, *implicitly define* these symbols by giving them a specific task to perform in the linguistic economy. The linguistic meaning of a word is entirely constituted by the rules of its use.” Sellars (1949), p.302 (reprinted in Sellars (1980a), p.142).

And neither is Sellars.¹⁷⁸ Both of them in fact, offer regress arguments against regulism that are specific versions of the regress arguments we saw followism fall into. Sellars refutes regulism by pointing out that *knowing a rule* is yet another norm-governed intentional state, and thus if knowing the meaning of sentence S required knowing the rules governing S, then knowing the meaning of S would require knowing the meaning of R1, where R1 is a sentence formulating the rules governing S. But knowing the meaning of R1 would mean knowing the meaning of R2, a sentence formulating the rules governing the use of R1, and so on. Regulism seems to require not just that you know the rules, but that you know the rules that govern the rules, and the rules that govern the rules that govern the rules, *ad infinitum*.¹⁷⁹

Wittgenstein's regress seizes on the (closely related) fact that rules don't interpret themselves. On one understanding of a rule it might tell you to do one thing, but on another interpretation of the rule it might be telling you to do the exact opposite. Any action can be made to accord with the rule given a certain interpretation.¹⁸⁰ So you need rules for interpreting the rules. For example: Mom sets down the rule, "Junior must be in bed by nine." When Junior is caught staying up late, he defends himself thus: "When you said 'nine', I thought you meant 'nine AM'." So mother sets down an interpretation for her initial rule: "By 'nine', I mean *nine PM*." When Junior is again caught staying up late he says, "By 'nine PM', I thought you meant '*nine PM*'

¹⁷⁸ The dilemma between followism and conformism as it occurs in the issue of learning a language is the main theme of Sellars's "Some Reflections on Language Games," Sellars (1954).

¹⁷⁹ Sellars's regress argument in the opening section of Sellars (1954) actually involved the learning of a whole language, not one sentence. The essence is the same.

London time.' Junior can make his behavior -- no matter what behavior it is -- in accord with Mom's bedtime rule, given a certain interpretation of that rule (or interpretations of her further interpretations, etc.). Often to stop this regress the regulist will end up going beyond regulism to either Platonism (the regress is stopped by one's non-linguistic, non-conceptual grasp of a universal, a grasp which does not need further interpretation), or the experientially given (the regress is stopped by one's immediate access to, say, a red patch in one's visual field which supplies the content for the word 'red' in a way that is supposed to not need interpreting). Needless to say, neither Wittgenstein nor Sellars is happy with either of these ways of stopping the regress.¹⁸¹

In "Some Reflections On Language Games," Sellars formulates a version of the regress as it applies in particular to observation words like 'red', and its unhappy stopping place quite nicely:

The idea that 'undefined descriptive predicates' (e.g. 'red') acquire meaning because we come to obey 'semantical rules' (e.g., *red objects are to be called 'red'*) clearly presupposes the existence of prelinguistic concepts. Now there appear to be two possible lines that can be taken with respect to such ur-concepts:

(1) They are interpreted as a structure of symbols and, hence, *in our broader sense*, as a *language*. In this case, it is as though when asked, 'How did German words come to be meaningful to Schmidt?', someone were to say, 'Well, before learning German he knew English -- though not to speak out loud -- and his compatriots, by a clever combination of gestures and the production of vocables in the presence of objects, brought him to formulate to himself (in English) and obey such rules as "red objects are to be called *rot*".' Clearly, a regress is lurking which can only

¹⁸⁰ See *PI*, §201.

¹⁸¹ Sellars fact finds these two ways of stopping the regress to be, at bottom, the same: "Here we must pay our respects to John Dewey, who has so clearly seen that the conception of the cognitive given-ness of sense-data is both the last stand and the entering wedge of rationalism. Thus, since anything which can be called cognition involves classification, the conception of the cognitive given-ness of sense-data involves as a necessary condition the givenness of universals." Sellars (1949) pp. 304-305. (Reprinted in Sellars (1980a) pp. 144-145.)

be stopped by admitting that the meaningfulness of at least one symbolic system is not clarified by the idea of obeying semantical rules.

(2) As a second alternative, the ur-concepts may be conceived as pre-symbolic abilities to recognize items as belonging to *kinds*, or, perhaps, to systems of resembling particulars. This, of course, puts one squarely in a classic 'mental eye' type of position according to which the human mind has an innate ability to be aware (given some contextual focusing) of abstract entities. And a mental eye is a mental eye even if its objects are such modest items as *that* one immediately experienced item is red, or *that* one such item resembles another.¹⁸²

Conformism in Theories of Meaning and Intentionality: Regularism (a.k.a. The Thermometer View)

On the other end of the spectrum from regulism we have the view that analyzes one's intentional states in terms of regularities, uniformities in the person's behavior, in other words, behavioral dispositions. Brandom calls this conformist theory of intentionality *regularism*.¹⁸³ Sellars calls it, following H. H. Price, the Thermometer View.¹⁸⁴ Sellars puts it this way:

...there is a temptation to suppose the word 'red' means the quality *red* by virtue of these two facts: briefly, that it has the *syntax* of a predicate, and the fact that it is a *response* (in certain circumstances) to red objects.¹⁸⁵

I noted above that where the norms are epistemic, as they are in the case of norms involved in intentionality, a conformist account of norm-governedness will obviously be considered by Sellars to be a case of givenness. It analyzes norm-governedness in terms of mere descriptive regularities.

Brandom launches another objection to regulism. He calls this the gerrymandering problem.¹⁸⁶ The general conformist strategy is to explain why a

¹⁸² Sellars (1954), §37.

¹⁸³ Brandom (1994), p. 26 ff.

¹⁸⁴ Sellars (1956) §31, Price (1953) p. 185.

¹⁸⁵ Sellars (1956) §31.

particular token bit of behavior *b* was (epistemically) praiseworthy, norm-governed behavior by appealing to the (merely descriptive) fact that *b* was an instance of a regularity, a behavioral disposition. But every bit of behavior, including *b*, will be an instance of a number of different regularities simultaneously. To take Sellars's example above, suppose *b* is a tokening, by *S*, of "*that's red*." If we just focus on tokens of that type, *S*'s past behavior exhibits several different regularities: he (usually) only produces tokens of that sort when something red is in front of him, but also only when his mouth is not overly dry, and thus far he has only produced that token in front of items that are both red and less than a cubic mile in size, and only when he is near the surface of the earth, etc. And there will also always be a huge number of dispositions that *b* is *not* an instance of. There's a question of which regularity is the one that matters for determining whether *b* is norm-governed. As Brandom says, "There is simply no such thing as *the* pattern or regularity exhibited by a stretch of past behavior, which can be appealed to in judging some candidate bit of future behavior as regular or irregular, and hence, on this line, correct or incorrect."¹⁸⁷ If the conformist strategy is one that couches its analysis in descriptive terms, then it does not seem to have the resources to say which regularity is the *right* one, from the perspective of norm-governedness. It's not good enough that one's behavior is the product of habit. There's a difference between good habits and bad ones, and the bare notion of a uniformity does not seem to be enough to distinguish them.

¹⁸⁶ Brandom (1994) pp. 28-29.

¹⁸⁷ Brandom (1994) p.28.

Another problem with regularism is that different concepts share (so to speak) the same regularity. For example, granting for the moment that the regularist can overcome the gerrymandering objection, he might want to say something like the following: "In order to have the concept of *red*, one simply has to be disposed to respond to the presence of red things with some linguistic token like '*that's red*'." But if Jones has the disposition to respond to red things with linguistic token L, then he also thereby has the disposition to respond to electromagnetic radiation having wavelengths falling within such-and-such a range (i.e., the *red* range) with L. That's presumably also the disposition Jones would need to have in order to have the concept of *electromagnetic radiation having wavelengths falling within such-and-such a range*. Thus it would seem that regularism implies that one cannot have the concept of *red* without also having the concept of *electromagnetic radiation having wavelengths falling within such-and-such a range*. But that's absurd. One can clearly have the concept of *red* without having the more complicated scientific concept. That there are different concepts that share the same regularity shows that the regularity is insufficient to individuate concepts.¹⁸⁸

Sellars also points out that such accounts of meaning are hopeless when it comes to words like 'of' and 'and'.¹⁸⁹ Sometimes the regularism view is bolstered by the fact that statements like "'rot' means *red*" look like relational statements. If *means* statements are relational, then *means* is presumably a relation between a word and an

¹⁸⁸ Sellars makes a similar response to Roderick Firth in §8 of the appendix of lecture 1 of "The Structure of Knowledge" (Sellars, 1971).

¹⁸⁹ See for example Sellars's "Empiricism and Abstract Entities" (Sellars, 1963c).

object. Regularism specifies that relation: the relation that a "_____ means" statement asserts to obtain between a word and an object is that the presence of the object regularly triggers tokens of the word. Red objects regularly trigger English speakers to say 'red' and German speakers to say 'rot'. This picture -- both the idea of meaning as a relation, and in particular the regularist idea that that relation is one of regular triggering -- becomes extremely implausible once we see that there is no clear object that could trigger the word 'and' or 'of' or a whole host of other words. If one is a Platonist, I suppose there is always the presence of the universal Conjunction. But what's the universal for "of-ness"? (And anyway, the sorts of philosophers hoping to ground facts about meaning in facts about regularities between words and objects are *not* typically Platonists. They would hold that the relata of meaning-statements are words and concrete objects.)

McDowell does a nice job of summarizing Wittgenstein's struggle to wiggle between the horns of the regulism-regularism dilemma:

Wittgenstein's problem is to steer a course between a Scylla and a Charybdis. Scylla is the idea that understanding is always an interpretation. [That's regulism. -DMN] ... We can avoid Scylla by stressing that, say, calling something 'green' can be like crying 'Help!' when one is drowning -- simply how one has learned to react to this situation. But then we risk steering on to Charybdis [That's regularism. -DMN] -- the picture of a basic level at which there are no norms; if we embrace that, I have suggested, then we cannot prevent meaning from coming to seem an illusion. The point of *PI* §198, and part of the point of §§201-202, is that the key to finding the indispensable middle course is the idea of a custom or practice. How can a performance be both nothing but a "blind" reaction to a situation, not an attempt to act on an interpretation (avoiding Scylla); and be a case of going by a rule [that is, be norm-governed -DMN] (avoiding Charybdis)? The answer is: by belonging to a custom (*PI* §198), practice (*PI* §202), or institution (*RFM* VI-31).¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ McDowell (1984) p. 242. (p. 342 of the original article in *Synthese*.)

Sellarsian Semantics: A Brief Sketch

Sellarsian semantics is a subject large enough for and worthy of a dissertation all its own. But as my topic is perceptual knowledge, I must content myself with saying only what would be required for an adequate understanding of Sellars's theory of perceptual knowledge. Hence, "a brief sketch."

I'm going to start by saying what it is, according to Sellars, to understand the meaning of a word. Once we have that on the table it will be relatively short work to explain Sellars's take on other closely related issues such as what it is to have a belief, what it is to have a concept, and what it is to understand a sentence uttered by someone.

Like Wittgenstein, Sellars holds that the meaning of a word is determined by its use, or its *role*.¹⁹¹ Thus it is a version of what is now-a-days called Conceptual Role Semantics. According to Sellars there are three different kinds of *moves* or transitions that a word may be involved in, and which constitute the role, and thus the meaning, of the word: language entry (also called world-word) transitions, inferential (or word-word) transitions), and language-exit (or word-world) transitions. Let's look at each of these.

Language entry transitions

Language entry transitions occur in observation. There are some words – for example, simple color concepts like *red* – that have, as a part of their content, a certain observational component. Part of this observational component involves a *regularist*

condition, a matter of having a certain regularity. (Another part of the observational component involves a certain special inferential component, which I will talk about below.) In order for Jones to know the meaning of the word 'red', he has to have a disposition to respond to red objects with tokens of 'red'.¹⁹² This dispositional response is what Sellars calls the language-entry transition. Here is a way of cashing out how this part of the observational component is integral to the meaning of the word 'red': Frank and I are standing right in front of what I would consider to be a paradigm case of redness (say, a red stop sign). If Frank disagrees with me about the color of the sign (that is, he is *not* disposed to respond to the stop sign with "that's red", like I am), then that is a strong (but not indefeasible) reason to think that we mean different things by the word 'red'.

I want to highlight an important feature of this part of Sellars's account. The world to word transition that occurs in observation (at least insofar as it is part of a requirement on the meaning of certain words) is *not* understood by Sellars to be, in itself, a normative relation. In "Some Reflections on Language Games" he calls it a stimulus-response transition.¹⁹³ It is the sort of thing that could find expression in a

¹⁹¹ See Sellars (1949), p. 142 and Wittgenstein (1958), §43.

¹⁹² There is, of course, a sense in which a person can know the meaning of the word 'red' without having this disposition; for example, a Frenchman who understands English but is not disposed to speak it would not have this disposition. But part of his understanding the word would be his understanding that English speakers who do regularly speak it *would* be so disposed. The Frenchman typically understands the word English word 'red' by knowing that its equivalent in French is 'rouge' and knowing the meaning of 'rouge'. The semantic equivalence of 'red' and 'rouge' is secured in virtue of the fact that 'red' plays the same role in English that 'rouge' plays in French.

¹⁹³ Sellars (1954). See in particular §17.

descriptive science. Although Sellars certainly thinks that intentionality is a norm-governed affair, that it involves a sensitivity to norms, that ruleishness does *not* come into play here, in the observational transition between world and word. He says,

Now, certain overly enthusiastic regulists [by *regulists* here Sellars means those, like himself, who take semantics and epistemology to be a rule-governed affair. -DMN] have spoken of the "sense meaning rules" of a language, arguing that the hook-up of an empirically meaningful language with the world is a matter of rules of linguistic usage. I am as convinced a regulist as any, and, as I shall indicate in a moment, a far more thoroughgoing regulist than most, but I regard this as a mistake.¹⁹⁴

So let me be clear: Sellars certainly thinks that intentionality is a rule-governed affair. He thinks that intentional phenomena are constituted by their functional roles, where this role involves three parts (language entry, inference, and language exit transitions.) But, he thinks that the language entry transition (which is itself a part of the observational component of meaning), is *not* itself a rule-governed affair. *This* part is just a matter of cause and effect, of stimulus and response. He thinks that to think otherwise would be to fall into the myth. Of course, the linguistic response will be norm-governed in virtue of its *inferential* role (discussed below), but not in virtue of its being caused by some item in the world. We might put it this way: the linguistic response (the tokening of "that's red", for example) is, *qua* a causally elicited response to the world, *not* norm-governed, but it definitely *is* norm-governed *qua* an item inferentially connected to other meaningful items. In fact it could not properly be called a *linguistic* response (a *language*-entry transition) were it not for its being caught up in this inferential net. Nor could it even be properly called an *observation* without this inferential component. (In a moment we will discuss a *special* inference

¹⁹⁴ Sellars (1949), p. 301. (p. 141 of Sellars (1980a).)

that the observational role also requires in addition to the language-entry requirement.)

But if we consider the token in abstraction from its role in inference¹⁹⁵, then the language-entry transition seems to involve only stimulus-response and no normativity. The language-entry, considered in isolation from the other (inferential and language-exit) roles goes no further than the thermometer view.¹⁹⁶ (It is this fact, that Sellars's view takes the language-entry transition to be purely causal, and not normative, that McDowell takes issue with in *Mind and World*. In chapter three I will argue that my alternative view, perceptual responsibilism, does not fall prey to this kind of objection.)

I have mentioned that there is another part to the observational component of meaning than *just* the non-normative world-word transition. In a moment I will move on to discuss the *inference* component of a word's meaning. While only some words have an observational role to their content, *all* words have an inferential component. But for the words whose content is partly determined by their role in observation, this observational role includes not only the non-inferential language-entry transitions (thought of as a matter of stimulus-response), but also a special type of *inferential* mastery. That is to say, in order for Jones to have the concept of *green*, not only must

¹⁹⁵ It is important for Sellars that we be able to conceptually separate the three component parts of the conceptual role, and to see where the normativity is and is not. Sellars thinks that those who think that language-entry transitions are norm-governed (in and of themselves and not simply in virtue of collateral inferential role playing) are likely to fall into the given.

¹⁹⁶ The fact that the language-entry part of the three-fold conceptual role is a *regularist* component is why it makes sense for Sellars in EPM §36 (when developing an account of perceptual justification in response to the followist-conformist dilemma as it arises

he be trained to reliably respond to green items with the sound 'green', but he must also be able to make a certain special sort of inferential transition, over and above the "normal" inferences required of any old concept. Sellars characterizes this "special" inferential requirement as,

...the ability to infer (in a pragmatic metalanguage) from 'The thought *this object is green* just occurred to X at time t in place s in circumstances c' to 'In all probability a green object was present to X's senses at t in s.'¹⁹⁷

(For those who are already Sellars scholars, or who have read ahead in this chapter, we can put the point this way: the observational component of the content of tokens like "that's yellow" is simply that such tokens must clear the two hurdles that Sellars describes in EPM §35. Clearing the first hurdle makes sure that the tokens are reliably produced in response to the objects they report on (that's the language-entry transition part), and clearing the second hurdle makes sure that the person has the ability to make the above inferential move (that's the special inference part). This means that some perceptually produced tokens – the ones whose meaning is partly constituted by the observational component – will generally have what it takes to be perceptually justified simply in virtue of being conceptually contentful tokens in the space of reasons. Or to put it another way, the observational requirement, for some concept F that has such a requirement, is just that a person who has that concept must be such as to know an F when she sees one.)

there) to describe his alternative as a *revision* of the thermometer view instead of a replacement of it.

¹⁹⁷ Sellars (1954), §36.

Inference

Another part of the conceptual role constitutive of a word's meaning is its role in *inference*. What Jones means by the word 'red' is partially determined by certain inferences Jones is licensed to make that involve the word 'red'. For example, if Jones can't infer from "x is red" to "x has a color" (if, in other words, Jones does not know that red is a color¹⁹⁸) then this may be good evidence that the word 'red' (or, perhaps the word 'color') does not mean the same thing for Jones as it does for the rest of us. Of course, not *all* inferences that involve the word 'red' are part of its meaning. If two gardeners are arguing about whether some rare African flower (that they're not currently looking at) has red petals (that is, they disagree about whether the inference from "x is one of those rare African flowers" to "x has red petals" is a good inference) this does not thereby show that they mean different things by their words. Sometimes a disagreement is a genuine disagreement. Other times when it seems as though people are disagreeing they are merely talking past each other, meaning different things by their words. Often it is hard to tell.

This inferential requirement obviously makes this theory of meaning a holistic one. The inferences connect one meaningful word to others. One could not know the meaning of only one word. In fact, it could not be the case that there is only one meaningful word. Words have meaning only in relation to other meaningful words.

¹⁹⁸ On Sellars's view, claims like "all red things are colored" are material mode formulations of rules of inferences like "from 'x is red' it may be inferred that 'x is colored'". Knowledge of what were typically called "a priori truths" is grounded in one's grasp of certain *material* rules of inference (as opposed to formal rules of logic),

There is no such thing as a baby's first word. (There is, of course, such a thing as the first word-like sound that a baby makes.)

A common mistake in understanding holistic views of conceptual content like this one is in thinking that the meaning of a word is constituted out of relations among intrinsically non-meaningful sounds. On that interpretation, we see the web of inferentially connected words as really just a web of interconnected noises (or dispositions to make noises), and then suppose that at some point when there are enough noises (or noise dispositions) and when there are enough of the right sort of connections to each other, then suddenly all these sounds have meaning. That would be to treat this theory as a *reductive* theory of meaning. It would ground facts about meaning (and we have been assuming, with Sellars, Brandom, McDowell, and Wittgenstein that these are *normative* facts) in facts about dispositions to make noise. It would be a theory that buys into givenness. And in any case, the *connections* between words could not be genuinely *inferential* if the words are thought of as mere *noises*. To say again, Sellars's theory is a theory that fixes the meaningfulness of a word by its inferential relations to other *meaningful* words. It does not squeeze meaningfulness out of meaninglessness. One of the things that can lead to confusions along these lines is reflecting on the fact that on this kind of view, a child being initiated into the language is, at one point, a manipulator of (meaningless) symbols, and then later a manipulator of meaningful words. One is tempted to hypothesize that the what makes the difference between the former and latter stages must be understood

the grasp of which is part of one's competence with the concept. See Sellars (1953a),

in terms of what the child was doing at the former stage; to think that enough manipulations of meaningless symbols will be sufficient for meaning. But that is to give in to the (admittedly hard to resist) temptation to look for a reductive account of intentionality. For someone not partial to the Sellarsian system, there is undoubtedly much to worry about in this vicinity.

The inferential requirement helps to individuate concepts that could not be individuated by the regularist account alone. Suppose Shinichi points and says "squee-squawk" every time he's in front of something red. On the regularist account it would indeterminate whether "squee-squawk" meant "red object" or "object reflecting electro-magnetic radiation at such-and-such a wavelength." We can settle the question if we can find out what inferences Shinichi would make using "squee-squawk." The concept of red does not by itself license any inferences about radiation or wavelengths, whereas the other concept does. Again, a concept can only be individuated by inference by supposing that other concepts are already individuated. That is just to reiterate the non-reductive character of the view. No concept could be individuated if one were only allowed non-semantic materials. And this is again likely to be seen as very objectionable by philosophers whose perspectives are external to the Sellarsian framework.

While we're on the subject of concept individuation and possible objections to Sellarsian semantics: it is sometimes objected against semantic holism (by, e.g., Fodor and LaPore, 1993) that since the content of a concept is determined by its inferential

relationships to the other concepts, each concept would have the same content. If, in other words, the meaning of each word is determined by the whole web of inferentially connected contents, then there is nothing to individuate particular concepts. A change in the meaning of one concept would imply a change in meaning for all of them. To put the objection somewhat simplistically: if, for any words x and y , the meaning of x is "the whole web" and the meaning of y is also "the whole web", then x and y have the same meaning. A Sellarsian wanting to respond to this sort of objection has two resources at her disposal. First, some words' meanings are determined by more than just their inferential role, but are also determined by language-entry or language-exit transitions. Thus the word 'red' can be distinct from other words not only in virtue of the inferences that it licenses, but also in virtue of its being, in some contexts, causally elicited by certain objects and not others. Second, the objection assumes that the defender of a conceptual role semantics is committed to the idea that the meaning of any word or the content of any concept must be determined by "the whole web" of inferentially connected contents, and I see no reason why the defender of conceptual role semantics is committed to this. Surely it is plausible to think that some inferential connections are more central to the content of a concept than others. Thus changes in the web could make for a change in the meaning of one word but not another. That would mean that the words do not have the same meaning. I imagine that these are the sorts of considerations a Sellarsian might appeal to in defending semantic holism against such objections.

It is worth mentioning one more potential liability of this theory of conceptual content. This inferentialist requirement makes it very difficult to attribute conceptual content to an animal's noises or behavior, since attributing one concept, belief, or meaningful noise to the animal commits one, on this view, to attributing many other concepts, beliefs, grasp of inferences, etc. For anyone who is disposed to think that non-human animals -- higher mammals for instance -- are able to engage in conceptual thinking, this consequence of the view will undoubtedly seem to be a serious liability. Sellars does try to respond to this worry by agreeing that, although animals do not engage in any *conceptual* activity, there is indeed "a legitimate sense in which animals can be said to think and hence to be able, in something like the above sense, to see a pink ice cube and to see that it is pink. Furthermore, the point is important in its own right and not simply a rhetorical maneuver." (Sellars, 1971, p. 303-304.) Whether defenders of animal thinking would be mollified by this, and in particular whether Sellars is right that it is not merely rhetorical maneuvering may be, I think, a point of contention. Sellars does not say very much about what this "sub-conceptual" thinking would amount to, but he is very clear that misunderstandings arise if one tries to understand it on a model with conceptual thinking. I think the tendency here is to wonder why we should call the animal's sub-conceptual activity *thinking* at all if it has little in common with the thinking that we are familiar with in humans. This thought would motivate the worry that indeed Sellars's granting of sub-conceptual thinking to animals (and small children for that matter) is indeed mere rhetorical maneuvering.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁹ See, for example, Alston (1989b), and Meyers (1981) for worries along these lines.

It is here, with the inferential requirement, that norm-governedness comes in. To make an inference is not just to make two sets of noises with a "therefore" sandwiched between them.²⁰⁰ Inference is by its very nature normative. Inferential relationships are justificatory relationships. To infer Q from P is to implicitly recognize that believing that P would justify, (license, warrant, epistemically entitle, etc.) one to accept that Q. It would be weird to think of someone as actually inferring from P to Q if they had no awareness of any justificatory connection between them. The transition from P to Q could not be an inference unless P was being used *as* a premise -- that is, *as* something that licenses the conclusion -- by the one making the inference. Of course, the person needn't be explicitly thinking to themselves, "I am using P as a premise", or "P is justifying Q." But according to this way of thinking about inference, part of what it is to grasp that the inference from P to Q would be a good one is to grasp that if I were to believe that P, then I would be justified in believing that Q. Recognition of inferential relationships is recognition of justificatory relationships.

But having isolated that this is where the norm-governedness occurs is not yet to have given an account of it in a way that makes it clear how it avoids the dilemma of followism and conformism. After all, if "grasping an inferential relationship" is not to be understood in terms of instantiating a regularity and it is not to be understood in terms of following the rule of inference, how *is* it to be understood? Sellars's solution to the dilemma is to be found in his account of *how* it is that a person and his words

²⁰⁰ This is a point made to me by Cass Weller. Ryle (1949, chapter 5) makes similar

come to play the three-part role that is required by Sellars's theory of meaning. It is no *accident*. But it is neither on *purpose* nor biologically or physically necessary.

Sellars's solution involves the fact that what brings this about is the training one receives from one's community (including, in particular, one's parents).²⁰¹ (Recall McDowell's claim that Wittgenstein's middle way between the Scylla and Charybdis of regulism and regularism was, "...by belonging to a custom (*PI* §198), practice (*PI* §202), or institution (*RFM* VI-31)."²⁰²) I will discuss this in greater detail below when I talk about this question as it arises in Sellars's account of perceptual knowledge.

In some sense the inferential requirement is the most important of the three. For while the meanings of some words may lack the language-entry component associated with observation, and the meanings of some words might lack the language-exit component associated with action (and still others may lack both or neither), *every* word's meaning has an inferential component.²⁰³ The inferentialist requirement also brings in the holism. And it is where the norm-governedness is located.

There are questions about the inferential requirement that a serious study of Sellarsian semantics would have to answer, but which here I can only point to. Does it burden Sellars with needing to give principles which non-circularly²⁰⁴ specify which

points.

²⁰¹ I am not claiming that the community *makes* the norms, just that their training can help to explain how one's epistemic behavior is norm-governed. The community helps bring it about that I am sensitive to these norms. More on this below.

²⁰² McDowell (1984) p. 242. (p. 342 of the original article in *Synthese*.)

²⁰³ It is because of this inferential requirement that the criterion that Sellars (1977b, 228) proposes for when a word stands for a concept is that there be good arguments in which the word is essentially involved.

²⁰⁴ That is, without presupposing something's having a particular meaning.

inferences are constitutive of meaning and which are not? Are there any inferences that are so absolutely required by the meaning of a word that failure to grasp that one inference is by itself enough to prevent the person from knowing the meaning of the term in question?²⁰⁵ (Or is it instead the case that knowing the meaning of a word requires having a grasp of a sizable portion of the most central and important inferences but that there is no single inference that is by itself absolutely necessary to the meaning?) Is it plausible to think that there is no such thing as a baby's first word?

But, as pressing as these questions are, I want to leave them in the background so we can finish getting Sellars's theory of meaning in front of us. It's his theory of perceptual knowledge that I really want to focus on. Some of these worries will resurface there.

Language exit transitions

Language-exit transitions typically occur in the context of *action*. Just as the observational part of the conceptual role required of some concepts a certain regularity that moved from world to word, some concepts also require a regularity in the other direction. This is the language-exit transition. An example of a word the content of which is partly determined by the language-exit transitions it is involved in is 'shall'. 'Shall' wouldn't mean what it does were it not the case that tokens of "I shall do X now" are generally followed by the doing of X now (or at least attempted doings of X

²⁰⁵ If so then the generalizations corresponding to such inferences would fit the bill as synthetic *a priori* truths in the sense of being *true in virtue of the meanings of the terms*. Sellars defends such an account in "Is There A Synthetic A Priori?", Sellars (1953)

now). The transition from thinking "I shall do X" to doing X is the language-exit (or word-world) transition. But if Jones says, "I think I'll go ahead and get a glass of water," and then he just stands there, and he doesn't seem to be joking and there's nothing preventing him from getting the drink, then I may have reason to suspect that he doesn't mean what I thought he meant by that expression (or maybe I just didn't hear him correctly). Concepts like *wanting*, *desiring*, and *intending* have conceptual connections to action. Thus, a requirement on Jones's knowing the meaning of the word 'intend' is that he exhibits certain regularities: whenever he says or believes, "I intend to do X today", he tends, *ceteris paribus*, to do x (or at least attempt to do x) on that day. An important group of concepts Sellars takes to have conceptual connections to action is the group of *normative* concepts. To know the meaning of the word 'ought', Jones must have certain dispositions; whenever he believes that he ought to do x, *ceteris paribus* he does x. Sellars says,

Learning the use of normative expressions involves... acquiring the tendency to make the transition from occupying the position 'I ought now to do A' to the doing of A. This motivating role of 'ought' in the first person present is essential to the 'meaning' of 'ought'. That is to say, it could not be true of a word that 'it means *ought*' unless this word had motivating force in the language to which it belongs. It is a necessary truth that people who occupy a position which means *I ought to do A now*, tend to do A. If they did not, the position they occupy could not mean *I ought to do A now*.²⁰⁶

Sellars sides with Socrates, and against Plato²⁰⁷, in thinking that no additional conative element is required to convert normative judgment into action. Were it not

²⁰⁶ Sellars (1954), §67.

²⁰⁷ McDowell (1981, §4) also lumps Hume in with Plato and Socrates as one who thinks that no genuinely cognitive, propositional episode by itself is sufficient for producing action. On this interpretation, Hume's argument against the cognitivists is that since (a) normative judgments need no further element to ensure action, therefore (b) normative judgments cannot be genuinely propositional, cognitive episodes.

for the *ceteris paribus* clause, and for the fact that the regularities are not required to be 100% accurate, Socrates would be right that weakness of will would be impossible.²⁰⁸

Since the meaning of a word is its role, this gives us something like rough synonymy conditions -- it determines when two words have the same meaning. To say that the German word 'rot' means *red* is to say that the word 'rot' has in German the same role (in observation, inference, and action)²⁰⁹ as the word 'red' does in English. Different words in different languages can express the same concept, since this just means that they function in the same role. Having the concept of *red* is to have some bit of language that functions as 'red' does in English.

Sellars's treatment of the meaning of declarative sentences is identical to his treatment of the meaning of words. Just as the concept (or meaning) expressed by a word is its three-fold role, so too the proposition expressed by (or meaning of) a statement is its three-fold role. The only real difference is that whereas words could only be component parts of the premises and conclusions of inferences, a statement is all by itself fit to be a premise or conclusion in an inference. One could not have the

McDowell accepts (a) but resists (b) by rejecting the premise that no genuinely propositional episode could be motivationally efficacious. And he rejects the latter by accepting the Sellarsian semantics that holds the content of certain propositions (e.g., the propositions expressed by normative judgments) is partly constituted by language-exit transitions that make motivational efficaciousness a part of the propositional content.

²⁰⁸ See Sellars's "On Knowing the Better and Doing the Worse", Sellars (1970). Also see Wiggins (1979) for (what Wiggins sees as) a more Aristotelian account of *akrasia* than Aristotle's own, an account which is strikingly close to Sellars's.

belief that P without being able to make inferences to and from P. To understand what someone means when they say 'P' is to grasp that role, to have some idea of what would follow from P, what would be evidence for it, what would be incompatible with it. If P has an observational role, then understanding it would also mean having some idea what observational circumstances would be appropriate to respond to with 'P'.

How Sellarsian semantics avoids the dilemma

Now I want to make clear just how Sellarsian semantics avoids the dilemma of followism and conformism. The question is: how are intentional states or episodes genuinely norm-governed without being cases of rule-following (regulism) or being merely an instance of a regularity (regularism)? How do the norms get in there if the followist strategy requires too much and the conformist strategy requires too little? How does Sellarsian semantics constitute the middle way?

The solution involves two parts. We will see these two parts again in more detail when I discuss the "two hurdles" (EPM §35-36) that Sellars thinks a theory of perceptual knowledge must overcome. But here is the general idea. The first part concerns the explanation for Jones's conforming to the epistemic norms. What brings it about that Jones conforms to these norms (i.e., that his linguistic tokens play the appropriate role in observation, inference and action in virtue of which they could legitimately be said to have meaning)? Sellars's answer is that Jones's linguistic behavior is neither *on purpose* (as it would be according to followism), nor a matter of

²⁰⁹ Again, though every word has *inferential* role constitutive of its meaning, not every word has an a role in observation or action.

natural or physical necessity, but is brought about -- at least at the beginning -- by his community.²¹⁰ This is an important part because the actions of the community that bring about behavior that conforms to the epistemic norms itself embodies a commitment to those norms. It is because the community of trainers (especially including one's parents) thinks it is a good idea that children respond to red items with tokens of "that's red" that Jones tends to respond to red items with tokens of "that's red." In other words, the explanation for the fact that he conforms to the rule that "it ought to be that people respond to red items with tokens of 'that's red'" is that that rule is accepted, in some sense, by the linguistic community Jones was raised in. We want norm-governed behavior to be behavior that happens *because of the rule*, in some sense. The followist cashed that out by requiring the norm-governed behavior to be on purpose, a following of the rule. But on Sellars's account we can say that the behavior happens because of the rule in the sense that the linguistic community's implicit (and perhaps sometimes explicit) acceptance of the rule is what explains why the individual raised in that community displays some of the linguistic behaviors he does.²¹¹ As Sellars (1973c, 123) says,

²¹⁰ Once Jones has a language, it is of course possible for him to create new words, new concepts, which get their content (partly at least) because of their inferential connections to the rest of the system.

²¹¹ When I talk about norms embodied in the practices of the community, I am not claiming (as for example Brandom (1994, 25) does) that the practices of the community *make* the norms. Rather, the epistemic community (insofar as it is recognizable *as* an epistemic community) is sensitive to epistemic norms that are, so to speak, already there, and it is by initiation into that community that one's eyes can be likewise opened to those norms. I do not here consider the skepticism that threatens if we suppose that no one in the community has any sensitivity to the (real) norms; I touch upon it in the next chapter. And in any case, although I have been assuming that

'This is red', as a pattern governed response to red objects, is not an action. Yet it is covered by a rule, and indeed, a rule which is involved in the explanation of its occurrence. The rule which directly covers it is, however, an *ought-to-be*, and it is involved in the explanation, by virtue of the fact that it was envisaged by the trainers who assisted the speaker in acquiring his linguistic abilities. Trainees conform to *ought-to-be's* because trainers obey the corresponding *ought-to-do's*.

Although the rule is brought in, it is still only an explanation of how his linguistic behavior merely *conforms* to the rule. If *Jones himself* is to get the credit for the rule-governedness of his linguistic behavior, the rule needs to be involved in a more intimate way. That is what the second part is for.

The second part of how the rule is involved in Jones's linguistic behavior (in virtue of which it is appropriately norm-governed and yet which avoids followism and conformism) is that he has a meta-language and is able to ascend to the meta-language and argue concerning object-level linguistic tokens.²¹² In other words, it is not good enough that Jones makes the required transitions (whether world-word, word-word, or word-world). Not only does he have to be disposed to make the transition from position A to position B in the language game, but he also has to be able to make a transition in the meta-language of this sort:²¹³

the community's practices *do* embody an acceptance of the norms, a sensitivity to norms needn't be understood as perfect. They can get things wrong. (And we *do*, as is evidenced by research showing human susceptibility to certain kinds of fallacies.) And indeed, part of the point of the successive modifications to a conceptual system that takes place as one generation trains the next is precisely to improve the community's sensitivities to those norms. I will touch on these issues again in the next chapter. (Thanks to Bill Talbott for helping me to be clearer about this.)

²¹² I believe it is this extra meta-linguistic requirement that Sellars has in mind by "a great deal more" when he says, in EPM §19, "...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 -- and, indeed, as we shall see, a great deal more besides."

²¹³ In the case of world-word transitions, this meta-level ascent requirement manifests

I am in position A. When one is in position A, one ought to adopt position B.
Therefore, I shall adopt position B.

For example, in order for Jones's transition from "That is an apple" to "That is a fruit" to count as a legitimate inference, a rule-governed transition (of the sort that Jones must be able to make if those tokens are to be meaningful), he must also be able to make inferences like these:

I just said 'That is an apple'. When one says 'That is an apple', one ought to say, 'That is a fruit'. Therefore, I shall say, 'That is a fruit'.

Sellars's view is that it is because one is able to ascend to the meta-level and apply normative vocabulary to tokens at the object level that such transitions (whether inferential or world-word or word-world) are legitimately norm-governed and thus can such tokens be legitimately meaningful items. Note that Sellars does not require that you always *do* this, only that you're generally *able* to. Note also that the explanation for your making the object level transition is not your awareness of the meta-linguistic rule sanctioning it – that would make this look like a version of followism. Rather, the explanation for your making the transition is the training you get from your linguistic community. The meta-level ascent requirement is not a requirement that the lower level inferences were *on purpose* in order to follow the rules formulated at the meta-linguistic level.²¹⁴

itself as Sellars's "second hurdle" (Sellars, 1956, §35). The upshot of the paragraph above is that something like this second hurdle is also required both inferential transitions. (There is a similar requirement for practical (word-world) transitions, though I do not discuss that here. See Sellars 1963d, 1973d.) The second hurdle will be covered in much detail later in this chapter.

²¹⁴ After all, inference cannot be *on purpose* since it is, like observation, *not* an action. "Inference is not a *doing* in the conduct sense – which however, by no means implies

This meta-level ascent requirement is clearly an internalist requirement in the sense that these (lower level) transitions do not count as legitimately norm-governed inferences unless the person has available a certain justifying argument (which in this case happens to be at the meta-linguistic level). The background for Sellars's acceptance of this kind of internalist requirement is that for Sellars in order for a person to graduate from the level of merely being a product of a linguistic community to being a full-fledged member of it, she has to be able to take responsibility for her linguistic activity, and Sellars does not see how this can be unless the person is able to have a certain amount of awareness of what she does. Thus she shows that she is her own epistemic agent and not just parroting those around her when she can make explicit – in the form of meta-linguistic ascent – what she does implicitly in making inferential (lower level) transitions. (This is what the title of Brandom's (1994) "Making It Explicit" refers to. There he defends the Sellarsian idea that rationality involves the ability to make implicit inferential commitments explicit.) The idea of epistemic responsibility will be a major theme in the next three chapters. I will, in fact, argue for an *externalist* account of it, in contrast to the internalist sort we see Sellars adopt here. We will talk much more about this internalist requirement a bit later in the chapter when we discuss how it arises in Sellars's theory of perceptual justification.

Of course this second part, the requirement of meta-linguistic ascent, explains the norm-governedness (and meaningfulness) of tokens in the object language only by

that it is not a process." (Sellars, 1969, §IV). Ryle (1949, 300 *ff.*) makes similar

presupposing the meaningfulness, and thus norm-governedness of the meta-language.

And the explanation of the meaningfulness and norm-governedness of the meta-language is the same as the explanation of the meaningfulness and norm-governedness of the object language. Thus in order for the meta-language to be norm-governed and genuinely meaningful, one has to be able to ascend to the meta-meta-language, etc..

This appears to be a bad regress: in order for the object language to be meaningful, you first have to have a meaningful meta-language, which then requires that you first have a meaningful meta-meta-language and so on.

Sellars's response to that worry is this: Learning to ascend to the meta-language is not like learning a new language in the way that learning French is. It is more like learning a trick. Once you've got the hang of ascending to the meta-level, you also thereby get the hang of ascending to the meta-meta-level and applying normative terms to tokens in the meta-language.²¹⁵ A language learner more or less simultaneously learns the object level language game and the trick of ascending to the meta-level, but none of it is appropriately called meaningful until all of that apparatus is well in place.

Since we will cover much of this same terrain again when we will look at the "two hurdles" in EPM §35-36, we can think of the foregoing as a primer for the discussion yet to come.

points.

²¹⁵ See Sellars (1949) footnote 5.

Perceptual Knowledge

Now we will look at followism and conformism in theories of perceptual knowledge. Then we will be ready for Sellars's own positive view of perceptual knowledge.

Followism in perceptual knowledge: Schlick Foundationalism

By §32 of EPM Sellars has rejected several different forms that an appeal to the given can take in connection with a theory of perceptual knowledge. Once the givenist realizes that episodes of sensing, being non-epistemic, can do no epistemic work, and once he realizes that a proper analysis of 'looks' talk reveals that it is likewise useless for his purpose, there are few avenues open to him. Sellars considers one such avenue in §33:

...it has been claimed, not without plausibility, that whereas *ordinary* empirical statements can be *correctly* made without being *true*, observation reports resemble analytic statements in that being correctly made is a sufficient as well as necessary condition of their truth. And it has been inferred from this -- somewhat hastily, I believe -- that "correctly making" the report "This is green" is a matter of "following the rules for the use of 'this', 'is', and 'green'."

What Sellars is getting at by talking of statements being "correctly made" is *justification*, the reasonability of making such statements, their norm-governedness.

Although Sellars doesn't mention Morris Schlick here, Sellars is likely taking Schlick as his model for this view.²¹⁶ Thus I'll call it Schlick Foundationalism, even if it may not be exactly Schlick's view.

Schlick Foundationalism is a followist theory of perceptual knowledge. The idea behind this view is that a perceptual report, a spontaneous observational belief

like "that is green," has positive justificatory status in virtue of the fact that it is the result of one's following a rule that specifies the circumstances under which one ought to believe such a statement. Presumably the rule is something like, "when one is in front of something green, one ought to token the belief 'that is green'." (It is easy to also concoct a version of Schlick Foundationalism in which the rule makes no direct reference to the existence of physical objects: "when one is having a sensory experience as of a green object, one ought to token the belief 'that is green'." Sellars's objections to Schlick Foundationalism apply just as well to either version.)

Sellars comments (EPM §33) that this view treats the correctness of making the report in the same way that we might treat the correctness of actions. (Again, I take 'correctness' here to refer to reasonableness, positive justificatory status.) Let me say what Sellars means by this. There is a certain followist picture of the norm-governedness of action which looks like this: The sorts of behaviors open to praise or blame, the ones we think are open to norm-governedness, are actions in the full-blooded sense of intentional actions. Actions in this sense are done for a *reason*, even if they are not preceded by a bit of practical deliberation that puts that reason into play. The reason will either *be*, or will point to, a general maxim or rule. We evaluate the action by evaluating the maxim, or rule, behind it. For example, suppose Kelly brushes her teeth. We ask her why. She replies, "because I want clean teeth." Her reason points us to a general maxim: "When one wants clean teeth, one ought to brush them." We can then reconstruct the action as though it were the outcome of a practical

²¹⁶ See DeVries and Triplett (2000) p. 73, and Schlick (1959) p.225.

sylllogism: "When one wants clean teeth, one ought to brush them. I want clean teeth. Therefore, I ought to brush them." If we agree with the maxim, and we believe that she really did want clean teeth, then we will be satisfied that her brushing was justified.

An analogous treatment of the justification of perceptual beliefs, *a la* Schlick Foundationalism, would run as follows. Suppose Kenny perceptually forms the belief that "that is green." We ask him what his reason is for believing it. He responds, "because, well, take a look at it -- it *is* green." His response points us toward a general rule of belief: "when one is in front of something green (eyes open, looking at it), one ought to form the belief 'that is green'." We can reconstruct the non-inferentially produced belief as though it has been the product of the following syllogism: "When one is in front of something green (eyes open, looking at it), one ought to form the belief 'that is green'. I am in front of something green. Therefore, I ought to believe that this is green." If we agree with the premises, we should be satisfied with Kenny's entitlement to believe 'that is green.'

Sellars has several problems with this view. First of all, Sellars emphasizes that "not all *ought* is *ought to do*, nor all correctness the correctness of actions."²¹⁷ Sellars is clear that observation beliefs are not actions and that their reasonableness is not to be treated in the same way that the reasonableness of actions is. This also points up the inadequacy of the rule, for as stated it is a rule for action, an ought-to-do rule.²¹⁸

²¹⁷ EPM §33.

²¹⁸ On the distinction between ought-to-do rules and ought-to-be rules, see Sellars (1963d). We will discuss this more below.

As Alston (1985, 1988b) argues, beliefs cannot be understood as actions, the sort of thing that can be undertaken voluntarily. The rule involved in the perceptual believing in virtue of which it is appropriately rule governed cannot be an ought-to-do.

The more fundamental objection for Sellars, however, concerns the fact that

...if the expression 'following a rule' is taken seriously, and is not weakened beyond all recognition into the bare notion of exhibiting a uniformity -- in which case the lightning, thunder sequence would "follow a rule" -- then it is the knowledge or belief that the circumstances are of a certain kind, and not the mere fact that they *are* of this kind, which contributes to bringing about the action.²¹⁹

For it is the requirement of an awareness (in the form of knowledge or belief) of the circumstances that "puts us face to face with givenness in its most straightforward form."²²⁰ In the case of the putative rule, "when one is in front of something green (eyes open, looking at it), one ought to form the belief 'that is green'", to be aware of the circumstances is to know that one is in front of something green. And this awareness, this knowledge, must *not* be a norm-governed episode, or else it would (according to the Schick Foundationalism we are exploring here) require a following of another rule, in which case we are off on a regress. To say again: If the awareness of the circumstances was a norm-governed episode (for example, a conceptual episode, an awareness of the circumstances *as* involving a green object, or even a putatively green object), then the account of the episodes' norm-governedness would require a following of a rule. In this case it's even worse than a regress. If the awareness of the circumstances is, as Sellars thinks it must be, a conceptual episode, a *knowing*, then it appears that in order to be justified in believing "that is green", you first have to be

²¹⁹ EPM §33.

²²⁰ EPM §34.

aware of the circumstances, where this means knowing that "that is green." You have to know that you're in front of something green before you can be justified in believing that you're in front of something green. The only way out of this mess is to declare that the "knowledge" or "awareness" of the circumstances is a non-conceptual, perhaps non-norm-governed (and thus non-epistemic) episode, such that no rule-following analysis is required of it. This non-epistemic awareness would do epistemic work. It would be given.

Note that the same kinds of problems arise if we alter the rule such that the circumstances mention a sensory event instead of a public one. Suppose the rule is , "Whenever I have an experience as of a green object, I ought to believe that there is a green object in front of me." Now my being aware of the circumstances would require that I am aware that I am having a sensory experience as of a green object. But that is a conceptual, and so rule-governed episode. In virtue of what would *that* episode be appropriately rule-governed? On this followist account, the answer is that it can be reconstructed as a case of rule following. Perhaps the subsequent rule would be, "Whenever I have an experience as of a green object, I ought to believe that I am having an experience as of a green object." In this case, an awareness of the circumstances would amount to believing that you're having an experience as of a green object. Thus this rule would require that you be justified in believing that you're having an experience as of a green object in order to be justified in believing that you're having an experience as of a green object. On the other hand, we might avoid circularity and instead launch into a regress by having the subsequent rule instead be,

"Whenever I am having an experience as of an experience as of a green object, I ought to believe that I am having an experience as of a green object." The only way out of these troubles is to admit of a non-norm-governed episode of awareness, something given.

Conformism in perceptual knowledge: Perceptual Reliabilism

Conformism in a theory of perceptual knowledge becomes a version of what is now-a-days called reliabilism. Sellars formulates it like this:

An overt or covert token of 'This is green' in the presence of a green item is a *Konstatierung* [observational report - DMN] and expresses observational knowledge if and only if it is a manifestation of a tendency to produce overt or covert tokens of 'This is green' -- given a certain set -- if and only if a green object is being looked at in standard conditions.²²¹

A modern day formulation might look more like this: An observational belief (like "this is green") has the sort of positive justificatory status appropriate to its being a case of knowledge just in case the belief is the result of a reliable belief forming process, a process that turns out a suitably high ratio of true to false perceptual beliefs. Sellars doesn't say much about why he rejects it. He simply says,

Clearly the above suggestion, which corresponds to the "thermometer view" criticized by Professor Price, and which we have already rejected, won't do as it stands.²²²

We have already seen the fundamental reason why, in the Sellarsian framework, reliabilism "won't do as it stands": It puts forward mere descriptive facts (uniformities in one's belief-forming behavior) as an account of something normative, the positive justificatory status of beliefs.

²²¹ EPM §34

²²² EPM §35

Sellars's positive view of perceptual knowledge

After Sellars rejects Schlick Foundationalism and perceptual reliabilism, he proceeds to give his own account --different from followism or conformism-- of the ruleishness of perceptual knowledge. Yet he starts from perceptual reliabilism, introduced in §35, his own view being, he says, a *revision* of it. What does this mean? In what ways is Sellars's view similar to perceptual reliabilism? According to perceptual reliabilism, a token's being an instance of a certain uniformity is both a necessary and sufficient condition for its being an instance of observational knowledge. In revising it, Sellars keeps the necessity while rejecting the sufficiency. Thus he still requires a tokening of perceptual knowledge to be an instance of a certain uniformity. But in addition to this conformist condition, Sellars claims that a token observational belief (that is, a spontaneous belief "wrung from the perceiver by the object perceived", EPM §16) must also meet two other conditions -- it must "clear two hurdles". In clearing these two hurdles, it will have the ruleishness that it does not have in merely satisfying the conformist condition alone.²²³

There are disagreements about how to understand these two hurdles, and as we will shortly see, my interpretation diverges in some crucial ways from some more mainstream interpretations (such as Brandom and Rorty, 1997). Before launching into a larger discussion of the hurdles, let me give a very brief initial characterization

²²³ An important note: if the observed property in question (say, *green*) is one the concept of which is partly determined by its role in *observation*, then these two hurdles must be met in order for the token of "that's green" to even count as a conceptual episode at all. In that case, to characterize the token of "that's green" as a

of the two hurdles: The first is a requirement not just that the possessor of perceptual knowledge has certain regularities in her belief forming behavior, but that these regularities came about in a particular way – namely, from one’s upbringing in a linguistic community. The second hurdle is an internalist requirement. In order to clear the second hurdle, the possessor of perceptual knowledge has to not only have these perceptual regularities, but the fact that she has them has to be available to her in the sense that she could potentially cite that fact as a premise in a certain kind of argument. (The nature of that argument and its point is a tricky issue and will be discussed at length shortly.)

The separability of the three conditions (the conformist condition and the two hurdles) may seem somewhat artificial in the following sense. It may be hard to imagine a token’s passing one of them without thereby meeting one or both of the other conditions. But even if this is right, it will still be worthwhile, for the purposes of elucidation and clarity, to treat them separately, as Sellars does.

Another important point before we launch into the larger discussion of the hurdles. Generally we will be talking about the conditions under which perceptually produced *belief* tokens (like “that’s green”) clear or do not clear each of the hurdles. But I believe that it is Sellars’s view²²⁴ that for perceptually produced tokens containing *certain* sorts of concepts, these tokens must meet the two hurdles in order to count as conceptually contentful at all. As discussed in our brief sketch of Sellarsian

observational *belief* is, for Sellars, to imply that it has already cleared the two hurdles. More on this shortly.

²²⁴ See for example, Sellars (1954) §36.

semantics, there are some concepts whose content is partly determined by its role in *observation*. (In the next chapter I will dub such concepts *basic* observational concepts.) Simple color concepts like *green* are likely examples. That observational role is captured by the two hurdles. That is to say, if *green* is indeed an example of a concept whose content has an observational requirement, then unless Jones's token of "that's green" meets the two hurdles, it will not count as a meaningful, conceptually contentful token (it will not be appropriately characterized as his coming to perceptual *believe* that something is green, for he will not even count as having the concept of *green*) – and this is even if Jones might otherwise meet the inferential requirements for having the concept of green. Now there other concepts – perhaps *pine tree* is one of them – whose content has no required observational component. That means that you can have the concept of a pine tree without clearing the two hurdles, and thus one can have a perceptually evoked token of "that's a pine tree" without yet clearing the two hurdles. But even with concepts like *green* for which clearing the two hurdles is a necessary condition of having the concept, it will still be useful to focus on the hurdles in their role as what determines whether a particular perceptually produced token of "that's green" is epistemically justified, and abstract away from the role of the hurdles in their role as necessary conditions for the token's being conceptually contentful at all. This is in keeping with Sellars, who, in his discussion of the hurdles, seems to take it for granted that the tokens are meaningful, conceptually contentful, genuine *reports*, despite the fact that the separation between the conditions for conceptual content and the conditions for perceptual justification is an artificial one for concepts like *green*.

(This may be an artifact of the dialectical structure of EPM; by §32, he has finished talking about semantics, and now he is ready to talk about knowledge. He is, however, fully aware of the multiple ways in which they are inseparable.)

The first hurdle

At the start of the paragraph where Sellars introduces the first hurdle, he tells us that a token observational report must have *authority* if it is to count as knowledge. He then points out with regard to perceptual reliabilism (remember that he takes this as his starting point) that, "...the only thing that can remotely be supposed to constitute such authority is the fact that one can infer the presence of a green object from the fact that someone makes this report."

So for example, if Jones just tokened, "this apple is green", then in order for this token to clear the first hurdle, the following inference has to be good: *Jones just said 'This apple is green', therefore, there probably is a green apple in front of him.* For now, we'll call this inference, following Brandom, the *reliability inference*.²²⁵ So a putative token of observational knowledge has the requisite authority on the perceptual reliabilist view when the reliability inference is a good one.

*A detour: Brandom's interpretation of the goodness of the reliability inference*²²⁶

What does it mean to say that the reliability inference is a good one? Sellars doesn't say. Brandom interprets this to mean that others must be justified in making this inference. On this interpretation, Sellars has already by this point made a

²²⁵ Brandom (1994), p. 216.

substantive revision to perceptual reliabilism: not only must there be a strong correlation between Jones's tokens of "this apple is green" and the presence of green apples in front of him, but others must know this.²²⁷ (As we'll shortly see, *I think that* the substantive revision comes a bit later in that paragraph.)

Let me take a moment to say why I think this interpretation is unsatisfactory. The primary problem with this interpretation is that it puts you face to face with the question, "*Who* is it that needs to know about Jones's reliable disposition in order for his token to be eligible for the title of knowledge?" My view is that there is no good answer to this question. Brandom's attempted answer is that the person *attributing* the knowledge to Jones (whether this person is Jones himself or someone else) is the one who needs to know about Jones's reliable disposition. I think that although it may make sense to say that in order for Smith to be *justified* in attributing knowledge to Jones, Smith must know (or at least justifiably believe) that Jones is reliable. But it cannot be that in order for Smith's knowledge attribution to be *correct* (that is, *true*) Smith must know that Jones is reliable. Otherwise we might have a case where both Smith and Wentworth attribute knowledge to Jones, but since Smith knows of Jones's reliability and Wentworth does not, Jones both does and does not have knowledge! But we should not think that Brandom is simply *confusing* the truth conditions for

²²⁶ Thanks to Marc Lange whose probing comments prompted this section.

²²⁷ To put the point as I have here might seem to assume something that will shortly come under attack by Brandom: that there is a (non-epistemic, non-normative) fact of the matter about whether Jones's tokens are reliably produced. In fact I want to agree with Brandom that there is no non-normative fact of the matter. However, where I disagree with Brandom is that I think that there is a *normative* fact of the matter about

Jones knows that P with the conditions under which one would be justified in believing that Jones knows that P. Rather, Brandom has an account in which he understands what it is to *have* a normative status in terms of the practice of *attributing* a normative status. (He calls his view "phenomenalist".²²⁸) But I am not convinced that Brandom manages to maintain (what I think must be maintained) a robust distinction between someone's making an attribution of normative status -- even a *justified* attribution -- and that attribution's being accurate, true. On Brandom's interpretation it makes sense to say something like, "Jones's token clears the first hurdle *for me*, but not for Smith." But it doesn't make sense to say "Jones's token clears the first hurdle (full stop)" (unless this is just interpreted as something like "Jones's token clears the first hurdle *for me*, the person making this claim"). But since the first hurdle is a necessary condition of Jones's perceptual belief being justified, this would also mean that there is no sense of "Jones's perceptual belief is justified (full stop)" that is not also attributor-relative.

It may be that one reason that Brandom wants the goodness of the reliability inference to be attributor-relative is that he might see this as the only way of avoiding the *gerrymandering* objection we mentioned above. The problem there was that, as Brandom says, "There is simply no such thing as *the* pattern or regularity exhibited by a stretch of past behavior, which can be appealed to in judging some candidate bit of

whether someone is reliable, and he thinks that there is no fact of the matter at all. More on this in a moment.

²²⁸ Brandom (1994) p.25

future behavior as regular or irregular, and hence, on this line, correct or incorrect."²²⁹

The example Brandom uses is Goldman's Barn-Façade County.²³⁰ Suppose Jones, looking at a barn, says, "that's a red barn." Relative to the fact that he is in Barn-Façade country, where 999 of 1000 apparent barns are just barn-façades, he is not very reliable, and it is just lucky that he picked out the one real barn for miles around. But Barn-Façade country is located within Real-Barn state, in which every county except for Barn-Façade county contains real barns. Thus relative to the fact that Jones is in Real-Barn state, his tokens of "that's a barn" are reliable. But he is also in Fake-Barn country, in which every state except for Real-Barn state, contains mostly fake barns. (And so on.) Natural facts do not determine which reference class is the appropriate one with which to judge whether Jones is reliable or not, and thus natural facts do not determine whether he is reliable or not. Brandom's solution is to treat reliability as a matter of whether a certain inference pattern is good, and whether a certain inference pattern is good depends upon what evidence one has, what premises one has available. Thus, says Brandom there's no such thing as whether Jones is reliable *simpliciter*, but only relative to certain premises. Conjoined with the premise that Jones is in Barn-Façade county, Jones is not reliable (in the sense that the inference from "Jones just said 'that's a barn', and he's in Barn-Façade county" to "therefore that probably is a red barn" is not a good inference). However, relative to the premise that Jones is in Real-Barn state (where every county except for Barn-Façade county contain real barns), Jones is reliable, (in the sense that the inference from "Jones just said 'that's a barn',

²²⁹ Brandom (1994) p.28.

and he's in a Real-Barn state" to "therefore that probably is a red barn" is a good inference). Both premises (he's in Barn-Façade county, and he's in a Real-Barn state) are true, so the truth of the premises cannot decide which should be used in determining whether Jones is *really* reliable. Thus, concludes Brandom, the issue of whether Jones is reliable is relative to one's evidence.

Brandom takes the gerrymandering problem to force a re-centering in how we think of reliability. We cannot think of reliability as some independent (i.e., non-evidence relative) property. – Rather, he says, "taking someone to be reliable is endorsing a distinctive kind of *inference*: an inference, namely, from the *attribution* to another of a propositionally contentful commitment acquired under certain circumstances to the *endorsement* or *undertaking* oneself of a commitment with that same content."²³¹ Brandom calls them *reliability inferences* but we might also call them *copy cat transitions*: a transition from my believing that S believes that P to my believing that P. It should be pointed out that engaging in the copy cat behavioral pattern is not sufficient for taking someone to be reliable, since I might be engaging in copy cat behavior out of hero worship. Rather, it has to be an *inferential* transition, and that inferential transition has to be *good*, which Brandom interprets to mean, *supported by one's evidence*. This brings us back to his claim that reliability is evidence-relative, and thus attributor-relative.

But my inclination is to say that even if there is *some* sense in which reliability may be relative (it is certainly relative to reference class), there is still sense to be

²³⁰ Goldman (1976), Brandom (1998a).

made of the idea that there is a fact of the matter about whether Jones is reliable *in the respect in which he would need to be reliable in order for his token of 'that's a barn' (or whatever) to be epistemically justified.*

Brandom focuses on the role of reliability in determining whether someone should be *relied* upon. But even granting that role, treating reliability as a matter of endorsing an inference pattern, relative to one's evidence, does not settle the matter of whether someone should be relied upon. Suppose Smith and Wentworth both hear Jones say "That's a red barn." They are disagreeing among themselves whether Jones's tokens of that type are reliable -- that is, in Brandom's terms, whether they should rely on Jones, and thus undertake the commitment to the red barn themselves. Smith knows that Jones is in Barn-Façade county, and thus, relative to that piece of evidence, the reliability inference looks like a bad one, so he is not willing to undertake the commitment to the red barn himself. Wentworth on the other hand, doesn't realize that Jones is in Barn-Façade county but does know that Jones is in Real-Barn state, and thus, relative to *that* piece of evidence, the reliability inference looks like a *good* one, and so he *is* willing to undertake the commitment to the red barn himself. That Smith and Wentworth ought to undertake different commitments here, given that they have different evidence, is, as Brandom sees, just what we should expect. But now, suppose that Smith and Wentworth, since they are arguing about whether Jones should be trusted, each divulge to each other their premises. Now both know that Jones is in

²³¹ Brandom, "Insights and Blindspots of Reliabilism", p. 120 of *Articulating Reasons*.

Barn-Façade county and in Real-Barn state. Now what should they say about whether Jones is to be relied upon? I see two possibilities here.

On the one hand, perhaps they should say (with Brandom), that there is no fact of the matter still about whether Jones is to be relied upon. We can only say that given one of these pieces of evidence, Jones is to be relied upon, and given the other piece of evidence, he should not be relied upon. Having both pieces of evidence in view puts one in a state of genuine epistemic indeterminacy.

On the other hand, perhaps they should say (and this is what *I* am inclined to say) that there *is* a fact of the matter about whether Jones should be relied upon or not (at least for the specific purposes of saying whether Jones is epistemically justified), and that the question about which of these pieces of evidence should trump the other is something that in fact *can* be decided, at least in principle, perhaps by bringing in more evidence. (For example, it might make a difference to find out that it is only a lucky accident that Jones happened to be in Barn-Façade county on this one day; the rest of his life is spent elsewhere in the state.) There can be temporary uncertainty but no genuine indeterminacy.

But to say that there is a fact of the matter about whether Jones should be relied upon or not, that Smith and Wentworth are in fact having a genuine disagreement and are trying to get to the truth of the matter, is not necessarily to say that this fact of the matter must be a non-epistemic or non-normative one. I want to agree with Brandom that naturalistic facts cannot determine the appropriate reference class for determining the reliability that is germane to (say) the justificatory status of a particular perceptual

belief. But I disagree with Brandom's claim that this means that there must be *no fact of the matter at all*, and that whether someone is reliable *in the sense required for perceptual knowledge* should simply be relative to the evidence of the attributor.

Instead, we should say that the facts about whether Jones is reliable, about which reference classes are and are not germane, are determined by the epistemic norms reflected in the practices of the community who trains him to have a language, and which the job of the first hurdle is to get Jones in conformity with.²³² Which reference class is the *right* one, which uniformity is the one Jones's perceptual behavior *ought* to conform to if those perceptual belief tokens are to count as knowledge can be determined in part by the shared epistemic norms that determine the content of a term like 'green' or 'barn'. As I will discuss more fully in the next chapter, the norms that require certain regularities in Jones's perceptual belief practices also allow for exceptions to those regularities -- they have *ceteris paribus* clauses -- and the content of the *ceteris paribus* clause may determine whether (for example) being in both Barn-Façade county and Real-Barn state is a mitigating factor or not. --Which is just to say that persons who are sensitive to these epistemic norms should in principle be able to work out whether Jones exhibits the required regularities or not.

Here's another case to make the same point. Jones is a bird-watcher. He makes this non-inferentially produced perceptual report: "That is a crested jay." Again

²³² Again, when I say that the norms are reflected in the practices of the community, I am not claiming that the practices of the community *make* the norms. (That would fit Brandom's (1994, 25) notion of epistemic norms as merely *phenomenal*, arising out of communal practices.) Rather, on my view the community can get norms wrong. But it

Smith and Wentworth disagree about whether Jones is to be trusted. Each of them has a true premise about Jones that the other does not. Smith knows that Jones is a world-renown bird watcher whose expert bird watching skills have enabled him to win the International Bird-Watching Federation's bird recognition competition fourteen years in a row (from 1988 to 2002). Wentworth, on the other hand, knows that within the last year Jones has developed cataracts that were so bad that last month he failed the vision test he was required to take in order to renew his driver's license. On Brandom's view, Jones's bird report is reliable for Smith but not for Wentworth, and there is no attributor independent fact of the matter about whether the report is reliable (full stop). Smith is justified in thinking that it is reasonable to rely on Jones's report, because relative to the reference class of reports of birds made by Jones in the last twenty years, it is very likely that this report (like the vast majority of similar reports in that reference class) will be true. And Wentworth is justified in thinking that it is not reasonable to rely on Jones's report because relative to the reference class of reports of birds made by Jones in the past year, it is not at all likely that this report will be true. Here the reference classes are temporal instead of spatial. But is it right to think that there can be no fact of the matter about which of these is more relevant to the issue of whether Jones's report ought to be trusted? Again imagine that Smith and Wentworth share with each other their respective premises. Knowing about both facts (his excellent past record and his current cataracts), I should think that there is no genuine epistemic indeterminacy. My intuition is that the premise about the cataracts is more

is one's initiation into the linguistic and epistemic community that opens ones eyes to

relevant to determining the trustworthiness of this bird report. Wentworth was right to think that Jones's report is not reliable, and Smith was wrong. It is part of our epistemic norms that in a context like *that*, the more recent poor track record would trump Jones's past good track record for purposes of determining whether this report ought to be relied upon. To be sure, additional premises (e.g., that Jones just had corrective surgery yesterday) might make us change our minds about whether Jones is reliable. But whereas Brandom takes this to indicate that reliability is relative to the attributor's premises, I take it to show that there is a fact of the matter about whether Jones ought to be relied upon that these additional premises can help us to converge upon.

The first hurdle requires that the reliability inference be a good one. Our point of departure here was the question of what that goodness consists in. I argued against Brandom's view that the reliability inference is a good one when the attributor of knowledge to Jones has evidence that would (when conjoined with the premise that Jones just had a non-inferentially produced perceptual token of P) support the conclusion that P. On this view there is no fact of the matter about whether Jones's perceptual report that P is reliably produced (full stop). Instead we can only say that Jones's report that P is reliable *for person S*, where that means that S's evidence justifies her in accepting Jones's report that P. There is no *objective* sense in which a reliability inference is good. A reliability inference can be good for Smith but not for Wentworth. My view, on the other hand, is that there is an objective sense in which a

the norms that are there. More on this in the next chapter.

person can be reliable (whether, that is, the reliability inference is a good one). Thus a person (say, Smith) can be justified in thinking that Jones is reliable (that is, it can be reasonable for Smith to believe what Jones has just reported), but it is possible for Smith to be wrong in thinking that Jones is reliable. There is a difference between its being the case that an inference is good and its being the case that one has evidence that it is good. Smith and Wentworth can disagree about whether Jones's report that P is to be relied upon or not, and there is a fact of the matter about which one of them is right (at least in the context where reliability would matter to the question of whether Jones's token clears the first hurdle²³³). Again I emphasize that I am not claiming that this fact of the matter about whether the reliability inference is good is a non-normative fact. Rather, it is an *epistemic* question, and for Sellars epistemic questions are normative ones. On my view it makes sense to say that Jones's report that P was reliably produced (full stop), or that his tokens of that type are in general reliable (full stop), even though I agree with Brandom (and Sellars) that we should understand reliability in terms of the goodness of an inference. Understanding reliability in terms of the goodness of the reliability inference does not undermine the objectivity of attributions of reliability, so long as we can make sense of the idea that there is a (non-attributor relative) fact of the matter about whether the inference is good.

²³³ The parenthetical is there because I am inclined to think that even if "S is reliable" is not attributor relative, it is still context relative; S might count as reliable in some contexts but not others. But once we've specified the context (for example, a context where reliability matters for the question of whether S knows that there is an apple in front of him, in an ordinary, non-technical setting), then there can be an objective (attributor-independent) fact of the matter about whether he is reliable.

When we say that Jones has a reliable disposition to say "green here" only in the presence of green items, this is to say that there is a non-accidental correlation between Jones's tokens of "green here" and green items. Sellars's understanding of reliability in terms of rules of inference is very similar to his treatment of the concept of a natural law. When we assert that, as a matter of natural law, *All A's are B's*, we are saying that there is a non-accidental correlation between A's and B's. Now for Sellars, when we assert a non-accidental correlation between two types of events, we are not thereby committing ourselves to the existence of Real Connections between universals or anything like that. Rather, Sellars cashes out modality -- the *non-accidentalness* -- in terms of rules of inference. Thus when we say that it is a law of nature that *All A's are B's*, part of what we are saying is that there is a good inference from "this is an A" to "this is a B". And it is the sort of rule which supports at least some counterfactuals: "had this been an A, it would have been a B..." Similarly, when we say that Jones's observational behavior instantiates a certain regularity (e.g., that he is disposed to say "green here" only in the presence of green items) part of what we are saying is that the reliability inference is a good one.

By putting it in terms of the goodness of an inference instead of in terms of the instantiation of a regularity Sellars makes it easier for us to see how something which instantiates a regularity can have authority, can be trustworthy. But in merely saying that the authority involves the good inference has Sellars yet made any substantive revisions or additions to perceptual reliabilism? I do not think that Sellars would think so. Since he understands non-accidental regularities in terms of rules of

inference, he would not think that it is adding anything extra to perceptual reliabilism to point out that the authority of a reliably produced perceptual token accrues to it in virtue of goodness of the reliability inference.

Notice however that Sellars is already at this point treating the reliably produced perceptual tokens as *assertions*. The reliability inference is *not* "Jones made such-and-such noises, therefore (probably) P." It is, rather, "Jones said (or believed) 'P', therefore (probably) P." Sellars is clearly thinking of these tokens of "this is green" as not just *noises*, but as actual *reports*.²³⁴ Thus, unlike thermometers reading 70 degrees, or the rusting of iron or other differentially responding items, these perceptual tokens are propositionally structured items in the space of reasons, the sort of thing fit to be a premise or conclusion of inferences. And for Sellars, as we have seen, a token cannot be propositionally structured, a *conceptual* item, unless it is a part of network of other propositions which are both inferentially connected to each other and causally connected to the world. That much comes with just the *belief* requirement of knowledge. Remember that only a few sections earlier, in §§30-31 (the section entitled "The Logic of 'Means'") Sellars had introduced some of his semantics (of which I have earlier in this chapter provided a brief sketch). By the time the reader gets to §35, he should already realize that for Sellars a statement like "Jones said 'P'" implies many epistemic (and so normative) facts about Jones. I point this out only to make clear how the perceptual reliabilism that Sellars starts with here would differ from some contemporary versions of reliabilism that are motivated by a project of

naturalizing epistemology. If a naturalist reliabilist seeks to cast the concepts and problems of epistemology in non-epistemic and non-normative terms, he will already find the perceptual reliabilism that Sellars takes as his starting point to be problematic, even before Sellars has begun to revise it. To say again, the way I see it, when Sellars introduces the notion of authority and the reliability inference, he is not making what *he* would consider a substantive revision to perceptual reliabilism; he is simply explaining the sense in which perceptual tokens would have authority on that view.

The real revision of perceptual reliabilism that comes in the first hurdle is introduced toward the end of the second paragraph of §35. There Sellars indicates in what *way* the regularity might come about. There are a couple ways I can think of how a non-accidental regularity might come about. For one, the object instantiating it might be an *artifact*, like a thermometer, carefully designed to exhibit a correlation between its mercury level and the temperature. Two, the regularity might be brought about by *nature*, as in the correlation between thunder and lightning, or between the rusting of iron and the presence of water. Three, the regularity might be brought about by conscious effort, as in the case of a person explicitly following a rule, trying to bring her behavior in conformity with it. This last way is the followist strategy Sellars has already rejected.

Sellars's alternative to these (though perhaps his is most like the *artifact* case) is that the tokening exhibits a regularity because it is, "an instance of a general mode of behavior which, in a given linguistic community, it is reasonable to sanction and

²³⁴ Some of the ideas in this paragraph, like many other things in this dissertation, may

support."²³⁵ The reliable disposition is one brought about by one's community.²³⁶ For example, in the process of teaching a child the word 'green', we are inculcating in it the disposition to say "green here" only when in the presence of green things. So it is no *accident* that the child (or any of us) says "green here" only in front of green things; it's the result of a community whose practices embody an acceptance of a norm to the effect that it ought to be that people be disposed to respond to green objects with 'green'.²³⁷ -- Not, of course, because there's something special about the *noise* 'green', but because there's something special about the *word* 'green' -- that it plays a special role (inferential and causal) to other words and objects in the world.

Now the sort of observational predicates that Sellars discusses in §32-38 are the sort that one generally learns to use in the process of learning a language. One can, of course, enrich the language with *new* concepts, not already accepted by the linguistic community. For example, a ornithologist may learn to identify a new species of bird, dubbing it a *Green-Winged Nixon-Bird*. But he could not teach himself the concept of a Green-Winged Nixon-Bird without already having a language, a system of concepts with which the new concept will be inferentially

well have been ideas I picked up from talking with Cass Weller.

²³⁵ EPM §35.

²³⁶ On the crucial role of the community, see Sellars (1969), section IV: "As Wittgenstein has stressed, it is the linguistic community as a self-perpetuating whole which is the minimum unit in terms of which conceptual activity can be understood."

²³⁷ See Sellars (1973d), §31, where he makes a similar point about inferential transitions that I am here making about world-word transitions. Consider Tom's (inferential) practice of always following 'p' with 'q'. Sellars says, "...the fact that the former is followed by the latter is an instance of a uniformity *for which the entailment is responsible* -- in the sense that persons who accept the entailment have followed the norm it formulates in teaching him the language."

related in order to have content. It is only when I am a full-fledged member of the linguistic community that I can teach myself or invent new concepts. One's first concept (or set of concepts, rather) cannot be self-taught. For our purposes here, we will follow Sellars and continue to focus on the simple observational predicates (like 'green') picked up in the process of learning a language. In the chapter four I will discuss other sorts.

Although one of our primary tasks is to explain in what sense a norm is *in* one's reporting behavior in virtue of which its exercise can be called a knowing, we are now in a position to answer a related important question, namely, *which* norm (or "rule") is in a person's reporting behavior? For Sellars has made it clear that the rule at issue cannot be of the form "one ought to do A in circumstances C" (Sellars, remember, calls this an ought-to-do rule), for the satisfaction of this kind of rule would require that the reporting behavior (the saying of "green here", or what have you) be an *action* (which spontaneous observational tokenings are not) done on account of an awareness that the circumstances are C -- and this, as we have seen, puts us right back into the myth of the given. Sellars's alternative to the ought-to-do rule is the *ought-to-be* rule²³⁸, an example of which is the one mentioned two paragraphs back -- the norm embodied in the practices of the community of trainers. Ought-to-be rules don't always need to be satisfied by the doing of *actions*, and when they *do*, the actions needn't always be done by the person, if any, to whom the rule applies. Two examples might help to make this clear. Consider the (putative) ought-to-be rule, "It ought to be

that there are lots of wide open green spaces in Seattle." Now if it happens that there are *already* lots of wide open green spaces in Seattle, then things are as they ought to be and this rule is satisfied without anyone doing anything. If there *aren't* lots of wide open green spaces in Seattle, then this ought-to-be rule implies ought-to-do rules.

(These may be general like, "one ought to do what one can to bring it about that there are lots of wide open green spaces in Seattle" or specific like "one ought to vote for the Seattle Commons initiative to create a large park in Seattle.") Ought-to-be rules often but not always imply ought-to-do rules. Now consider the rule (set down by Mom) that "it ought to be that Joey's room is clean before the guests come over tonight."²³⁹ This rule can be satisfied by an action on the part of *Joey* himself (e.g., his cleaning his room), or by an action of someone else (Joey's brother's cleaning it), or by a non-action (an amazingly lucky gust of wind through the open window sweeps all Joey's toys into the right spots). This is an important feature of ought-to-be's because, as we've mentioned, observational behavior is spontaneous, non-action behavior.

So the 1st hurdle requirement (as interpreted here) helps us to see *one* way in which the rule (the ought-to-be rule) is *in* Jones's observational behavior (i.e., his tokening of "green here" or what have you). Namely, the fact that the community accepts this rule is what explains why Jones's behavior is the way it is.²⁴⁰ It is

²³⁸ On ought-to-be rules, see Sellars (1963d), (1974), also the last chapter of *Science and Metaphysics* (1967).

²³⁹ She might be more likely to put it like, "Joey's room needs to be clean before the guests come over tonight."

²⁴⁰ Again, we are restricting our attention for the time being to the simple observational predicates likely to be learned at a young age. Once we see what the second hurdle is,

important that we think of the community's training behaviors as rule-governed. If we were to instead think of these training behaviors as mere (non-norm-governed) regularities at the level of the community, we would be prevented from offering an explanation of the non-accidentalness of *Jones's* perceptual dispositions that connected it to the rule. If the training behaviors of the community were mere (non-norm-governed) regularities, it would seem like an accident that Jones, in virtue of his perceptual dispositions, conforms to the ought-to-be rules.²⁴¹

But clearing the first hurdle is not enough. That clearing the first hurdle is not sufficient for the tokening's having the appropriate positive justificatory status is seen in the fact that (a) in saying that Jones has a certain reliable disposition -- even one brought about by communal practices embodying the acceptance of certain epistemic norms -- we have not yet said anything normative about Jones and thus (b) to infer from the fact that he has cleared the 1st hurdle that his tokening therefore has positive justificatory status would be a mistake akin to the naturalistic fallacy -- what I've pointed out as a the heart of the Myth of the Given. Thus the 2nd hurdle will require that the rule be put in the observational behavior in an even deeper way. We'll see what Sellars thinks this is a bit later on.

As I've said, the essence of the "revision" to perceptual reliabilism required by the first hurdle is just that the reliable disposition is brought about in a particular and important way. But let's be clear about what the *role* of the first hurdle is. The goal of

we'll see that self-taught predicates (whose content is determined partially by their being connected up to the rest of the system) are likely to jump both hurdles at once.

²⁴¹ Thanks to Bill Talbott for helping me to be clear about this point.

both hurdles together is to put the norm-governedness in an observational tokening in the way appropriate to its being an instance of observational knowledge. The first hurdle does half this job: it makes sure that the token is an exercise of a behavioral disposition which *conforms* to the rule. (See above for a reminder of *which* rule that is.) But more than that, the first hurdle also makes sure that the person's behavior doesn't just *happen* to conform to the rule, but that it *non-accidentally* conforms to it. Of course, the reason it's non-accidental is not because it's on *purpose*. Rather, the reason that it's no accident that the person's reporting behavior conforms to this rule is that the rule's acceptance by the community tends to bring about this sort of conformity in its members.

But, just as Kant tells us, mere *conformity* to one's duty won't do.²⁴² The rule needs to be *in* the reporting behavior more deeply than conformity -- even *non-accidental* conformity.²⁴³ The tokener herself needs to get into the act more -- she needs to be an *agent*. She's got to *own* the tokening (or at least the disposition); it's got to be *hers*. In short, she needs to be more than just a *product* of society, she needs to be a *member* of it. And that's precisely the role filled by the second hurdle.

²⁴² There is more than just analogy here. See Sellars's "Language, Rules and Behavior", as well as Science and Metaphysics for discussion of the ways in which his views on rules are heavily shaped by Kant.

²⁴³ See, in contrast, Brandom (1998a), (pp. 97-98 of *Articulating Reasons*) where the requisite non-accidentalness is thought to be satisfied by the concept of reliability (understood, as he does, in terms of inferential license).

The second hurdle

What Sellars thinks it takes to jump the second hurdle is relatively clear and I'll start my discussion with that. But the account that he gives immediately raises the question of whether or not Sellars is what I called a *non-inferentialist* -- that is, whether or not he believes that there is any non-inferentially justified knowledge. Some will want to say that perceptual reports like "this is green" are inferentially justified according to Sellars. I will argue that this is incorrect. Next I will turn to the issue of whether the second hurdle is too high. Then I will explain what makes me think that Sellars's account of perceptual knowledge (and his way of jumping the second hurdle in particular) is not quite satisfactory. Finally we will want to summarize and make sure we are clear about the respective roles played by the two hurdles. We will then be just about ready to hear what I have to say about how these roles should be filled.

Inferentially or non-inferentially justified?

According to Sellars, in order for a perceptually occasioned token of "this is green" to clear the second hurdle, the tokener (Jones) must *know* that tokens of that type are reliably correlated with the presence of green items, so that he himself is justified in making the inference from "I just tokened 'this is green'" to "it is reasonable to think that this *is* green." In essence, while the first hurdle requires that certain things be the case, the second hurdle requires that the agent also *knows* that they are the case. This is how the agent gets into the picture, so to speak.

Some people interpret Sellars as an inferentialist about justification, and essentially, as a coherentist. Sellars, however, sees his view as neither foundationalist nor coherentist (at least as these have traditionally been understood), but instead, as "reconciling the claims of those who stress warrantedness grounded on explanatory coherence with the claims of those who stress the non-inferential warrantedness of certain empirical statements."²⁴⁴

Now my view is that Sellars is a non-inferentialist and he believes that, in particular, bits of perceptual knowledge like "this is green" are non-inferentially justified. But the second hurdle, understood in a certain way, seems to tell against this view. For it might look as though Sellars thinks that Jones's perceptual belief "this is green" is justified in virtue of the fact that Jones can make the following inference: "I just tokened 'this is green' and my tokens of that type are generally reliable, therefore this *is* green." Thus it might seem that the perceptual belief is inferentially justified.

My response to this involves two parts. The first involves a distinction that Sellars makes between knowledge which *presupposes* other knowledge and knowledge that is inferentially justified. The second involves a distinction between an argument whose conclusion is P and an argument whose conclusion is 'It is reasonable to believe that P.'

²⁴⁴ Sellars (1973b), "Givenness and Explanatory Coherence", p. 612.

In §32 EPM, Sellars says that,

It might be thought that... knowledge (not belief or conviction but knowledge) which logically presupposes knowledge of other facts *must* be inferential. This, however, as I hope to show, is itself an episode in the Myth.

Sellars makes this distinction because he defends the position that all knowledge presupposes other knowledge yet some knowledge (e.g., a perceptual tokening) is non-inferentially justified. When Sellars says, "(not belief or conviction, but *knowledge*)" (my italics) it is clear that he has the *justification* aspect of knowledge in mind. Thus in the above quote from §32, Sellars is saying, in effect, that even if the justification of Jones's belief that P presupposes that Jones knows other stuff, this does not mean that P is *inferentially* justified. It might be true that Jones's belief that "this is green" is not justified unless he knows that his tokens of "this green" are reliably correlated with the presence of green items, but this does *not* mean that Jones's justification for "this is green" must be inferential. The question of whether that belief is inferentially justified is the question of whether it is justified in virtue of the fact that there is a good argument, from premises that Jones believes, to the conclusion that *that is green*. In other words, if Jones is either not in possession of such an argument, or if his having such an argument is not what explains the belief's positive justificatory status, then the belief is not inferentially justified. We'll settle that question in a moment.

One might claim (as Brandom does in his Study Guide of EPM, pp. 152ff.) that by 'inferential knowledge' in the above passage in §32, Sellars means only non-inferentially *produced* knowledge, and not non-inferentially *justified* knowledge. But

this suggestion, in addition to flying in the face of the parenthetical remark "(not belief or conviction but knowledge)", also threatens to render unintelligible Sellars's claim that one who runs together the distinction between knowledge which presupposes other knowledge and inferential knowledge falls into the myth of the given. Let's take a moment to see why.

EPM §32 and non-inferential knowledge

Sellars thinks that the proposition

Q: If some bit of knowledge p logically presupposes other knowledge, then p is inferentially known

is an episode of the myth. It will be easier to see why if we look at its contra-positive²⁴⁵,

Q1: If p is non-inferentially known, then p does not logically presuppose any other knowledge.

Now on my interpretation of Sellars's point here, the 'non-inferentially known' in the antecedent of Q1 (or the 'inferentially known' in the consequent of Q) is meant to refer to the non-inferential *justification* of p (as opposed to how p came about.) Thus on my interpretation, Sellars thinks this is an episode of the myth because it is tantamount to saying,

R: If p is non-inferentially justified, then it must be justified in virtue of *non-epistemic facts*.

Given the understanding of givenness I set out in the first chapter, it should be obvious how R is an episode of the myth.

²⁴⁵ The credit for this strategy is due to Marc Lange.

(Clearly I've taken liberties in the transition from Q1 to R in order to make it easier to see why Sellars thinks that Q/Q1 is an myth-ridden. Those liberties include: (a) I tacitly assumed here that for Sellars the only kind of epistemic facts are facts about what someone knows, so that if p's justification doesn't presuppose knowledge, then p's justification must not presuppose *any* epistemic facts. I think that this may not be too far off the track as far as Sellars is concerned (especially if we were to replace 'knowledge' with 'justified belief' in that latter conditional, since it is justification that he means to focus on). But this is an assumption that my alternative view (see chapter three) will challenge. In other words, I think that there are more epistemic facts than just "S knows that p", or "S is justified in believing that p" or even "S grasps the inferential relationship between p and q." The other liberty I took, smaller in importance I think, is (b) that, even granting (a), I assumed that if p is not justified in virtue of epistemic facts, it must therefore be justified in virtue of non-epistemic facts. Thus I ignored the possibility that p is justified not in virtue of anything at all, that its justification is *sui generis*. A more perspicuous transition between Q1 and R would have made explicit the (not implausible, I think) assumption that no justification is *sui generis*.)

On Brandom's interpretation, as far as I can tell, the 'non-inferentially' in Q1 is meant to be understood as 'non-inferentially *produced*'.²⁴⁶ thus he understands Sellars to mean by Q1,

²⁴⁶ See Brandom's EPM study guide p. 153: "His [Sellars's] project at this point is to show how a bit of knowledge (belief) can, and indeed how all of it does, presuppose other knowledge (belief), even though it is not inferred from that other knowledge or

Q1^B: If p is non-inferentially produced, then p does not logically presuppose any other knowledge.

It is easy to see why Sellars would think this is false, but would he think that it is an episode of the myth? I can make it an episode of the myth only by making the 'non-inferentially produced' part of it irrelevant to why it is myth-ridden. (I'll demonstrate this in a moment.) But if instead, as seems likely, Sellars takes the givenness of Q/Q1 to essentially involve what follows from p's being *non-inferential* -- that is, if the non-inferentialness of p is crucial to why Sellars thinks that Q/Q1 is myth-ridden -- then on Brandom's interpretation Sellars's point is that it is an episode of the myth to think that something can be non-inferentially produced without presupposing other knowledge. But that, by itself is not an episode of the myth. A tree produces its fruit non-inferentially without presupposing any knowledge, any epistemic facts about the tree. Nothing mythical about that. In order to make Q1^B an episode of the myth, you simply have to focus on the fact that in the antecedent, p is a *belief*. Given the Sellarsian/Brandomian understanding of belief as something whose content is fixed by its inferential role, its connection to other epistemic states, it would be an episode of the myth to think that someone could have a belief without presupposing other beliefs or other epistemic states. That is well and good -- and is a point that Sellars has already made in earlier sections of EPM when focusing on his account of conceptual

belief." I take it that Brandom's parentheticals indicate that he thinks that Sellars's point here can be made in terms of *belief* as well as knowledge, in spite of Sellars's explicit qualification, "not belief or conviction, but knowledge." Also on p. 153: "A noninferential report or belief can properly be called 'noninferential' only in the sense that the reporter's commitment to an essentially inferentially articulated content is elicited noninferentially on this occasion".

content²⁴⁷ -- but it makes the *non-inferentiality* of p totally irrelevant to the point, since the same point can be made whether p is inferentially or non-inferentially produced, so long as p is a belief. And, to say again, to think that the crucial element of the antecedent of Q1 in virtue of which it is myth-ridden is the fact that p is a *belief* ignores Sellars's urging that his argument does *not* turn simply on whether something is a belief when he prefaces the point by saying "not belief or conviction, but knowledge".

This then is some reason to think that Sellars's point is to defend the claim that there is genuine non-inferentially justified beliefs, in spite of the fact (which Brandom seizes on) that all beliefs presuppose other beliefs, other epistemic states.

Inferentially justifying "p" or inferentially justifying "it's reasonable to believe that p"

In "On Accepting First Principles" (Sellars, 1988), a paper written in the 1960's but first published in 1988, Sellars defends a conception of first principles. By a first principle, Sellars means, primarily, a claim P for which (a) there is no good argument with P as the conclusion (thus P is not inferentially justified) but for which (b) there is a good argument whose conclusion is "it is reasonable to believe that P." If (a) were not the case, P could not properly be called a *first* principle since it would derive its reasonableness, its positive justificatory status, from antecedently justified premises.

²⁴⁷ See e.g., EPM, The Logic of 'Means', especially at the end of §31. Thus this point should still be fresh in the minds of the readers of §32. On Brandom's interpretation, Sellars is repeating himself, making a point about the normativity and holism of belief, whereas I think he is making a point that is particularly concerned with the *justification* of belief, and not just the conditions for something to *be* a belief.

However, Sellars thinks that without (b) P would not have the positive justificatory status that it must have if it is to be a first principle capable of justifying other claims. Thus first principles are non-inferentially justified on this account.

In the Machette Lectures,²⁴⁸ Sellars clarifies the nature of the inference or argument that one must have available to one if one's perceptual tokening is to (in the words of EPM) pass the 2nd hurdle. There he calls the inference (what we have been calling, following Brandom, a reliability inference) a *trans-level credibility inference*.²⁴⁹ There he makes it clear that the conclusion of such an inference is *not* "this is green", but "it is reasonable to believe 'this is green'".²⁵⁰ The latter gives epistemic license to accept the former. It is the difference between asserting P and asserting that P is justified. For Sellars then, a perceptual tokening like "this is green" may have a status very like that of first principles.²⁵¹ Jones may have at his disposal an argument that it is reasonable to believe (or perhaps to continue believing) that this

²⁴⁸ Reprinted as "The Structure of Knowledge", pp. 295-348, in *Action Knowledge and Reality*, edited by Hector-Neri Castanêda (1975). I will abbreviate "The Structure of Knowledge" as SK.

²⁴⁹ See SK p. 342, footnote 12. Sellars first uses the term "trans-level credibility", in referring to this inference in "Phenomenalism", p. 88 of *Science, Perception, and Reality*.

²⁵⁰ You might think that if the conclusion, should not be understood as "p", then perhaps it ought to be understood as "it is probable that p". But Sellars makes clear in "Induction as Vindication" (Sellars, 1964b), that the latter, in *this* context has the sense of "it is reasonable to accept that p". See especially §15. See also Rosenberg (1974), p. 78.

²⁵¹ Of course, a first principle won't contain (implicitly or explicitly) any indexical terms as perceptual claims typically will, and the argument justifying the reasonableness of accepting a first principle will be very different than the argument justifying the reasonableness of accepting a perceptual claim.

is green (thus it clears the 2nd hurdle) but according to Sellars he might not have an argument that this is green and thus the latter is not inferentially justified.

One might object, "But in having an argument for 'it is reasonable to believe that P', don't I also thereby have an argument for P? It seems like Jones can just as easily make this inference: *"I just said 'this is green' and usually when I say that there's a green thing around there is, therefore this is green."* But for Sellars this would be a confusion of levels. The premises are at the metalinguistic level while the conclusion is at the object level.²⁵² For Sellars (as I will shortly explain), a transition between the metalinguistic level and the object level is not properly understood as an *inferential* transition.

Intuitively, we would expect any argument for the conclusion that "this is green" (as opposed to "it is reasonable to believe that this is green") to make reference in some way to this thing in front of me and its greenness. But the premises of the trans-level credibility argument are too high level for that. So it is not surprising that the conclusion that follows from them should also be once removed from the object level. Sellars says, "...the conclusion of this reasoning is not the *thinking* in his original perceptual experience. Like all justification arguments, it is a higher order thinking."²⁵³

²⁵² See Rosenberg (1990) for similar points.

²⁵³ Sellars (1971) "The Structure of Knowledge", p. 341.

More evidence in support of this interpretation of Sellars is to be found in his "Some Reflections on Language Games."²⁵⁴ He there distinguishes between the object-language (OL) and the meta-language (ML). Remember that there are three kinds of transitions: language-entry, language-language (in SLRG Sellars also calls this an *intra-game* move), and language exit transitions. In the OL, language-entry transitions happen primarily in observation. Thus Jones might make a transition from being in front of a red object, eyes open (etc.) to tokening, "that's red". In the ML, a language-entry transition might be a case where Jones moves from the OL position of "that's red" to tokening in the ML, "I just tokened 'that's red'." For Sellars this will not count as an inference, even though the position moved from and the position moved to are both positions in language. It will not count as an inference if they are not in the same language, and *at the same level*. A transition between OL and ML will count as an inter-game move and not an intra-game -- that is, an *inferential* -- move. Likewise, a language-exit transition *from* the ML (where this will involve normative language, or what Sellars calls in SRLG a "motivating context") will be a transition *into* the OL. Just as in the OL, when someone makes the transition from "I should go eat" to eating, this is *not* an inference, so in the ML, when someone makes a transition from "I should believe that P" to believing that P, this is also *not* an inference. The trans-level credibility inference is an inference in the ML. (In §36 of SRLG, Sellars says it is an inference "in the pragmatic metalanguage.") Its premises mention tokens in the OL, but the premises are not themselves *in* the OL. Its conclusion is also in the ML: it is a

²⁵⁴ Sellars (1954), to be abbreviated *SRLG*. A similar interpretation is also accepted by

license to adopt a position in the OL. To do what the license says you may do is to make a language-exit transition out of the ML and into the OL.²⁵⁵ This is, to say again, not an inference. Let's take a look at the trans-level credibility argument, and the transition from it to the OL token, more closely:

(1) I just tokened "that's green." [ML]

(2) When I token "that's green," I generally get it right. [ML]

Therefore (3) It's reasonable to believe "that's green." [ML]

Okay then: (4) *That's green.* [OL]

The transition from (1) and (2) to (3) is an inferential (intra-game) transition. The transition from (3) to (4) is *not* an inference but a language-exit transition from ML into OL. Thus although it is true that one can get from the trans-level credibility argument to "that's green", this transition is not an inferential one, and thus we cannot say that "that's green" is inferentially justified by the trans-level credibility argument. (And in any case, there's no need in the case of perception, to make the transition from (3) to (4) since you already (and presumably *still*) believe that it's green.)

Thus we see that Sellars does *not* believe that the trans-level credibility argument inferentially justifies the original object-level perceptual belief. Rather, Jones's belief that "this is green" is non-inferentially justified in virtue of the fact that he is *inferentially* justified in believing that "it is reasonable (justified, licensed, etc) to believe that this is green."

Jay Rosenberg in Rosenberg (1990).

²⁵⁵ See SRLG §60.

One reason I have given for interpreting the trans-level credibility inference as I have is that so interpreting it is (as far as I can see) the only way to make sense of Sellars's insistence that perceptual knowledge can be genuinely non-inferentially justified. But someone might challenge this by giving an alternative rendering of the trans-level credibility inference such that the conclusion is still *p* (as opposed to "it is reasonable to believe that *p*") while still maintaining that *p* is nevertheless still *non-inferentially* justified by it. Here is one idea along these lines.²⁵⁶ Suppose we were to say that the conclusion of the trans-level credibility inference is "that's green", but we note that this conclusion is a different token (of the same "that's green" type) from the original token of "that's green" that was perceptually occasioned by the green object. Then we can say that the original token of "that's green" is non-inferentially justified in virtue of the fact that a different token of that same type was inferentially justified by the trans-level credibility inference. Furthermore, we can combine this suggestion with the idea that it makes sense to call the original token non-inferentially justified since the premises of the trans-level credibility inference (or at least one of the premises -- the one that "I just tokened 'that's green'") were not available prior to the original tokening.

As for the idea that the original perceptually produced token and the conclusion of the trans-level credibility inference are different tokens of the same type, it makes more sense I think if we are talking about speech tokens than belief tokens. If the conclusion of the trans-level credibility inference is "that's green", would it make sense

²⁵⁶ A suggestion along these lines was made to me by Marc Lange.

to say that this is a *separate* belief of the same type? Surely a person who rehearses the trans-level credibility argument doesn't come to accept a *second* belief of that same type. I'm not sure even what that would mean. But perhaps the idea that the original token and the conclusion of the trans-level credibility inference are tokens of the same type should be interpreted simply as the idea that the original token is justified in virtue of the fact that that Jones can *reassert* the belief *as the conclusion of an inference* even though that was not how the belief originally came about. In this case, the only thing that would save the belief from being inferentially justified is that the premise "I just tokened 'that's green'" was not available until Jones has perceptually tokened "that's green." But is it right that it is a requirement on a belief's being inferentially justified that the premises be available *prior* to the conclusion? Clearly that would be a requirement on a belief's being inferentially *produced*, since I couldn't infer p from q without *first* believing q. But the question of whether p is inferentially justified for S at time t is the question of whether S has, *at time t*, beliefs that could be premises from which p could be inferred. I don't see why the premises need to be available *prior* to time t.

For these reasons I am inclined to say that this suggestion would not amount to a genuine account of non-inferential justification, as I think Sellars is shooting for. However, one could insist that this really is his attempt at an account of non-inferential justification and that it fails, or provides an account of only a rather weak sort of non-inferential justification. As we will see at the end of this chapter, I certainly have

some sympathy with this line. I will, in fact, raise this kind of worry even to the account of non-inferential justification that I have attributed to Sellars.

The role of the second hurdle

The first hurdle makes Jones's reliable word-world connections a product of communal norms (at least at the outset). But Jones needs to be more than a mere *product* of the community, he needs to be a *part* of it.²⁵⁷ Jones himself needs to get into the act. Jones needs to *own* his tokenings so that *he* (and no longer his community, his trainers) is to be criticized or applauded for his perceptual mistakes and successes. And this is the role to be filled by the second hurdle. The first hurdle makes it the case that some epistemically good state of affairs is true of Jones -- namely, that he conforms to the epistemic norms governing perception (i.e., his perceptual tokens are reliable). The second hurdle makes it the case that he, and not the persons who originally brought about the dispositions, deserves the *credit* for the fact that this good state of affairs obtains.

Perhaps a way to feel the pull of the need for a second hurdle is to look at an analogous case involving moral instead of epistemic norms. We all agree that stealing is wrong. But being a good person with regard to that particular prohibition involves more than simply a lack of stealing. For suppose that Jane has never stolen anything,

²⁵⁷ And once Jones is sufficiently a member of that community, so that his epistemic behaviors are governed by these epistemic norms, then he is in a position to self-train, to teach himself (or others) new concepts not already a part of the language he has learned. For our purposes here it is important to see that his *first* concepts (or set of concepts rather), his first language, cannot come about by self-training. The training of the community is crucial.

though not for a lack of trying. A bad thief, or a thief-wanna-be, is subject to criticism despite never having stolen anything. It's not enough that her behavior *conforms* to the "don't steal" rule.

Now it may seem like the only thing that could be *more* than mere rule conforming is rule following, and if one sees all the problems that the followist strategy faces (and many of these problems have been seen as *internalist* problems), one might well turn around and declare that we must not yearn for more than rule conforming, that attributions of knowledge do not involve evaluations of a person that say any more than that the person is in some good epistemic state (such as the first hurdle requires). (In a way, I think that this is what motivates many externalists.²⁵⁸) But Sellars's crucial insight here is that the second hurdle can be cleared -- that is, we can give an account of the particular axis of epistemic evaluation that involves *more* than mere rule conforming -- without falling back into the followist strategy. However, as we'll shortly see, Sellars's way of clearing that second hurdle is not ultimately satisfactory to me.

In chapter four, when we look at the issue of internalism and externalism, we'll see that it is characteristic of externalists not to feel the need for something like a second hurdle. For them the achievement of the desirable epistemic state (accomplished by the first hurdle) is sufficient for knowledge. They do not feel the

²⁵⁸ Perhaps Alston's denouncement of the "deontological" conception of justification is of this sort in, e.g., Alston (1988b). Followism suffers from worries about doxastic voluntarism in ways that Alston thinks are fatal to the deontological conception. But Sellars does not (and I do not) think that followism is the only way to cash out the deontological conception. I will discuss these issues in a later chapter.

need to bring the agent into the act any more than that. My view is that internalists have hold of an important insight, that knowledge involves giving credit to the agent for this good state of affairs, but once this insight is properly understood it is in fact compatible with a certain sort of externalist view.

Objections to the second hurdle

The second hurdle: too high?

Now let's look at some objections to the second hurdle. One is brought up by Sellars himself in §35 of EPM:

[T]his is a steep hurdle indeed. For if the authority of the report "This is green" lies in the fact that the existence of green items appropriately related to the perceiver can be inferred from the occurrence of such reports, it follows that only a person who is able to draw this inference, and therefore who has not only the concept green, but also the concept of uttering "This is green" -- indeed, the concept of certain conditions of perception, those which would correctly be called 'standard conditions' -- could be in a position to token "This is green" in recognition of its authority.

So knowing that this is green presupposes having other knowledge, having other concepts. The concepts employed in the seemingly simple judgment 'this is green' are thus not conceptually foundational in the sense that one could successfully wield them without knowing how to wield others. As I have said, Sellars is a concept holist; he thinks that you can't have one concept without having many. This sort of view flies in the face of those who picture concept formation as happening one at a time, that children learn simple concepts (like *green* or *mama*) first and develop more sophisticated ones later. For Sellars there is no *first* concept. It is only appropriate to describe a person as in possession of a concept when it is appropriate to describe her as

in possession of many. But the concept holism that comes with the requirements of the second hurdle will come to no surprise to those who, in reading EPM, have followed Sellars's views about meaning and belief. For such people it will not seem to be an *extra* burden on Sellars's account of the second hurdle that it requires concept holism, for concept holism was *already* required in order for a token of "this is a banana" to even count as a belief at all.²⁵⁹ So the second hurdle is no more objectionable on this account than his overall view already was.²⁶⁰

However, somewhat independently of general objections to concept holism, an objection might be launched concerning the specific *kind* of knowledge that is required in the premises of the trans-level credibility argument. In particular, one of the premises is a *general* claim, namely, the premise that "my tokens of 'this is green' are reliably correlated with green objects." So Sellars's view has the consequence that being justified in *particular* claims (like 'this is green') presupposes that one is justified in *general* claims.²⁶¹ This will likely seem quite backwards to those who think of induction in roughly Humean terms, where general claims are supposed to be justified by the prior acceptance of a number of particular claims. My own view is that a philosopher who is comfortable with holism will be able to see that Sellars's position is in fact *stronger* precisely because it does not fall into the skeptical problems that

²⁵⁹ And, it will be remembered, that the two hurdles must be met in order for some tokens (tokens employing concepts with an observational requirement, like "that's green") to even count as conceptually contentful.

²⁶⁰ It's worth remembering that Alston (2002) thinks that one can grant semantic holism and still be a foundationalist about justification. He grants the former for the sake of the argument but still holds that there are non-epistemic justifiers.

Humean induction, traditionally understood, does. Those from other perspectives (persons either wedded to atomism or the Humean model of induction) may, however, find this objection very troubling.

In §36 Sellars responds to the objection that his view involves a vicious regress. The objection would go like this: In order for Jones's token of "that's green" to count as perceptual knowledge, Jones must know that his tokens of "that's green" are reliably correlated with the presence of green items. In other words, Jones would have to know about his own track record with regard to tokens of that type. For example, he would have to know facts like "Last Tuesday I said 'that apple is green' and I was right" and similarly for other instances of his saying that something is green. But he could not know that last Tuesday's token was correct without knowing that Tuesday's apple was green. This makes it sound as though today's perceptual knowledge of "that's green" not only presupposes general truths, but presupposes knowledge of particular matters of fact of *just the same sort under consideration here*. In other words, it looks like in order for Jones to know (today) that "that's green", he has to have known (last Tuesday and on many other occasions) that there was something green in front of him. But the perceptual knowledge gained last Tuesday will similarly presuppose knowledge of his reliability, and so of other similar particular matters of fact of the same ("that's green") sort.

²⁶¹ This is part of the upshot of Sellars's arguments in "Concepts as Involving Laws and Inconceivable Without Them", Sellars (1948).

Sellars makes an interesting move in responding to this objection. He agrees that of course today's tokening of "This is green" by Jones cannot count as expressing observational knowledge unless he now knows that

...utterances of "This is green" are reliable indicators of the presence of green objects in standard conditions of perception. And while the correctness of this statement about Jones requires that Jones could *now* cite prior particular facts as evidence for the idea that these utterances *are* reliable indicators, it requires only that it is correct to say that Jones *now* knows, thus remembers, that these particular facts did obtain. It does not require that it be correct to say that at the time these facts did obtain he *then* *knew* them to obtain. And the regress disappears. [EPM §37]

So the idea is that last Tuesday's tokening of "that's green" need not have been a case of knowledge (at the time), for Jones may not have had, at that time, a sufficiently long track record that he could cite in support of his reliability. Indeed, it may have even been (though Sellars isn't explicit about this possibility in the above passage) that last Tuesday's tokening didn't at the time even count as a *saying* of "that's green". It may have only been *noise* at the time. But *now* Jones is in a position to say that he knows that last Tuesday his tokening of "that's green" was accompanied by a green object, even if that tokening didn't at the time count as a knowing that the object was green.

Now it may be hard to imagine anyone actually going through a process like that envisioned here. This would be a case where a person remembers having produced certain word-like noises in response to the presence of what he now knows to be a green item and where he realizes that those same noises, were they to be produced in identical circumstances today, would be a saying – indeed a *knowing* – that that's green. And it will undoubtedly seem strange to some that last Tuesday's episode and today's are practically indistinguishable with regard to their descriptive features (aside from taking place at different times) and yet one is a semantically

contentful, meaningful episode and a *knowing*, while the other is neither. This is yet another manifestation of Sellars's view that epistemic facts are not descriptive facts.

But there is something else that someone might find even more worrisome about Sellars's response: what is the story behind Jones's (now) knowing that the object he was in front of last Tuesday was green? Perhaps Jones calls to mind an image of the object and identifies its color in just the same way that he would if the object was in front of him now. In that case the knowledge of the color of last Tuesday's object is just as problematic (if not more so in virtue of the possibility of mistaken memory) as the today's (putative) knowledge of the color of the object in front of him now. In order to (now) know that the object in front of him is green, Jones must (now) know that last Tuesday's object was green. But the latter seems as problematic as the former, and thus this response will not seem adequate to one who feels the bite of the regress objection.

However I think that Sellars is in a position to make his response more effective. In essence, the response he gives is that the regress only gets going because of a confusion between temporal and logical priority. He corrects the mistake by pointing out that while it is true that on his view, one could not have one perceptual episode correctly characterizable as a knowing that P without there being other perceptual knowledge that one could cite as premises in support of one's reliability, his view does *not* require that these premises be known *before* the episode of perceptual knowledge in question. The reason that this response does not go far enough is that it would seem to trade temporal priority for logical priority and a relation of logical

priority is no less vulnerable to regress problems. That was the upshot of the previous paragraph. In order to know (a) that this object in front of him is green, Jones must have other knowledge, including (b) that the object that triggered the “that’s green” response last Tuesday was also green. Rejecting temporal priority means that (b) needn’t have been known before (a) was. But holding onto logical priority means that knowing (a) implies knowing (b), while the reverse is *not* the case: we can explain why (a) is a case of knowledge by adverting to (b) but then we will be owed a similar explanation for Jones’s knowing (b) – an explanation that will perhaps appeal to some further bit of knowledge (c), and then the regress has begun. In my view, the solution needs to involve an explicit rejection of the linear structure presupposed by the objection’s threatened regress. And the way to do that is for Sellars to come out and explicitly reject the logical priority that his view might appear to subscribe to.²⁶²

Instead he could say that each of these episodes (in our example, (a) and (b)) are mutually dependent upon each other for their having the epistemic standing that they do – both for their having semantic content at all (as opposed to being merely noise), and for their being justified.²⁶³ This response is obviously not going to placate a

²⁶² The move I am suggesting here is parallel to the idea (initially suggested to me by Cass Weller), discussed in chapter one that Sellars needn’t go so far as saying that the concept of being green is logically prior to the concept of looking green; it would do as well to say that neither has logical priority.

²⁶³ Note that if my interpretation of Sellars’s second hurdle was correct, this mutual dependence would not be an *inferential* dependence since (e.g.,) the premise that *other “this green” responses have been triggered by green objects* cannot be used to inferentially justify the claim that *this object in front of me now is green*. It can, instead, be used to justify the claim that *it is reasonable to believe that this object in front of me is green*.

philosopher who already is troubled by the holism in the Sellarsian system. But better that it wear its holism on its sleeve so that it will be clear where the impasses lay.

It is important to remember that Sellars does not need to be committed to the idea that one actually must token (either out loud or in thought) the premises of the trans-level credibility inference. Rather, we should think of it as something that must be *available* to Jones, so that he could, at least in principle, cite it in defense of his report in case the report is challenged. If Jones were actually required to token the premises of the trans-level credibility inference, then there would be another regress to contend with²⁶⁴: His knowing “that’s green” would imply that he tokens “I just tokened ‘that’s green’.” But the latter is also an observational claim, so in order to know *that*, Jones would have to also know (and thus to token) “I just tokened ‘I just tokened ‘that’s green’.’” And so on. But this regress loses some of its bite if the premises merely need to be *available* in the case of a challenge. In fact, we might even suppose that the trans-level credibility argument needs only be available in a very weak way: if challenged, Jones can easily come to believe – simply by thinking back to the event – that “I recently tokened ‘that’s green.’” On this very weak understanding of “available,” the offending premise that starts this particular regress isn’t anywhere in Jones’s head prior to his responding to the challenge, and the higher-order premise justifying *it* (that is, “I recently tokened ‘I recently tokened ‘that’s green’.’”) needn’t be in his head until a subsequent challenge is issued. (This response may not be that

²⁶⁴ This potential regress was brought to my attention by Bill Talbott.

attractive to Sellars, but since I do not agree with Sellars's way of jumping the second hurdle, I am not taking extraordinary measures to save it from these objections.)

Brutes and babes

In chapter one I briefly discussed the general objection to the Sellarsian system that it takes there to be a bright line between the cognition of humans and that of animals (and between adults and small children), whereas many people are inclined instead to see these as falling along a smooth continuum. A specific variety of that objection arises in the case of the second hurdle, and we are now in a position to see more fully what moves Sellars has available to him.

Another sense in which it might be thought that the second hurdle is too high is that it excludes individuals from having observational knowledge we might otherwise think to have it. For instance, it might be held that small children (and perhaps some adults) and some non-human animals could have observational knowledge but fail to have at their disposal the trans-level credibility argument. I throw the stick. Fido fetches it. We are tempted to say that he *sees* where the stick is, that he *knows* where it is. But he is not likely to produce, or to be able to produce (either overtly in English or Canine, or covertly in 'mentalese'), anything resembling a trans-level credibility argument. Similarly, a two year old seems to see the red ball; she went directly to it and picked it up upon hearing her mother say, "where is the red ball?" It appears that she *knew* just where it was. But if we ask her to cash in this claim to knowledge²⁶⁵ by getting her to inferentially justify the statement that "The claim I just made, that 'the

red ball is right here,' has positive justificatory status," we'll be lucky if she doesn't start crying. Again, it is plausible to think that Sellars's account doesn't require that a person be able to rehearse the argument for others, only that it is *available* to the person.²⁶⁶ But even this weaker (and somewhat vague) requirement is not likely to be met by many children.

With regard to non-human animals, Sellars will certainly have to bite the bullet: they are not knowers, at least not in the sense that adult persons are.²⁶⁷ As I said above, it will for many people seem like a serious objection to the Sellarsian system that it cannot account for the intuitive appeal of the idea there is a smooth continuum, as opposed to a stark line, between humans and the other animals. On Sellars's account, animals fail to be knowers in several ways. Not only do they not have a trans-level credibility argument at their disposal, but, as it was pointed out earlier in this chapter, they would generally fail the holistic requirements on having concepts.

Sellars must say then that when we say that Fido knows where the stick was thrown we must not mean to be attributing knowledge in the *strict* sense -- that is, in

²⁶⁵ Of course *we* are the ones who claim she has knowledge, not the child herself

²⁶⁶ That Sellars would make this move – of holding that the argument need only be *available* to the person – is supported by remarks he makes in Sellars 1973d, §18.

²⁶⁷ But see Sellars's "The Structure of Knowledge", lecture I: Perception, section 32: "Before continuing, I must qualify the above remarks lest the animal lovers among us take them as libel and calumny. I count myself in their ranks and therefore hasten to add that of course there is a legitimate sense in which animals can be said to think and hence to be able... to see a pink ice cube and to see that it is pink." Sellars clarifies that this is a *non-conceptual* sense of thinking and seeing, perfectly legitimate in its own right so long as it is not understood using conceptual thinking as a model. This,

the same sense in which we attribute it to humans. But an explanation of this knowledge-attributing temptation can help us see the sort of knowledge that animals *do* have. I believe that such a temptation arises because of the fact that many animals are *functionally*, or perhaps we should say *behavioristically*, very similar to knowers. Fido's stick-fetching behavior is very similar to the stick fetching behavior of a person who we *would* appropriately say *knows* where the stick is. But for Sellars the difference between being a knower and failing to be a knower is not the difference between engaging in certain behaviors (perhaps as a part of a disposition to do so) and failing to engage in such behaviors. The difference between engaging or failing to engage in certain behaviors (as well as the difference between having or lacking a disposition to behave) is a *non-normative* difference. But the difference between being a knower and failing to be one, as I have already emphasized, is a *normative* difference. Thus they cannot be the same difference. (If one believes, as Sellars does, that the Naturalistic Fallacy is indeed a fallacy, the strongest relation between the normative and the non-normative will be one of mere supervenience.²⁶⁸) The point applies equally to other non-normative theories of mind, like Central State Identity Theory, and most versions of functionalism: the difference between being or failing to be in a brain state is a non-normative difference. And the difference between being or failing to be in some functional state (at least if the input and output relations are specified in non-normative terms) is also a non-normative difference. So neither of

he says, would give rise to a "danger of serious confusion and misunderstanding." We will return to this in a moment.

these can be the difference between knowing and failing to know. (Though again, epistemic differences may *supervene* on these other kinds of differences.)

Although engaging in stick-fetching behaviors in *just* the same way as a person who *knows* where the stick is and *intends* to fetch it is not a *sufficient* condition for knowing where the stick is, Sellars (and I) will admit that, generally speaking, engaging in such behaviors is a *necessary* condition for having the knowledge.²⁶⁹

(This much comes with the conformist picture that Sellars started from in EPM §35.)

Attributing knowledge to Fido is treating a necessary condition as if it were a sufficient one. We are so apt to make this mistake because generally these behaviors and behavior dispositions (the necessary conditions) are the clues we look for in distinguishing knowers from non-knowers in *people*. But what we fail to realize is that in the vast majority of cases, we already implicitly attribute the requisite normative conditions to persons, and so generally all we need to know in determining whether they are knowers or not is whether they engage in the behaviors (or are disposed to). To *radically* over-simplify, we may say: One's being a knower = (a) one's engaging in certain behaviors (or having certain behavioral dispositions) + (b) having certain normative facts true of one (like having concepts, and one's tokenings having the *ruleishness* required by the hurdles, etc.). With humans -- especially people with whom we've *talked* -- we tend to (implicitly) assume that the second condition is fulfilled and let the first be the deciding factor in attributing knowledge to someone.

²⁶⁸ See Marc Lange's (2000) useful article, "Salience, Supervenience, and Layer Cakes ...". See also McDowell (1981).

This fools us into implicitly assuming that the first condition is the *only* condition with regard to attributing knowledge to *any* creature. But we cannot forget about the normative conditions!

Even upon recognizing the normative element of knowledge, the habit of attributing knowledge to animals may be so hard to kick that even philosophers in the grip of the Sellarsian system would do well to come up with some word similar to 'knowledge' that could be used in the case of animals. In the last chapter I suggested that we might make a distinction between *first nature cognition*, where this would include the sort of knowing, seeing, thinking, etc. that animals and small children engage in, and *second nature cognition*, which would include the distinctively *conceptual* activity that is characteristic of adult humans who have learned a language. Then we might use 'knowledge₁' for the kind of knowledge that dogs have and 'knowledge₂' for the kind of knowledge that language-using humans have. Thus for example, we could say that while the person knows₂ that the stick went behind the hedge, Fido merely knows₁ that the stick went behind the hedge, where part of the import of this is that this that Fido *would* know₂ if the requisite normative facts were true of him.²⁷⁰ For Sellars, the mistake will be in modeling the nonconceptual thinking of animals ("thinking₁") after the *conceptual* thinking ("thinking₂") of language-users, for these are very different. Of course, to those who are compelled by the notion that it

²⁶⁹ Strictly speaking, we should say that having a short term *disposition* to engage in such behaviors is a necessary condition of having that knowledge.

²⁷⁰ See McDowell's (1996c) useful "Two Sorts of Naturalism", where he explores the idea of attributing *logos* (the normative standing in the space of reasons that comes with initiation into a language) to wolves.

is better to think of animal knowledge as different in *degree* rather than in *kind* from human knowledge, having a separate term for animal knowledge will only highlight what is objectionable about the account. This is, to say again, a place that a more thoroughly naturalist project would have the advantage. (In keeping with Sellars, I shall, unless I indicate otherwise, continue to use terms like "know", and "think" and "believe", etc. in their *second nature* sense, the sense that applies to concept-wielding, language-using beings.)

Much of what we've said of animals applies equally to young children. A holistic account of concepts sets the bar rather high for young kids, and so they may not count as having observational knowledge in the Sellarsian system. We also pointed out earlier that they are often unable to produce the trans-level credibility argument required for observational knowledge. But treating them as though they are already knowers may in fact be necessary, in a practical sense, for training children in the sorts of ways that will help lead them to one day *be* knowers. So this might be a habit even Sellarsians would not want to kick, even if, when it comes down to it, it is mistaken.

Why Sellars's account of how the second hurdle is jumped is unsatisfactory

Now I want to say thing or two about why I find Sellars's account of the second hurdle to be unsatisfactory.

First of all, I have some sympathy with the line of thinking that questions whether all persons to whom we feel intuitively inclined to attribute perceptual knowledge really have in their cognitive ken the premises of the trans-level credibility

argument that Sellars's account requires. And this applies to adults as much as to kids. I can imagine a case in which a person is having a hard time remembering the last time they were inclined to call something teal and yet in which the positive justificatory status of her current perceptual tokening of "that hat is teal" is not at all in question. I can also imagine a case where a person (perhaps a somewhat philosophically slow person) cannot be persuaded of the relevance of her past perceptual tokenings of "that's green" to her current one, but again, where it nevertheless seems that the tokening has all the positive justificatory status it needs in order to count as perceptual knowledge. This would be a case in which the agent has the premises but cannot make the requisite inference because she fails to see the connection between past and present instances of green. ("Why should the fact that all *those* things were green have any bearing on whether *this* one is green? They're totally separate cases!", she might insist, failing to see the point.)

Robert Brandom agrees that Sellars goes too far in requiring the knower to have available the trans-level credibility argument, the reliability inference.²⁷¹ (I earlier argued against Brandom's amendment to Sellars's account, that only the persons *attributing* the perceptual knowledge to Jones need to be able to make the reliability inference.) Brandom thinks that the second hurdle reveals that Sellars is too much in the grip of epistemological *internalism*. Internalism is, very roughly, the view that a necessary condition of S's knowing that P is that S have some kind of *awareness* of whatever it is in virtue of which P has positive justificatory status for S. Although I

am not an internalist, I believe that the internalist tendency is the expression of an even deeper impulse, one that I am very much in sympathy with, and which is the at the heart of the role of the second hurdle -- a role which is mistakenly filled by Sellars's internalist account. I'll say more about this in a moment, when I summarize what that role is, but a fuller discussion of externalism and internalism (and in particular how my view fits into that distinction) will take place in chapter five.

A second, and somewhat related source of dissatisfaction with Sellars's second hurdle is that my instinct is that even in those to whom the trans-level credibility inference is readily available, this is *not* what it is in virtue of which such persons' perceptual tokenings are justified. I can scarcely say more here than that when I reflect about why it is perfectly reasonable for me to believe that there is a pad of paper in front of me, it simply does not ring true to say "it's because I have the trans-level credibility inference available." My instincts are the same when the question is put in the 3rd person: when I reflect about why it is perfectly reasonable for Jones to believe that there is a pad of paper in front of him, it simply does not ring true to say "it's because he has the trans-level credibility inference available to him."

Here is a third worry I have. Although in some ways Sellars's internalist second hurdle requirement is too high, there is another way in which his account does not require enough. Part of the point of the second hurdle is to get the agent more fully into the act, so to speak, so that Jones himself (and not his parents or community, etc.) is who deserves the credit for getting things right. But merely knowing about one's

²⁷¹ See Brandom's (1997) EPM study guide, p. 159, as well as his paper "The Insights

reliability may not be sufficient for that. Suppose that Jones's observational tokens of "that's green" are reliable, and that Jones knows that they are reliable. But also suppose that he feels disassociated from this disposition. He feels like it's something he can't help but do, even if he wanted to. It feels to him like a blind habit, like he's on automatic. Whenever he is looking at something green, he automatically tokens the belief, "that's green", but it almost doesn't even feel to him like *he's* the one believing it. Even though he knows that the disposition has been reliable in the past, he worries that it is just luck that it is still reliable, since he couldn't stop it if he wanted to. He feels more like the subject of operant conditioning than an autonomous epistemic agent. Reflecting on a case like this makes me worry that the requirement that Jones merely knows about his reliable perceptual disposition is perhaps not enough (though as I said before, in some ways it is *too* much) to credit *him* with knowledge. How can it be right to credit *him* when he feels so disconnected from it? We will look at this issue again in the next chapter.

Finally, I am thoroughly committed to perceptual knowledge being genuinely non-inferentially justified. Yet I am sometimes in a mood where the complicated story that I had to tell on Sellars's behalf to explain why perceptual reports on his view are genuinely non-inferentially justified just seems like sleight of hand. I can imagine someone saying (and I am sometimes in moods where I am sympathetic to this line), "Oh come on Sellars. When you've got a view like yours, where perceptual beliefs are *so close* to being inferentially justified (I mean gosh, the story of their justification

requires you to be able to make an inference), it starts to seem like semantic quibbling about whether these beliefs on your account are *really* non-inferentially justified or not. I mean, they're certainly not non-inferentially justified in the full-blooded sense that proponents of the given had in mind. You do all this bending over backwards to speak in harmony with the foundationalists, but doctrinally your heart seems to beat with the coherentists. Why not just give it up and throw your lot in with the coherentists?" *Sometimes* I am in a mood to agree with sentiments along those lines, and I want to say that if Sellars is not convicted on the charge of inferentialism it is only because he gets off on a technicality. Other times I feel like the distinctions that Sellars makes (for instance between knowledge that presupposes other knowledge and non-inferentially justified knowledge, and between a genuine inference and a transition from ML to OL) are important and valuable enough that his middle way seems like a genuine middle way. Either way, a nagging in my gut tells me not to be content with the Sellarsian story, that improvements can be made.

What we've learned from Sellars's account

Thus I will look elsewhere for a satisfactory account of perceptual knowledge. But Sellars's has much going for it I think. So let's do a bit of review to remind ourselves what parts of the view are healthy. The first hurdle connects the knowers' tokenings to the *world*. It requires that they are reliable – that when Jones says "that is green", generally there is indeed something green in front of him. Furthermore, we see that this reliable connection between word and world is a result of the community's

implicit acceptance of certain epistemic norms. Thus it is no *accident* that he says "that's green" only in front of green things, despite the fact that it is not on *purpose* either (because, again, it is not an *action* at all.) The first hurdle makes Jones's reliable perceptual dispositions a product of the community's acceptance of norms. But as we have said, Jones's observational habits need to be more than a mere *product* of the community, he needs to be a *part* of it. Jones needs to *own* his tokenings so that *he* is the one deserving of blame or praise for his perceptual mistakes and successes. This is the role of the second hurdle.

Now many have felt this second hurdle impulse, that the agent herself must be more closely related to the epistemic norms that govern correct perceptual behavior than merely conforming to them. But, as I have indicated, this impulse has led many to internalism, where the agent is required to have some *awareness* of these norms and to token her perceptual claims *because* of this awareness, (and not *blindly* as mere norm-conforming behavior might be.) This, of course, can easily lead, if one is not careful, into the arms of the given. And even if one (such as Sellars) is careful to avoid this, the internalism can put unnecessary burdens on the theory.

But there is a middle way between following a rule and merely conforming to it. The behavior needn't be on purpose nor blind. Nor does one have to be in any obvious sense *aware* of the norms for them to be operative in one's perceptual behavior in just the ways that allow us to praise or blame the agent herself for her epistemic successes or failures. We're now ready to see my own account of how this

can be so -- of how the rulishness is *in* the person's behavior in just the right way that we have seen it must be if her perceptual tokens are to count as knowledge.

Chapter Three: My (Rylean) Account of Perceptual Justification: Perceptual Responsibilism

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the general outline of my positive view of perceptual justification. The next two chapters will supplement the discussion here and help to flesh out the view. As the title indicates, the view I will defend has been heavily influenced by the writings of Gilbert Ryle, in particular, chapters two and five of *The Concept of Mind*.²⁷²

Jones, while looking at an apple in front of him, in a thinking-out-loud sort of mood, spontaneously says, "that's green." What we have learned from Sellars is that in order for Jones's tokening to have the positive justificatory status it must have if it is to count as his *knowing that it's green*, a number of conditions must be met:

1. The tokening must be an instance of a particular sort of regularity or uniformity; namely, that Jones's tokens of the type "that's green" are generally accompanied by the presence of green objects in front of him. In other words, the tokening must be the result of a disposition to token "that's green" only when there's something green there. Or in still other words, this tokening must be reliably produced. It is this fact that makes Jones an authority in the sense that it would be reasonable to infer from "Jones just said 'that's green'" to "it probably *is* green."
2. This uniformity must be brought about neither by accident nor by nature but rather is inculcated in Jones (at least at the outset) by his linguistic community. Their patterns of training each other (and especially their young) embody a certain

epistemic norm: that it ought to be the case that, *ceteris paribus*, one tokens "that's green" if and only if a green item is present. (We will shortly make some minor modifications to this requirement.)

3. The *noises* "that's green" must be fulfill the required conditions so that they are not just noises, but *words* (whether out loud or in silent soliloquy); indeed, they must be the making of a claim, the assertion of a proposition. This means that they must be systematically inferentially related to other words, other claims. It's important to remember that these are normative connections. It's not enough that Jones tends to follow tokens of "that's green" with tokens of "that has a color." He must also have some implicit sensitivity to the fact that the former *grounds, justifies, makes reasonable* the assertion of the latter. We will also remember that some concepts have an observational component to their content such that clearing both hurdles for perceptual knowledge will already be required for conceptual contentfulness.

But we've also learned from Sellars that these conditions are not jointly sufficient for the token's having the positive justificatory status required for perceptual knowledge.²⁷³ The agent has not yet gotten into the act in the way he needs to be in order to count as having perceptual knowledge. We see, from condition 2, that there are norms implicit in the training behaviors of the *community*, but not directly in the behavior of Jones himself. Jones's behavior exhibits the right uniformity thanks to the community but (given what we've said so far) no thanks to Jones. In some ways he is

²⁷² Ryle (1949)

still like a thermometer: if the thermometer is accurate, we do not applaud the thermometer itself, we thank the maker. And if the thermometer is inaccurate for a certain range of temperatures, we do not waste time berating the artifact, we instead think nasty thoughts about the persons that crafted it (or we go have it fixed). For all we have said so far, if Jones were to say "that's blue" in front of things of a dark purple hue, it would be more appropriate to blame the trainers, the community, for failing to satisfy, in the person of Jones, the rule that *it ought to be that persons say "that's blue" only in the presence of blue items*.

It is the role of the second hurdle to make sure that the agent gets into the act, that she is not merely a product of society but a member of it. I have already expressed some dissatisfaction with the way that Sellars thinks this hurdle is jumped. The current chapter will be primarily devoted to spelling out my alternative picture. The rest of Sellars's theory of perceptual knowledge (such as the conditions above and the general framework of the holistic and inferential Sellarsian semantics) I will leave pretty much in tact, for it is this framework that this dissertation attempts to extend. But I want to say a thing or two about (and perhaps make a minor modification of) that crucial *rule* mentioned above in condition #2.

²⁷³ Again, with the exception of certain observational concepts, for which having the concept implies already passing the hurdles for perceptual knowledge. But saying that that is not yet to say what passing those hurdles amounts to.

The Rule

The rule as we have it so far is this:

It ought to be that, *ceteris paribus*, one tokens "that's green" if and only if there is something green present.

Notice that this rule requires that the presence of a green item be both necessary and sufficient for the tokening of "that's green." (The *ceteris paribus* clause weakens these connections some, but ignore this for the moment.) The necessity is easy to understand: we want Jones's tokens to generally come out true. But what about the sufficiency? One can imagine a criticism of the sufficiency requirement along these lines:

"Picture what it would be like if the presence of green items was a sufficient condition for Jones to token "that's green"-and similarly for other perceptual states of affairs: He'd be constantly saying, "that's green", "that's blue", "that's a flower", "that's a chair", "that's my left hand", "that's my right hand", and so forth, continually reporting on everything in his immediate perceivable environment. He'd be tokening those statements non-stop. A rule that requires this cannot be right."

There's something right about this criticism. But we cannot jettison the sufficiency requirement altogether either. For then we might have a case where Jones fulfills the norm (and thus could be epistemically justified) in virtue of the fact that whenever he says "that's green", he gets it right, and yet in 95% of the circumstances where he is in front of something green he has no idea what color it is. (But luckily he keeps his mouth shut in such circumstances so his track record with regard to tokens of "that's green" is still very good.) Surely this is not the paradigm of someone whose

disposition is in good shape, epistemically speaking. Let's see if we can modify (or perhaps just reinterpret) the rule in a way that still hues to the spirit of Sellars's proposal.

We want to at least make sure that if Jones is staring right at a green tree in broad daylight, trying to discern its color, he is pretty likely to succeed. But it is less reasonable to expect Jones to pick up on perceptual features of his environment when he is spacing out, not paying attention, extremely tired, concentrating on something else, etc. An especially perspicuous statement of the rule might require that the chances of a green object triggering Jones's disposition to token "that's green" be roughly proportional to the degree to which he is paying attention, not tired or distracted, etc. We *could* modify the rule thus:

It ought to be the case that when (or to the extent that) one is paying attention, not distracted or overly tired, etc., then, *ceteris paribus*, one tokens "that's green" if and only if there is a green item present.

But instead I think it will not do too much damage to simply let these considerations of attention, distraction, tiredness, etc., simply inform our understanding of the *ceteris paribus* clause. Then we can stick with our original formulation,

It ought to be that, *ceteris paribus*, one tokens "that's green" if and only if there is something green present.

with the understanding that the sense of the *ceteris paribus* clause is to include such qualifications as: *unless the person is not paying attention, or is being distracted, or is very tired or drunk, or is spacing out, or is in other similar circumstances*; as well as qualifications like: *unless the lighting is abnormal, or the object is too far away or too*

close, or too small or too big, or the person has something in their eyes, or is not facing the object, or other situations like these.

This should go a fair distance toward answering the objection that the above rule requires too much (in that it seemed to require Jones to be constantly reporting on everything around him). Our response to this objection so far is that understanding what is involved in the *ceteris paribus* clause allows us to see that the rule only requires Jones to report on things he is focusing his attention on; the rule only comes into play when he is in a "look what we have here" sort of mood.

But we can also supplement this response by noting that one can come to believe that P without either saying "P" or having the thought that P. Thus if our rule concerns primarily *belief* tokens instead of speech tokens, some more of the bite will be taken out of the objection that the rule requires Jones to have a constant stream of tedious speech or thought episodes. The most that would be required would be that he be constantly *believing* stuff (whether or not these were accompanied by occurrent thought or speech tokens).²⁷⁴ And when this is combined with the previous response concerning *attention*, we see that Jones is only required to form beliefs about stuff when he is focusing his attention or when he is in a "look what we have here" mood. Together I think these responses go along way toward defending the plausibility of the rule against the above objection.

²⁷⁴ Alston thinks of this as a matter of having *unconscious* beliefs: "It would seem... that as we move about the environment, we are constantly forming short-term perceptual beliefs without any conscious monitoring of this activity." (Alston, 1985, p. 108).

A quick detour regarding speech tokens and belief tokens

But would this proposal, that the rule concern belief tokenings instead of speech tokens or thought tokens (which according to the Sellarsian account of thoughts are modeled after speech tokens²⁷⁵) be acceptable to the Sellarsian? If so, why does Sellars himself always talk of speech tokens instead of belief tokens? The answer concerns Sellars's *psychological nominalism*, the view that there is no conceptual activity or indeed any "awareness of logical space prior to, or independent of, the acquisition of language" (EPM §31). The prevailing Cartesian/Augustinian picture that Sellars's psychological nominalism is supposed to help dislodge is that there are private mental events and states which can occur quite independently of having learned a language but which can be expressed using language once one has learned one. On that picture, the intentionality of linguistic phenomena is a secondary sort, dependent on and explained by mental phenomena that have a primary, intrinsic sort of intentionality. The proponent of psychological nominalism, by contrast, has the burden of trying to explain how one can learn a language (and thus to reason, to understand, to *mean* things by some bit of language, to be "in the space of reasons", etc.) without presupposing any antecedently (that is, pre-linguistic) meaningful or conceptual mental items. So Sellars starts with the linguistic. Also, if one just starts blithely talking about belief tokens without first setting some kind of philosophy of mind on the table (like the Sellarsian semantics I set out in chapter two) there is danger that these belief tokens may be misinterpreted as one of these private pre-linguistic

cognitive events that Sellars takes to be mythical. So that's another reason why Sellars might stick with sentence tokens instead of talking of belief tokens.

But here is an egregious misunderstanding of psychological nominalism that is worth watching out for: Someone might be thinking of *language* purely as a system of sounds or marks on paper (as opposed to focusing on their essential *meaningfulness*) and thus suppose that Sellars's psychological nominalist project is to explain conceptual, cognitive activity in terms of systems of meaningless sounds and marks or dispositions to make sounds and marks; to squeeze meaning out of the meaningless. That would be a giant mistake. Sellars would regard such a project as myth-ridden. Quite the contrary, when Sellars talks of having a disposition to token certain sentences in response to objects in the world, he is supposing these sentences to be real sentences, with *meaning*, and not mere noises. These sentences are the expression of a *belief* on the part of the tokener. (*Caution*: we must make sure not to take the phrase "the sentence is the expression of the belief" in the sense it would have according to the view that psychological nominalism is trying to dislodge, wherein the belief is something that can be had independently of language, and the sentence just clothes it in garb suitable for communication.) Rather, on Sellars's view the observational tokening of the sentence "that ball is green" *is* Jones's coming to believe that the ball is green. Thus, although Sellars sticks with actual sentence tokens (though he does allow them to be *covert* ones-thought tokens instead of overt sayings), and this is part of the

²⁷⁵ See Sellars's Machette lectures, (Sellars, 1971) for his "verbal behaviorist" model of thoughts.

simpler model that he starts with²⁷⁶, I see nothing un-Sellarsian about simply talking here about belief tokens and to allow for the possibility that Jones acquires a belief without tokening a sentence (either overtly or covertly). Of course, what it means for Jones to acquire a belief would still involve language. (*Very* roughly: S's coming to believe that P at time t is for S's cognitive/linguistic economy (and attendant inferential licenses and dispositions) to change at t in just the sort of way that they would had he said 'P' (meaningfully, sincerely, etc.) at t.) The long and short of it is that there is nothing that a Sellarsian would object to in the idea of talking directly about belief tokens in our characterization of the rule or the disposition, *so long as* we understand beliefs in the Sellarsian manner, characterized in terms of their role in inference, observation, and action -- a role that nothing could play if the person had not acquired a language. Thus when I say *Jones tokens "that's green"*, we can interpret this as his tokening the belief that *that's green*.

Epistemic Responsibility

Now let us return to the task of revising how that second hurdle is jumped. We have said that jumping the second hurdle is what makes Jones a member of his community and not just a product of it. It is what makes it appropriate to blame or praise Jones himself when his perceptual dispositions go astray or get things right. Clearly the notion we're looking for is that of *responsibility*. We want Jones himself to be the one responsible for the fact that his perceptual behavior exhibits the right

²⁷⁶ See Sellars's Machette Lectures (Sellars, 1971), lecture II, section II, where he is explicit that it is a "radically simplified" model. He calls it Verbal Behaviorism there.

uniformities. If Jones's observational tokens are to count as perceptual knowledge it must be appropriate to blame Jones and not his trainers when his perceptual disposition diverges from the way it ought to be and he gets things wrong or fails to pick up on things he ought to.

This, as we have said, is the heart of the role played by the second hurdle. Sellars's way of getting that responsibility in there is that the agent herself must be *aware* of her reliable disposition in the sense that she could cite it as a premise in the trans-level credibility argument. I will give a different story about how the responsibility gets in there.

Let me quickly make a few general remarks, in the service of heading off possible misunderstandings, about the notion of responsibility I've got in mind. The word 'responsibility' can sometimes have a merely causal sense, as in: "My mechanic told me that the lack of water in my radiator was responsible for the car's overheating." Other times the word has a normative sense: "The owners of the pit-bull must pay remuneration to the parents of the child mauled by it, for the owners are responsible for what the dog has done, even if they had nothing to do with bringing it about (and indeed, could not have even predicted it.)" In this latter case the normative and causal come apart: The owners are normatively responsible for the mauling while the dog is causally responsible for it. Often they go together: Johnny is both causally and normatively responsible for his baseball's going through the neighbor's window. In some cases we will use the expression '*held* responsible' (instead of just saying the person *is* responsible) when we want to indicate that the person is normatively

responsible even if not causally responsible: "If my car gets so much as a scratch on it, I'm going to hold *you* responsible." (Generally speaking, to hold someone responsible is to believe her to be normatively responsible and to treat her accordingly.) The kind of responsibility I'm after here is of course the *normative* sort.

So what is it in virtue of which Jones is responsible for his dispositions in spite of the fact that he had no part in originally bringing them about? The question in its general form is not new. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle defends a view in which having a virtuous character is determined in large part by one's dispositions (*hexeis*).²⁷⁷ But these habits, these dispositions (uniformities exhibited in one's behavior, etc.) are a result of one's upbringing. In light of this one might argue that it is your *parents* who deserve the praise (if any) for your good habits and not *you*. Yet at some point we think that it is no longer appropriate to blame the parents for the bad habits of their offspring, even though the parents may have helped to inculcate those bad habits. What makes the difference?

At some point the person is responsible for her habits, good or bad, regardless of the fact that she had no part in bringing them about in the first place. There is a correlative notion of *epistemic* responsibility in the case of one's perceptual dispositions. At some point, regardless of what took place at the dawn of Jones's language learning history, *he* becomes responsible for his perceptual successes and failures. If there are ranges of a peachy-color which he calls orange, it is Jones himself

²⁷⁷ See for example, NE 1103a11-1103b25.

whom it is appropriate to criticize ("That's *peach*, not *orange*, Jones!"), not his parents or linguistic community.

One traditional answer that has been given, at least in the realm of ethics, involves the notion of voluntary action. Suppose we compare cases like the following: on the one hand, a man who decides to kick someone else in the shins, and on the other hand a man whose leg has a sudden muscle spasm causing it to knock into another person's leg. Reflection on the fact that we would hold the man in the former case responsible while we would not hold responsible the man in the latter case might seem to provide good reason to think that the distinction between events one is responsible for and events one is not responsible for more or less maps onto (and is explained by) the distinction between things one chooses to do (voluntary actions) and things one does not choose to do.

But once we focus on cases in which someone clearly did *not* choose to do something and yet is clearly appropriately held responsible for it, we see that this voluntarist notion of responsibility cannot be right. A clear case of this is the man who forgets his and his wife's wedding anniversary. Forgetting is a paradigm example of something one does not choose to do; it is not a voluntary action. Yet the man will be appropriately subject for criticism for his blunder. So the class of events for which one is responsible extends wider than the class of events one chooses to bring about.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁸ This point, as well as the example (only slightly modified) are due to Angie Smith, taken from a paper she read at the University of Washington in 2000, and from subsequent discussions with her. See also David Owens's book *Reason Without Freedom* (Owens 2000), in which he defends the separation of epistemic responsibility from control over one's beliefs.

But of course this should not be news to us, since this was one of the reasons Sellars rejected the followist strategy. Followism (e.g., Schlick Foundationalism) would treat perceptual tokenings as if they were (voluntary) actions according to a rule (as though we could be pre-conceptually aware of a patch of green and then say, "oh, in situations like this I'm supposed to categorize that as *green*... so here I go: *that's green!*".) But of course perceptual tokenings are paradigm examples of non-actions. In the typical perceptual situation one does not *choose* to find oneself inclined to call something green. It happens as a result of the perceptual dispositions one was trained to have -- dispositions that one did not choose to have in the first place. How you get brought up is not up to you -- at least the part that concerns language learning and gaining conceptual capacities.

Being the steward of your dispositions

But here's an important fact. There are dispositions that you can *change*, even if you had no part in originally bringing them about. You parents may have raised you to have bad manners but you don't have to keep them. Even the man who forgets his anniversary could, at least in principle, change that bad habit. He could do things that would make it less likely that he would forget next time: he could tie a string around his finger, write it in large letters on the calendar, hire someone to remind him when the day gets close, get a tattoo, etc.. Now if none of this works we may be apt to hold him less responsible for his forgetfulness. It may be that he has some kind of mild mental disability that affects his memory and makes it more difficult to remember even important dates like his wedding anniversary. In this case it might not be appropriate

to hold him quite *as* responsible as we would the unimpeded and merely forgetful average Joe.

So let me use this insight to make a first stab (to be refined momentarily) at a suggestion for how the requirement of the second hurdle is met. Jones's perceptual token, "that's green" meets the requirement when, as we have said, he is responsible for having produced that token then and there. He is responsible for that individual tokening when he is responsible for the disposition that brought it about. He is responsible for the disposition that occasioned the tokening when he is in a position to go about altering the disposition.²⁷⁹ One can become the *steward*, so to speak, of dispositions that one had no part in originally bringing about, because they are the sorts of thing that one can become aware of and potentially change.²⁸⁰ Despite the fact that Jones just *finds* himself inclined to make such a token and that he did not *choose* to do so, he still has the requisite epistemic responsibility for the current tokening because he has the ability (in *some* sense) to alter the disposition that brought it about. If, for instance, he were to discover that he calls green what is appropriately called turquoise, he could set about retraining himself to try to make the dispositions more accurate. In doing this he takes on the role of trainer (albeit a *self*-trainer), instead of trainee, and thus the norms that we saw that governed the behavior of the community

²⁷⁹ And this may involve, as we will shortly see, knowing when to defer to the authority of others to help discover mistakes and learn how to correct them.

²⁸⁰ Correlatively, a child savvy enough to blame her parents for her bad habits simply demonstrates that she's ready to take responsibility for them herself, since her being aware of them shows that she is in a position to set about changing them.

of trainers now implicitly govern his own behavior. He is a member of the community instead of just a product of it.

Being in a position to take command of your dispositions is what makes *you* (as opposed to your parents or community) the fit target of praise or blame for the output of those dispositions. But since knowledge is a *positive* epistemic state, it is not good enough that the person is an appropriate subject of praise *or* blame. Rather, a person whose perceptual token has positive justificatory status is one who is *praiseworthy* for taking *good* care of his perceptual dispositions. It is not enough that he *could* change the disposition upon finding it to be in error. It has to be the case that he *would* so change it. Passing the second hurdle requires not just that he be the steward of his dispositions but that he be a *good* steward.

It might seem obvious that "... is a good steward of his perceptual dispositions" is a *normative* characterization of someone. And indeed it is. But one could be misled into thinking otherwise by falsely supposing that "... is a good steward of his perceptual dispositions" is simply shorthand for a descriptive characterization of someone as being disposed to alter his or her perceptual dispositions in such-and-such circumstances. On this mistaken interpretation of the view, being a good steward simply consists in having higher order (descriptive) dispositions to change lower level ones in certain circumstances. And while it is true that being a good steward implies having all sorts of higher order dispositions (and we'll see some of the details of these shortly), one who thinks of the whole affair exclusively in descriptive terms just won't have an adequate picture of things.

This is why I characterized this stewardship as a matter of having an implicit sensitivity to the rule.²⁸¹ After all, a person who is a good steward of her "that's green" disposition doesn't just *happen* to be likely to adjust the disposition upon finding it to be in error. Rather, she's likely to make such corrections because of the fact that she has an implicit sensitivity to the fact that *it ought to be that persons say "that's green" when and only when in the presence of green items*. The very same rules that implicitly guided the behaviors of the trainers also guide the self-training (and re-training) behaviors of the former trainee who is now the steward of her own perceptual dispositions. In short, being a good steward of your perceptual dispositions is all about being implicitly guided by epistemic norms. Becoming a full member of one's epistemic community involves recognizing with respect to oneself the authority of these epistemic ought-to-be rules and the collateral ought-do-to rules that follow from them.²⁸²

Implicit sensitivity to norms: it's just know-how

Now there's nothing particularly mysterious or new about the idea of one's behavior being guided by an implicit sensitivity to a norm. It is, in fact, just a variety of what Ryle called *know-how*. In *The Concept of Mind*, Ryle famously made the distinction between knowing *how* to do something (for example, knowing how to ride a bike), and knowing *that* something is the case (for example, knowing that in order to

²⁸¹ The phrase "implicit sensitivity to the norm" was used by Bill Talbott in an unpublished manuscript called "Learning From Experience." Similar expressions are used by Brandom in his *Making It Explicit* (that's what the title's 'It' refers to). Ryle's phrase is simply *know-how*.

ride a bike one must apply steady pressure to the pedals.) Behavior that is guided by *knowledge that* is just what we have been calling explicit rule following: The hero *knows that* drowning children ought to be saved, *knows that* in front of him is a drowning child, and subsequently jumps in to save it. Know-how, of course, does not require the explicit following of rules. A person who has been riding a bike her whole life has long stopped telling herself that she must apply steady pressure to the pedals. Or she may well have learned to ride without having been told such things.²⁸³ Riding a bike has become second nature, so that her body knows what to do, so to speak, without her having to instruct it first. But though she does not have to consciously guide her bike riding behavior by reciting maxims, neither is it a blind habit, like scratching an itch in your sleep.²⁸⁴

This last point -- that know-how is not blind habit -- is worth emphasizing. For the person whose copy of *The Concept of Mind* is getting dusty on the shelf, a certain

²⁸² This last point is due to Cass Weller.

²⁸³ Another great example of know-how is the oft rehearsed example in epistemology of the chicken-sexer who can sort baby chickens into male and female but often has no idea what it is in virtue of which he feels impelled to call this one a male and that one a female. He learned by watching an experienced chicken sexer and knows that he is now an expert too. Clearly he has learned to be sensitive to the differences in the gender of the baby chicks, but not by following any maxim. For example, he does not say, "put the chicks with such and such color pattern into the *male* box, others into the female box." -- He knows of no such maxim.

²⁸⁴ I am looking for a very thin middle ground here. I do not want implicit sensitivity to norms be like blind habit, but neither do I want it to be a matter explicitly following maxims. I want norm-governed behavior to be able to occur without requiring that the person conceptualize the circumstances under the description that would occur in the norm. (After all, I am trying to provide an alternative to Sellars's internalist way of clearing the second hurdle.) But I also do not think that the behaviors of creatures lacking conceptual abilities can be norm-governed. The extent to which

misunderstanding on this score is possible. One might think that having know-how is merely having a behavioral disposition to do thus and so in such and such circumstances, where this is thought of as a purely descriptive characterization. ("It is just a descriptive fact about Jim that he happens to do things like *this* in circumstances like *those*," one might say.) But Ryle is very careful to say that not all dispositions are blind habits, and they are not all descriptively characterized. In fact, a good part of chapter 2 of *The Concept of Mind* is devoted to explaining what distinguishes simple blind habits (appropriately characterized in descriptive terms) from the dispositions (or *second natures* as he sometimes calls them) which are exercises of mind -- know-how. One part of the distinction lies with the fact that "... it is of the essence of intelligent practices that one performance is modified by its predecessors."²⁸⁵ This corresponds to our requirement that a good steward of one's perceptual dispositions always be correcting them, refining them, making them more accurate. (More on this in a moment.) But another thing that distinguishes know-how from mere habit is that know-how is implicitly rule-governed: "Knowing *how*, then, is a disposition, but not a single-track disposition like a reflex or a habit. Its exercises are observances of rules or canons or the applications of criteria, but they are not tandem operations of theoretically avowing maxims and then putting them into practice."²⁸⁶ To say again, implicitly norm governed perceptual behavior is just a kind of know-how.

conceptualization and propositional competence is an integral part of responsible stewardship will be explicitly discussed later in this chapter.

²⁸⁵ Ryle (1949), p.42.

²⁸⁶ Ryle (1949), p.46.

But it's high time I admit that in fact Ryle has been the secret inspiration for this view all along, even back at the stage of talking of *responsibility* for your perceptual disposition. It is worth quoting in full this passage from *The Concept of Mind*:

What is involved in our descriptions of people as knowing how to make and appreciate jokes, to talk grammatically, to play chess, to fish or to argue? Part of what is meant is that, when they perform these operations, they tend to perform them well, i.e., correctly or efficiently or successfully. Their performances come up to certain standards, or satisfy certain criteria. But this is not enough. The well-regulated clock keeps good time and the well-drilled circus seal performs its tricks flawlessly, yet we do not call them 'intelligent'. We reserve this title for the persons responsible for their performances. To be intelligent is not merely to satisfy criteria, but to apply them; to regulate one's actions and not merely to be well-regulated. A person's performance is described as careful or skillful, if in his operations he is ready to detect and correct lapses, to repeat and improve upon successes, to profit from the examples of others and so forth. He applies criteria in performing critically, that is, in trying to get things right.²⁸⁷

Now Ryle in this passage is frying a slightly different fish than I am. But I think the lesson he is trying to impart can apply here too. Here I shall rephrase the above passage as though Ryle was worrying specifically about perceptual knowledge instead of about intelligent behavior in general. A suitable translation would look something like this:

"What is involved in our description of Jones as perceptually knowing that *that's green*? Part of what is meant is that when he says "that's green", he tends to get it right, to be correct. His observational behavior -- his disposition to say "that's green" -- satisfies a certain norm, namely, that it ought to be that people say "that's green" when and only when they are in the presence of green objects. (His observational behavior clears the first hurdle.) But this is not enough. The well-trained parrot, or the

²⁸⁷ Ryle (1949), p.28.

video camera hooked up to a computer with a speech-synthesizer may utter "that's green" when and only when in front of green objects, yet we should not say that they have perceptual knowledge. We reserve this title for the persons responsible for their performances. To be a perceptual knower is not merely to satisfy norms, but to apply them; to regulate one's observational behavior and not merely to be well-regulated. Jones is described as being responsible for his observational behavior (and hence can be said to have perceptual knowledge) if in his behavior he is ready to detect and correct lapses, to repeat and improve upon successes, to profit from the examples of others, and so forth. His epistemic behavior is implicitly governed by those epistemic norms; he wants to get things right."

In Ryle's wonderful statement, appropriately translated by me, we get three separable criteria that help us to see what is involved in the responsibility that is crucial to clearing the second hurdle:

"ready to detect and correct lapses."

This I said something about already. If Jones is responsible for his perceptual tokenings of the "that's green" variety, he will not only tend to go about correcting the errors he finds in his perceptual dispositions, but he will be *ready* to detect such errors. His eyes will be open to them. He will not have the sort of "head in the sand" attitude of those who are so afraid or ashamed of their possibly being in error that they tend not to see it when it is staring them in the face. He must not ignore evidence that might show him to be in error. Furthermore, Jones will also be ready to detect and correct such lapses when they occur in others. Even if Jones has never formulated the rule, he

will tend to get what I call the "something ain't right" feeling when he witnesses someone violating it. One sign that Jones's perceptual disposition is appropriately norm-governed and is not just a matter of blind habit, is that in cases where dispositions collide (e.g., Jones says "that's dark blue", and Smith says, "No, it's purple") Jones will feel the need to set things right, to figure out which of them is in error and to correct it. (We will expand on this a bit later in this chapter.)

"repeat and improve upon successes."

The idea behind this, as with the other two, is of course that one must be continually aiming at improvement, increased accuracy, less error. Suppose Jones, while taking a painting class, successfully identifies a never-before-seen color as a shade of green. If he is epistemically responsible for making sure that his "that's green" disposition is accurate, we will expect him to successfully identify that shade as green again in the future, and perhaps also to identify close variations of the shade, thus improving on the previous success. But we are so good at wielding simple color concepts like *green* that perhaps it can be hard to picture many instances of our improving upon it. So let's look at a different example. Suppose that Harriet is learning to identify works by Pablo Picasso.²⁸⁸ The tokening in question is of the "that's a Picasso" variety. Now suppose she successfully identifies a particular painting as a Picasso and the painting is an *early* work of his. Now we can imagine her starting to see other early works, similar to the first, and having the same

inclination to say "that's a Picasso." She uses these successes to even better hone her ability to pick out Picassos. She can continually train herself so that when she looks at a painting and feels herself inclined to say "that's a Picasso" (or she looks at a painting and feels inclined to say "that's *not* a Picasso") she'll be right more often than she used to.

"profit from the examples of others."

Harriet will obviously be helped immeasurably by the Picasso expert who will help her to see when she is in error and when she is correct. She can improve by watching others. Eventually she may become enough of an expert herself that others are of less help to her than she is to them. But again, the trend of the epistemically responsible person is toward continual improvement. Or, when the person is already at the top of her game, with not much improvement to be had (as most adults are with regard to the basic color concepts I've mostly been talking about), the epistemically responsible person will make sure that it stays that way.

Of course, a person need not be continually asking themselves, "what can I do to improve the accuracy of my perceptual disposition?" Indeed, it is likely that no such thought has ever in any way explicitly occurred to him or her. Nevertheless the person with the appropriate sort of epistemic responsibility for her perceptual tokenings will manifest the sorts of behavior described above in virtue of the fact that

²⁸⁸ So far I have been mostly sticking with simple color and shape predicates in my examples. Later on I will try to justify the use of more interesting examples like "that's a Picasso."

her behavior is implicitly guided by rules; rules of the form, "it ought to be that one says 'that's F' if and only if there is something F in front of one (*ceteris paribus*)"

This, then, is the basic outline of my alternative proposal about how the second hurdle is cleared. The requirement is met when Jones meets the epistemic responsibility for the upkeep and improvement of his perceptual dispositions; when he takes over stewardship of these dispositions from the community that originally brought them about. Then not only will it not be an accident that he tends to get things right, but the credit for that fact will be due to Jones himself. This is the core notion of my alternative picture. I call it *perceptual responsibilism*. But we are certainly not done with it. There are questions and objections to be answered that will provide an occasion to put flesh on these bare bones.

A question: how important is the community?

In this section I want to make clear the extent to which there is a *social* element in the theory of perceptual responsibilism. What is the role of one's community?

According to what I have said about Sellars's account of how the requirement of the first hurdle is met, the explanation for Jones's first coming to have these perceptual dispositions is that he has been suitably trained by his community. There will be little dispute, I think, that that is generally how it in fact happens. But one might wonder whether it really *needs* to happen that way. Suppose that we were born with the requisite reliable perceptual dispositions instead of getting them from a community's training. Wouldn't that be enough to clear the first hurdle?

I think not. To see what is special about the community we must first notice that I have been characterizing the members of the community as epistemic agents sensitive to epistemic norms. Suppose instead we were to characterize them merely as creatures with certain behavioral dispositions to selectively reinforce behavior in each other (and especially in their young) in ways that happen to bring it about that the others in the community have the same dispositions.²⁸⁹ (Call that the “herd” conception of community.) In that case – just as in the case where the dispositions are had at birth – there would be no reason to think that the dispositions that one is trained to have are in fact the *right* ones (or at least are an *approximation* of the dispositions we ought to have²⁹⁰). If Jones’s dispositions conform to the epistemic ought-to-be rules, this seems like a stroke of luck. If, on the other hand, we think of the community as consisting of epistemic agents whose training behaviors are a manifestation of their sensitivity to rules like “It ought to be that, *ceteris paribus*, one tokens ‘that’s green’ if and only if there is something green present,” then, if Jones has been brought up in such a community, it is no surprise that his dispositions conform to that norm. Since Jones’s conforming to those norms is a necessary condition of his (eventually) being sensitive to them himself, his being brought up in a community of

²⁸⁹ This fits Haugeland’s characterization of the notion of community held by the “neo-pragmatists” he places at third base in his (1990) paper “The Intentionality All-Stars,” in which he maps various views on intentionality to positions in baseball. (I think he is mistaken to foist the herd conception of community on those he puts at third base – at least on Sellars.)

²⁹⁰ As I will explain in a moment, I do not want to claim that the community is infallible.

individuals who are sensitive to such norms is a crucial part of the explanation of his being able to have the same sort of sensitivity to norms.²⁹¹

Now a proponent of the “herd” conception of the community might be able to meet this challenge if he has the view that the epistemic norms (such as the ought-to-be rule mentioned above) were in fact *products* of these social (herd) practices. That is to say, if the community, in virtue of these “herding” behaviors, *make* the epistemic norms, then we *can* explain how Jones’s dispositions end up conforming to the norms (despite the fact that the community is not characterized as consisting of epistemic agents sensitive to norms that are there independently). That kind of view fits the sort of view that Brandom (1994) seems to have. He says, “On the broadly phenomenalist line about norms defended here, norms are in an important sense in the eye of the beholder, so that one cannot address the question of what implicit norms are, independently of the question of what it is to acknowledge them in practice.”

(Brandom 1994, 25.) I take it that Brandom’s view is one in which the practices of the community (where these practices are initially characterized in *non*-epistemic terms) *makes* the epistemic ought-to-be norms. I see nothing that commits me to as strong a position as Brandom’s about the role of the community. It is open to me to hold instead that the initiation into a social practice is what enables one’s eyes to be open to

²⁹¹ The explanation of Jones’s sensitivity to norms presupposes that his trainers were also sensitive to the norms. Some might find this to be an objectionably circular explanation. I do not think that an explanation of *Jones’s* being norm-governed that appeals to facts about others’ behaviors bring likewise norm-governed is objectionable. I think that it will only seem objectionably circular if one takes the primary question at issue here to be “What is the ultimate source of epistemic

the norms that are there independently. On a view where the practices *make* the norms, it is hard to make a case that the community can get them wrong.²⁹² On a view where the practices *make* the norms, it is hard to make a case that the community can get them wrong. But I think that the community, like an individual, *can* get things wrong, and it is precisely the point of the ongoing social enterprise that a responsible steward will see herself as part of (more on this below) that members of such a community be working toward improvement. The notion of this kind of epistemic improvement would not make sense unless we can make sense of genuine epistemic norms that we are attempting to converge upon.

So, to say again, my view is that the fact that Jones is raised in a community of epistemic agents sensitive to the ought-to-be's is a crucial part of the explanation of how Jones can also come to be sensitive to those ought-to-be's.²⁹³ And remember, I am not claiming that being brought up in such a community is a *sufficient* condition for having the sorts of norm-governed states and episodes that would count as being epistemically justified. We cannot forget about the second hurdle, the clearing of

normativity (or epistemic norm-governedness)?" I will discuss such questions in the next section.

²⁹² Brandom does try to separate them (1994, pp.592-597, 601-607) by giving a proof that there is no legal move from "everyone believes p" to "p." See Haugeland (1998b, 357-358, footnote 14) for a well aimed complaint about the proof's success.

²⁹³ Is the community the *only* possible explanation of Jones's norm sensitivity? No. A traditional Platonist/rationalist might hold that humans have an innate faculty of rational intuition which can be used to put them into contact with the epistemic oughts residing in Plato's Heaven. In that case, the fact that it ought to be thus-and-so would be part of the explanation for Jones's having the dispositions that he does, since his dispositions will have been the result of his direct contact (by way of his rational intuitive faculty) with the norms. But that is the kind of story that the Sellarsian framework we are exploring and extending seeks to build an alternative to.

which enables Jones himself to get the credit for his continuing to have the dispositions he ought to have. The point here is that it is hard to see how Jones could get to the point of being a full member of the community (an epistemic agent appropriately sensitive to the epistemic norms, etc.) without the training he received from them.

Now let me summarize the ways in which the community plays a role, not just in helping to bring about these perceptual dispositions in the first place, but also in helping one to be an epistemically responsible steward of the dispositions oneself.

The role of the community does not stop at the first hurdle. When one clears the second hurdle, the norms of the trainers become internal to the trainee. A genuine commitment to those norms – whether this commitment is implicit in behavior or explicit in the acceptance of principles – will mean that Jones not only is *fit* to be a trainer of others, but he has the same internal motivations that make trainers *want* to correct others, and to treat them in all the ways that amount to training them (even if it is not conceptualized by Jones *as* training). For those who have a sensitivity to the norm, recognition of an uncorrected error is like an itch needing to be scratched. The norms that we are talking about here are *ought-to-be* rules, like “it ought to be that, *ceteris paribus*, one tokens ‘that’s green’ if and only if there is a green thing present.” The norm is not just directed at *oneself*; it is *not* “it ought to be that *I* token...”. (Sellars in fact argues that it is the very nature of genuine objective norms that they are

universal in this way.²⁹⁴) We can characterize the achievement that comes with clearing the second hurdle (and thus being a responsible steward, etc.) as the achievement of a kind of epistemic *autonomy*. But we should not think of that achievement as a stage at which one becomes completely *independent* from the community. Rather, it enables one to be a full standing *member* of it. It means, for example, that one becomes part of a community of individuals all normatively motivated²⁹⁵ toward correcting each other when corrections are needed. Jones is one small part of what we can think of as an ongoing societal endeavor to continually expand our knowledge and refine our conceptual system. (Thus the epistemic practice does not have to start from scratch with each person. Instead, each person inherits the conceptual system that has been successively improved upon by the preceding generations.) We might even go as far as to say that part of what it is to be committed to this ongoing social project is to not only have responsibilities of your own (such as the maintaining and improving of your dispositions), but to also have responsibilities to others, to help them to improve their own conceptual systems, so that they can play *their* small parts in the big group project.

While commitment to these norms may put you under the obligation to help others, it is also the case that you often need their help as well. As I will talk about more below (in the section entitled “When dispositions collide”), one of the mechanisms for responsible stewardship of one’s perceptual dispositions involves

²⁹⁴ See Sellars (1967), chapter VII, “Objectivity, Intersubjectivity, and the Moral Point of View.”

knowing what to do when others disagree with you and who to respect as an authority, when to listen to others, and when to stand your ground. Detection of a disposition that is not what it ought to be is not always something that one can do alone. Rather, much of the time, others will help in this – often simply by having a contrary response. (Again, I will discuss this in more detail below.)

Now that we see some of the ways in which there is an important social component to perceptual responsibilism, one might wonder whether the community has *too* big of a role. There is a sense in which Jones's epistemic community has a lot of power over whether he turns out to be someone who can perceptually know things. One can imagine a variety of different cases of bizarre upbringing that a child could get which would, according to my account, prevent her from being a knower in particular cases (or even from having concepts at all). For example, a child might be raised in a room with all sorts of abnormal lighting conditions such that while she is reliable at picking out colors while she is *in* the room, when she is finally let out she has none of the dispositions that she would need to pick out colors in the real world. And if she fails to have an appropriate sensitivity to the differences between normal and abnormal conditions of perception, this too might very mean that it would not make sense to attribute color concepts to her. The community has power also over persons who *have* received a proper upbringing. Imagine that because of some transgression, the chief of the village declares that Jones is to be shunned and that no one should communicate with him at all, nor even to speak or communicate with

²⁹⁵ That is to say, disposed to do it because of a sensitivity to the fact that it ought to be

anyone else while Jones is present. In such a case Jones would be deprived of crucial tools that he needs as a part of his being a responsible steward of his dispositions.

Without the benefit of being able to witness his peers' perceptual responses it may be difficult to keep his own perceptual dispositions on track. Or if they *do* happen to stay on track, it might be that this is too much of a lucky accident to credit Jones with having satisfied the norms. When he is deprived of these important resources, doing his best may not be good enough – even when the disposition does happen to stay on track. (The question of whether “doing one’s best” is enough to uphold one’s epistemic responsibilities is one that will be taken up in greater detail in chapter five, “The Deontological Conception of Justification and the Internalism Externalism Debate.”)

I mentioned above that the norm-sensitivities of the community of trainers is fallible, imperfect, and subject to improvement, just as Jones’s sensitivity is. What should we say to a philosopher who attempts to exploit the fact that a community’s sensitivity to norms needn’t be (and aren’t) perfect in order to bring on the threat of skepticism? Suppose the skeptic says, “Aha! So you admit that there is no guarantee that the practices of the community embody any kind of accurate sensitivity to the ‘real’ norms. But then the fact that Jones acquires his dispositions as a result of his being trained by that community does nothing to guarantee that he will have an appropriate sensitivity either. It’s like the blind leading the blind! What (non-question begging) reason do we have to think that any of our conceptual systems are *really*

done.

norm governed (that is, are *accurately* governed by the *real* norms)?" I think this skeptic asks for more than is reasonable to expect. We might try shifting the burden back to the skeptic with the following sort of argument: If the community has *no* kind of sensitivity to the true epistemic norms (not even a sensitivity that is imperfect and highly fallible), then, given that our conceptual system is partly constituted of norm-governed inferential linkages, this shows conceptual content, and our epistemic practices in general, to be a sham (a mere "play of empty forms", in McDowell's (1994, 6) words). But it certainly does not *seem* like conceptual content is an illusion. (And indeed, could it actually *seem* like anything if conceptual content is a sham?) So, in absence of a positive reason to think that the community's practices are *not* at all reflective of their sensitivity (however fallible and imperfect) to genuine epistemic norms, the skeptical threat seems to me to be unmotivated. In the absence of reasons to think otherwise, why not assume that persons do have states and episodes with conceptual content, some of which are justified? The orientation of this project is to deepen our understanding of the fact (or what is taken to be a fact for the purposes of the project) that a person can be non-inferentially justified in perceptually believing that P. I cannot claim that the theory of perceptual responsibilism will satisfy the skeptic. But I do not think that that is necessarily a strike against it, especially if the point is not to answer the skeptic but to deepen our understanding of these issues.

An objection: the source of normativity and a regress of dispositions

In this section, I want to flesh out more details of the perceptual responsibilism by considering a certain objection that might be launched to it. The general form of the objection looks like this: “You have been giving explanations of epistemically normative facts (such as that Jones’s perceptual judgment that P is epistemically justified) in terms of other epistemically normative facts (such as that Jones is an epistemically responsible steward of his perceptual dispositions). Where does this normativity come from in the first place? It is one thing to explain one normative fact in terms of another, but what is the ultimate source of all epistemic normativity?”

In a moment we will consider a more specific version of this objection which will provide a useful foil for my spelling out additional details of perceptual responsibilism. But let me first comment on the objection in its more abstract form.

It is true that I have resisted giving explanations of epistemically normative facts in terms of descriptive (or, for that matter, normative but non-*epistemically* normative facts). This is because that kind of explanation would be, given what I argued in chapter one, an episode of the given, something that we are avoiding for the purposes of this project. The Sellarsian perspective that this project adopts is instead that normative phenomena (such as a person’s being epistemically justified in perceptually believing that P) are best understood by relating them to other normative facts. The desire for a theory of the ultimate ground or source of all epistemic normativity – a theory that at bottom explains epistemic normativity in terms of descriptive (or non-*epistemic* normativity) – is to be excised, if possible.

Now let us see the more specific version of this general objection:

"The problem you started out with was that of explaining how a particular perceptual belief token, "that's green", could be norm-governed in the way it would need to be if it is to count as having positive justificatory status, to be a candidate for the title of knowledge. You told us that the answer lay in shifting our focus from the individual token to the disposition that brought it about. Fair enough. But then you told us that even if the disposition were fairly accurate (and thus fulfills the requirements of perceptual reliabilism) and even if the disposition were brought about by a community whose practices embody an acceptance of certain epistemic norms (and thus the first hurdle would be jumped the way Sellars thinks it should be), the tokening will still fail to be norm-governed in the right way unless the disposition that produced it is also norm-governed. (This was the point of the second hurdle.) Okay. So now in order to give an account of the norm-governedness of perceptual beliefs, we have to give an account of the norm-governedness of the dispositions that produce them. Let's call this perceptual disposition, (the disposition, for example, to believe "that's green" if and only if one is in the presence of a green item), *D1*. Now it turns out that your account of the norm-governedness of *D1* requires one to be responsible for its upkeep, to be a good steward of it, etc., where this in turn requires that you do all kinds of things, like improving upon *D1* when you find that it can stand to be improved. Now all this stuff can be seen as a matter of having a higher-order disposition (or set of dispositions) *D2*, which is a disposition to correct and improve (etc.) *D1*. But, once again, you have emphasized that all these correcting behaviors

that make up D2 must not be characterized merely as things that Jones just happens to do, like blind habits. Rather, they must be characterized in normative terms, in terms of being *responsible*, of being a manifestation of an implicit sensitivity to the rule we've been talking about. In short, it seems that in order for D1 to be norm-governed, not only must Jones *have* D2, but D2 must be norm-governed as well. Now we will want an account of the norm-governedness of D2. Is the norm-governedness of D2 to be explained in terms of Jones's having of a *further* norm-governed disposition, D3, which is a disposition to maintain, correct, and improve upon D2 when it needs it? Is there a regress in the offing here?"

I should hope not. The principle that gives rise to the regress is this:

P1: For any disposition D had by person S, D is norm-governed only if S has another norm-governed disposition D', which is a disposition to manage, upkeep, correct and improve upon D.

I reject this principle. The reason is *not* that I think that someone can have a norm-governed disposition D without in general being able to take care of it, correcting, improving, etc. Indeed, I do think that being the steward of the disposition is what makes it norm-governed. But it is not correct to think of this as involving a *separate* disposition.

Compare Sellars's response to a similar objection:

At this point, the reader will probably hurl the following challenge: "Are you not confronted by a dilemma? For surely the rules for a linguistic system are themselves linguistic phenomena. Therefore either you must hold that they, in turn, are rule-governed, or else admit that at least one linguistic structure exists which is not "rule-governed" in your sense. You can scarcely be prepared to adopt the latter course. If you take the former, you are committed, surely, to an infinity of rules, meta-rules, meta-meta-rules, etc." A full reply to this challenge cannot be given in the available space. The following remarks, however, may help. The reader is quite correct in predicting that we shall take the former course and grant that the rules are themselves rule-governed. He is, however, mistaken in inferring that this "regress" is vicious. It

would be vicious if the infinity of rules which an organism would have to learn in order to exhibit rule-governed behavior constituted an infinity of rules which differed in the full-blooded way in which the rules of chess differ from the rules of bridge. That the hierarchy of rules is in a certain sense repetitious (compare the rules for naming a name with the rule for naming the name of a name) provides the answer to this difficulty. However, even granting this, the regress would be vicious if in order for a type of behavior to be rule-governed, every instance of the behavior must be accompanied (brought about) by an organic event of which the *text* (to use Bergmann's term) is the core-generalization of the rule. If this were the case, then, obviously, an infinite hierarchy of events with texts would have to occur in order for any case of rule-governed behavior to occur.²⁹⁶

The idea that rule-governed behaviors needn't be accompanied by the *text* of the rule is just another way of saying that not all rule-governed behavior must be rule-followings. There must also be *implicitly* norm-governed behaviors, *know-how*. For the same reasons, we must not conceive of the rule-governedness of the perceptual disposition as a matter of having another separate norm-governed disposition. An analogy will help.

Suppose someone held a principle like the following:

QP1: One of the necessary conditions of person S having competently learned language L is "the quoting condition": for any token T produced in L (by S or by someone else), S must have the ability to ascend to the meta-language for L and quote T (e.g., the person has to be able to say things like, "I just said 'the sky is blue'", or "Frank just said, 'the sky is blue'.")

The idea behind the principle isn't crazy but understood this way it is likely to lead to the same sort of regress problems: Sam says, "I like cheese." But if he is a competent user of English, then he will be able to ascend to the meta-language and say, "I just said 'I like cheese.'" But if he is a competent user of the meta-language, then he will be able to ascend to the meta-meta-language and say, "I just said, 'I just

²⁹⁶ Footnote 5, Sellars (1949), pp. 142-143.

said 'I like cheese.'" But if he is a competent user of the meta-meta-language then he will be able to ascend to the meta-meta-meta-language, and so forth. To be a competent speaker of English, Sam must know an infinite number of meta-languages.

But that's obviously absurd. He doesn't need to know an infinite number of languages. He simply needs to get the hang of quoting and realize that any sentence with quotes in it can itself be quoted. It's perfectly fine, and important and necessary, to distinguish between object-level discourse and meta-linguistic discourse. But it is wrong to think that "learning the meta-language" (that is, learning to talk about talk) is like learning to speak a wholly new language, as for instance my learning to speak Russian was my learning to speak a new language (or as "the rules of chess differ from the rules of bridge"). Learning to ascend to the meta-language is not like learning a new language; it's more like getting the hang of a certain trick. -- A trick, which if the spirit behind the above principle is sound, is required as a part of being a competent speaker of a natural language.

Similarly then, I want to claim that having a norm-governed perceptual disposition involves getting the hang of a certain trick (or set of tricks). One's being a good steward, being epistemically responsible for the perceptual disposition, requires getting the hang of this trick. Part of the trick involves being able to make corrections to that disposition when corrections need to be made. But another part of the trick involves being able to make corrections to the corrections. But this is no more mysterious or regress inducing than my ability to quote sentences that have quotations in them.

The Perceptual Stewardship Trick, like the quoting trick, has an element of self-reflexiveness. Getting the hang of the Trick enables one to not only scrutinize and correct the products of the perceptual disposition (e.g., tokens of "that's green"), but also to scrutinize and correct the products of the Trick itself -- to scrutinize the scrutinizings and correct the corrections. The Trick enables my grandmother (whose perfect pitch is not as perfect as it once was) to say, "Gosh when the soloist started singing, I was sure they were in the key of D. But now that I listen carefully, I think maybe they're singing in D#. Maybe my hearing is starting to 'go flat' and I should compensate accordingly." But it also enables her to say, "Never mind. I don't know what I was thinking. They're singing in D after all. My hearing is just fine." And it can continue: "Scratch that. I guess I was wrong to think I wasn't wrong about the key. I was wrong. It *is* in D# and not D after all. Whoops." Let's call these successive corrections of corrections of corrections (and so on) *recursive* applications of the Trick.

Now typically, successive recursive applications of the Trick are *not* as explicit as this:

I just tokened 'P', but I was wrong. I should have said Q.

Whoops. My judgment that <P is wrong, Q is right> was wrong.

Whoops. My judgment that <My judgment that <P is wrong, Q is right> was wrong> was wrong.

Whoops. My judgment that <My judgment that <My judgment that <P is wrong, Q is right> was wrong> was wrong> was wrong.> was wrong.

etc., etc.

That is certainly possible. But generally speaking, normal people don't talk like that. More likely, it will look like this: "I thought it was P but now I think it's Q. No, wait a minute. Maybe it *is* P. No that's wrong, it's Q. Wait, I screwed up, it's P. No, maybe it's Q after all..."

When dispositions collide

There's a good reason that recursive applications of the Trick will often look like simple lower level wrangling over P and Q. Responsibly managing your perceptual dispositions is not about stepping back from all of your beliefs and dispositions and surveying their accuracy from some God's eye vantage point. Rather, responsible stewardship involves, among other things, playing your perceptual (and other) dispositions off against each other.²⁹⁷ For example: Jones enters a room where there is a coffee mug on a nearby table. He says to himself, "Well look at that -- a yellow mug." He then looks down at the sheet of typing paper that he brought into the room with him and feels himself inclined to call it also yellow -- or rather, he *would* be so inclined were it not for the fact that just moments ago he had seen the paper to be white (or so it seemed at the time). The situation produces in him a "something ain't right" feeling. He decides to make a correction: "That mug *looks* yellow but I think it's actually white." Before he leaves the room he looks up and notices the yellowish light bulb. Thanks to this experience he will be less likely to make a similar kind of mistake

²⁹⁷ Haugeland (1998b) p. 345 makes similar points: "To be sure, there is no way to check a skillful exercise except by other skillful exercises."

in the future. His "that's white" disposition and his "that's yellow" disposition have improved thanks in part to their having been in tension with each other. Call this *intra-personal disposition collision*.

Similar improvements can take place when one of your perceptual dispositions comes into conflict with someone else's. We may call this *inter-personal disposition collision*. Suppose Jones is inclined to call the tapestry *sea green* in color but Smith disagrees: "No, it's definitely *teal*." If Jones's disposition to call it sea green is norm-governed, he will feel a tension that needs resolving: One of them stands in need of correction. If Jones has reason to think that Smith is more the expert in such matters, perhaps he will defer to Smith and correct his own judgment. If Jones has reason to think that he himself is the more qualified observer, he will be apt to hang on to his judgment and correct Smith instead. Or he might have no opinion about who is better at identifying colors. (This is especially likely in the case of a dispute of something like basic colors, where typically people are so good at making such judgments that, unless one of them is a child, or the colors are strange ones, it is assumed that everyone is pretty much as qualified as you can reasonably get. More on this a bit later.) Many times when confronted with a disagreement in perceptual judgments, the persons will keep repeating themselves in a hope that they can trigger in the other a similar response: "But *look!* Don't you see that it looks *sea green*?" (This is sometimes mistaken as an attempt to justify the belief that it is sea green by appealing to something supposedly more basic and perhaps less corrigible and more epistemically

accessible: the *look* that the object has. But typically what is really going on here²⁹⁸ is that appeals to the way the object looks are really just further exercises of the same perceptual disposition (to say "that's sea green") in an attempt to bring the other person's responses in line with one's own.) Another way Jones might try to resolve the tension is to try to settle the matter by appealing to something that he hopes will be common ground between himself and Smith. For instance, he might try to find a range of colors on which their dispositions converge and try to use this as leverage to argue for the appropriateness of his own response in the original case. (E.g., "But Smith, you agree that the tapestry *over there* is more of a forest green, right? And that forest green is closer in hue to sea green than it is to teal? Therefore, don't you think that *this* tapestry is more likely to be sea green than teal?...") Or maybe they will seek the opinions of others to help settle the question. But there might be nothing that gives either of them reason to budge, or reason to think that the other is wrong (other than the initial contrary response itself). For the person whose disposition is norm-governed, there will likely be a feeling of dissatisfaction associated with leaving this situation like this, with the conflict unresolved. Perhaps it will be resolved in the future: Perhaps in other cases other people will be in agreement with Jones's *sea green* responses and this will strengthen his confidence in his own "that's sea green" disposition, and give him reason to think that Smith had been in error about the tapestry. Or it might be that Jones will have more cases like his disagreement with Smith, where what Jones is inclined to call sea green others are inclined to call teal.

²⁹⁸ --At least if the way of thinking about things that we set out in chapter one is right.

Then he will likely correct the disposition and start saying *teal* in those cases as others do.

Progress can be made when a problem is detected. Problem detection typically occurs by means of what I've been calling the "something ain't right" feeling (which may or may not be accompanied by an explicit conceptualization of the problem -- more on this in a bit) which arises in the epistemically responsible agent when the perceptual disposition -- or rather, its exercise, the perceptual judgment -- comes into conflict with something else: a disposition of one's own or of someone else's, or perhaps with other beliefs one has. As I've already indicated, responsible response to epistemic conflict can take several forms, depending upon the context. Sometimes the best course of action is to do nothing but wait and see, to file the discrepancy away for future reference. You don't want to change your disposition too quickly. Being too compliant or gullible can be just as irresponsible as being too stubborn or obstinate.

Sometimes the disposition in question produces an erroneous result and the token is corrected but there is still a question about whether the error was a fluke, something that could not have reasonably been avoided, or whether it reflects poorly on the disposition. If the former, then the disposition needn't change. But if it was no fluke, then that bit of negative feedback can help hone the accuracy of the disposition in similar circumstances. If the disposition consistently goes astray (perhaps within a certain range), then a more dramatic overhaul may be necessary. This might involve withholding endorsement from (or drastically lowering your confidence in) those

perceptual inclinations, at least until things can get straightened out. Maybe you even need to see a doctor.

In some cases the right response to conflict is to modify some combination of perceptual dispositions and beliefs. Often the observation or associated disposition is in the right and requires no changes itself, but requires the modification of other beliefs that one holds. Sometimes (rarely) there will even have to be modification to the very inferential rules the grasp of which constitutes one's understanding of the phenomena being reported upon. Such a modification might be radical enough to amount to a "change in meaning" of the perceptual token. It might amount to discovering that the perceived object has a very different nature than originally thought to have – perhaps a nature that, prior to substantial modifications, was unintelligible.

Quine's image of the web of belief, altered in response to experiential inputs from the periphery is useful in some ways, but it also encourages the idea that the experiential inputs are somehow fixed or unrevisable. I am urging that they (or rather, the dispositions that produce them) *must* be revisable if their verdicts are to have any normative force.²⁹⁹ It is epistemically *reasonable* to rely on such verdicts, and to make interior modifications in light of them, only if the agent is being *responsible*, doing her best to make sure that the experiential verdicts do not go astray.

²⁹⁹ Human fallibility is not just a well documented fact. It is also necessary for the kind of normativity at issue: How can I be praiseworthy for getting something right unless there is a possibility of my getting it wrong?

In what ways does my account differ from Sellars's?

Now let us flesh out some more details by comparing my account of how the requirement of the second hurdle is met with Sellars's. Sellars's view, remember, is that Jones's tokens of "that's green" will meet the requirement when Jones has available to him the trans-level credibility argument. This, I argued, is to be construed as *non-inferentially* justifying Jones's tokening "that's green" in virtue of *inferentially* justifying (by way of the trans-level credibility inference) the higher-order claim, "It is reasonable to believe 'that's green'."

On Sellars's view Jones earns his right to hold the perceptual belief ("that's green") in virtue of the fact that he is in a position to demonstrate (by citing the trans-level credibility argument) that his perceptual disposition is reliable. He has to *know* -- and in a sense which enables him to *show*, at least in principle -- that his epistemic affairs are in order, at least as regards the production of that particular token.

Brandom complains (and in this I agree) that it is too much to require that Jones *knows* that he is taking care of business (with regard to the epistemic success of that disposition). Instead, we think it is enough if Jones simply *is* taking care of business, (whether Jones knows that he is or not).

Where I part company with Brandom is when it comes to saying what *taking care of business* should amount to. For Brandom, it is enough that Jones is reliable (assuming of course that the other conditions besides the second hurdle have been met). However, I think that this is not enough. Merely saying that Jones is reliable is not yet to say that *Jones* is who deserves the credit for it. Perhaps, for all we have

said, Jones's parents deserve the praise for taking care of Jones's epistemic business, making sure his dispositions are where they ought to be. I, on the other hand, think that it is important that Jones himself be the one who deserves the credit for the state of his perceptual dispositions.

Needless to say then, perceptual responsibilism does not require Jones to have access to the premises of the trans-level credibility argument. It does not require that Jones knows that he is reliable, or that he knows that he has been a good steward of his perceptual dispositions, or that he knows that he has been doing any of the particular things that happen to be involved in being a good steward. Thus if we find that no amount of skillfully deployed Socratic method can prompt Jones into accepting the truth of any of those things, that is not necessarily a reason to think that he is unjustified.

Perceptual stewardship is a skill. And one can have a skill without knowing that one does. Being a good driver can be like this. A person can be a good driver without realizing that she does all of the little things that good drivers do: she checks her blind spot before changing lanes, she maintains a safe distance between her own car and the car in front of hers, she slows down on corners when the streets are wet, etc., etc. It might be that she can't specifically remember doing any of this. She might even think that she's a horrible driver. But if she does all those things, even if she doesn't realize that she does them, then she's a good driver. Similarly, if Jones is doing all the things involved in being a good epistemic steward (ready to detect errors,

making corrections when they occur, etc.) then he'll be justified, even if he doesn't realize that he is doing these things.

It might seem like it is easier to be justified on my view than on Sellars's, but in some ways I require more. Sellars requires that you be reliable and know about it. But he does not require that you have hand in your being reliable. Thus imagine a kid who has mastered the necessary inferential moves, as well as the requisite language entry and exit moves, so that his tokens of "that's an apple" have conceptual content. Suppose that he has *just* now realized that there is a strong correlation between his tokens of "that's an apple" and the presence of apples. He can now produce the trans-level credibility argument. But also suppose that he had nothing to do with his present reliability, and in fact would have no tendency to correct occasional errors in the disposition or to improve it. If his disposition were to begin to drift away from reliability, producing more and more error, he would do nothing to stop it. He has none of the higher-order dispositions that are involved in being a good steward of the (lower-order) disposition. According to Sellars's account the boy would have cleared the second hurdle and would be justified. By *my* lights, it would be wrong to say that he is justified, for epistemic justification involves giving *credit* to the boy himself (this is what I identified as the role of the second hurdle), and so far the boy is too unconnected to his reliable dispositions to get the credit for their reliability. His parents are to be congratulated on a job well done, but what has the *boy* done to deserve any accolades?

Now if someone *does* have the premises of the trans-level credibility argument available, this is certainly not a strike against him on my view. On the contrary, having some beliefs about how reliable one's perceptual dispositions are can be quite useful in the service of making sure that the dispositions stay reliable. But that is not required. An analogy: A child learning to ride a bike might be helped in her improvement by her realization that she sometimes stops pedaling when she starts to turn. Then she is in a position to say to herself, "I've got to remember to keep pedaling when I start to turn. Otherwise, I'll fall!" But she also might make corrections to her bad biking behavior more instinctively, without needing to be aware of it in any conceptual sense. She may simply sense when something isn't working (e.g., she gets a "something ain't right" feeling) and she tries something else. One's responsible management of one's perceptual dispositions might sometimes be like this latter case. For example, Jones might instinctively lower his confidence in the tokens of a certain disposition in response to its recently having a higher rate of error; but Jones could not tell you that this is why he feels inclined not to have a high degree of confidence. And when he has a high degree of confidence he may not be able to say why. Or (to take a different case) perhaps Jones, after being repeatedly corrected, no longer makes the same mistake. There is nothing mysterious about that happening without Jones having to explicitly realize that a particular mistake has been reoccurring and then consciously set about trying to fix the disposition.

In much of the foregoing discussion I have been concerned to distance myself from what I (like Brandom) find to be a certain amount of over-intellectualization in

Sellars's treatment of the second hurdle. This is why I have repeatedly stressed that norm-governed correction, improvement, and maintenance of a perceptual disposition needn't always be guided by any conceptual awareness of what it is that needs correction or maintenance. This is the point of the examples of the good (but unreflective) driver and the child learning to ride a bicycle. But there is also danger in over-emphasizing the differences between Sellars and myself on these points. I can certainly agree that quite often (though not always) self-correction is prompted by an awareness of the problem. I also agree (as I indicated above in the earlier section) that there is an important social dynamic to being a good steward; being a good steward requires knowing when to listen to others and who to listen to. In cases where corrections are made with the aid of others, such corrections will (unlike the good driver and the bike rider) be guided by an awareness of the problem.

So how much, if any, conceptual activity is required by perceptual stewardship? Well, first of all, what the perceptual stewardship is a stewardship *of* is a disposition to produce conceptually contentful, propositional items – *beliefs* – in response to things in the world. Stewardship is what makes those propositional competences norm-governed in the way they need to be if their exercises – that is, the belief tokens produced – are to count as epistemically justified.³⁰⁰ So clearly a creature that does not engage in conceptual activity cannot be an epistemic steward. But what we are asking now is what additional propositional or conceptual activity, if

³⁰⁰ Clearly an exercise of a propositional competence, even if it does not count as epistemically justified, is still norm-governed in a different sense – the sense in which it must be if it is to be a conceptual item (“in the space of reasons”) at all.

any, is involved in this perceptual stewardship. For instance: Is it a requirement on the person who responsibly manages her dispositions that when potential trouble arises (e.g., colliding dispositions) she has an explicit propositional awareness of what the trouble is so that she can fix it? We've seen that the answer to that is *No*. She does not, for instance, need to say or think to herself, "I seem to keep misidentifying paintings by *Monet* when they're actually by *Manet*. I never used to mix them up. Perhaps I should go open my old Art History textbook and give myself a quick refresher course..." Again, if she *does* happen to come to that kind of realization, that's great. But we cannot suppose, without inviting regresses, that the *norm-governedness* of a propositional competence (what makes it a *skill* instead of a mere blind habit) is, in general, the having of another propositional competence. That is of a piece with the kind of followist thinking that we have already rejected in chapter two. (We will see more of this issue in chapter five when I discuss perceptual responsibilism in relation to the internalism-externalism debate.)

But I also want to say that it would be hard to imagine counting Jones's correcting and maintaining behaviors as norm-governed if he did not have *any* of the sorts of conceptual skills that are needed to enable self-reflection and intentional self-improvement, generally speaking. Even if some particular norm-governed correction is not accompanied by an awareness that "this problem needs fixing...", it is doubtful that a person could have any norm-governed corrections without being able to accompany at least some of them with thoughts like that. It does not commit me to

followism to claim that unless there are at least some rule followings, there can be no *implicitly* norm-governed episodes.

Non-inferential knowledge

Another one of the things we found to be unsatisfactory about Sellars's view, and which I believe my perceptual responsibilism to be an improvement on, was his account of how the justification of perceptual beliefs is genuinely non-inferential. For persons who worry about the difficulties facing coherence theories of justification,³⁰¹ it will be especially important that an account of perceptual knowledge has it genuinely non-inferentially justified.

A person's belief is justified inferentially if it is justified in virtue of the fact that the person has other beliefs that inferentially support it (in other words, there is a good argument whose premises are other things the person believes, and whose conclusion is the target belief). On Sellars's view the justification of a perceptual belief is only non-inferential because (a) the conclusion of the trans-level credibility inference is (I argued) the higher-order claim, "It's reasonable to believe 'that's green'", and (b) the transition from that higher-order claim to "that's green" is not an inferential transition but a language-exit transition from the meta-language to the object language. Both (a) and (b) are controversial, and if I'm wrong about either of them then so much the worse for Sellars, at least as regards avoiding inferentialism and coherentism.³⁰²

³⁰¹ For criticisms of coherentism see, for example, Haack (1993), ch. 3, Sosa (1980), BonJour (2000), and McDowell's (1994) *Mind and World*.

³⁰² Granted, there are many who see coherentism as nothing to fear. Of the objections that face coherence theories of justification, McDowell's is perhaps the most serious.

Even if I am right to attribute (a) and (b) to Sellars, there are some who I think would still see this as a rather weak sense of non-inferential justification. After all, if what is objectionable about the idea that all justification is inferential is the idea that there is no justification coming from outside the epistemic system (so to speak), then one is not likely to be consoled by Sellars's story about the non-inferential justification of beliefs.³⁰³ There is still no justification from outside the system on Sellars's view.

Now, I'm not sure that perceptual responsibilism can *completely* satisfy this foundationalist urge for justification "from without" (in fact, I'm not sure that that's something a theory of justification ought to strive for) but I think my view can do a little better than Sellars's on that score.

So, first of all, perceptual beliefs according to perceptual responsibilism are neither inferentially justified nor justified in virtue of something *else* being inferentially justified (as on Sellars's view). On some occasions one might go about correcting a disposition by first having formed the belief that "this disposition needs improving", and that belief might well be inferentially justified. But even in these cases, this does not render the exercises of those dispositions, the perceptual beliefs themselves, inferentially justified. Thus perceptual responsibilism does not invite the

He alleges that if the connections that one's beliefs have to the world is only causal, and not normative, not *justificatory*, then these beliefs are not intelligible as beliefs at all -- they have no content. See McDowell (1994), chapter 1.

³⁰³ Sosa, for example, would certainly still consider Sellars's view a coherentist one: "By coherentism we shall mean any view according to which the ultimate sources of justification for any belief lie in relations among that belief and other beliefs of the subject: explanatory relations, perhaps, or relations of probability and logic." (from section 9, "The Raft and the Pyramid", Sosa (1980).)

objection that it is a *weak* sort of non-inferentialist view in the same way that Sellars's view does.

What about "justification from without", or better yet, "justification from the world outside of one's epistemic system"? Before I can give a proper response to that question, a mistaken way of thinking needs to be made explicit so it can be rejected. When dealing with an *inferentially* justified belief, it makes sense to ask the question, "What justifies the belief?" The answer is simple: Other beliefs do the justifying. By parity of reasoning then, it would seem to make sense to ask, "What justifies non-inferentially justified beliefs (e.g., perceptual beliefs)?" The grammatical structure of the question calls for an answer in the form of a *thing*, something that can be expressed using a noun clause. Notice then, that "What justifies these beliefs?" is a more restrictive question than "Why are these beliefs justified?" in the sense that the former question prompts for a particular *kind* of answer to the latter question. In other words, to think that "What justifies these beliefs?" is an appropriate way to ask "Why are these beliefs justified?" is to assume that the way that one explains why a belief is justified is by citing the *thing* (whether it be a belief or something else) that justifies it.³⁰⁴ This way of talking makes it easier to pose what I think is a false dilemma: "Are perceptual beliefs justified by something in the head or something outside of it?" The reason that the dilemma is false is not because there is something that is neither in the head nor not in the head. Rather, the dilemma is false because there is nothing (or

³⁰⁴ An example of an investigation of the concept of justification that uses this misleading way of putting the question is Alston's "Concepts of Epistemic Justification" (1985).

rather, no *thing*) that justifies perceptual beliefs. The search for a *thing* to do the justification also legitimates the question, "What does that thing *do* to the belief in order to justify it?" Once we ask questions like these, we can be stuck thinking like this: "In order to avoid coherentism, I want it to be that *the world* justifies my perceptual beliefs. But the only thing that the world can *do* to my perceptual beliefs is *cause* them, and that's not sufficient for justifying them..."

According to perceptual responsibilism the reason that a person's perceptual beliefs are justified is not that there is some thing that is justifying them. Rather, they are justified because she is a skilled observer and she is responsible for that skill. She takes good care of her perceptual dispositions. She makes sure that her perceptual beliefs are likely to be true, that they match the world that they're about. It is her job to make sure that when she finds herself inclined to perceptually believe "that's a pine tree," it is because there is a pine tree in front of her. We might say that in perception the agent is *normatively* (and not merely *causally*) beholden to the way the world is. That is as much of a justificatory connection to the world as perceptual responsibilism can offer, and as much as I think it is reasonable to want.

What, no sensations?

It will undoubtedly have been noticed that in the explication of perceptual responsibilism there has been nothing said about sensations, or sense-impressions or sense-contents or anything of the like. Simply put, it's an Occam's Razor thing: "If you don't need 'em, don't posit 'em." And I've not felt the need for sensations in this account of the justification of perceptual beliefs.

But, that is not to say that they wouldn't be needed if I were engaged in a different sort of inquiry. My contention is that sensations (sense-impressions, etc.) are not needed in an explanation of the *normative* status, the positive *justificatory* status, of perceptual beliefs. If, however, I was trying to give an account of the *causal* story, the story of how the world interacts with my sense organs in a way that eventuates in my having a perceptual belief, I might well find a real necessity to posit something like sensations. In particular, I might find that something like sensations are required to explain perceptual illusions, hallucinations, and the like. My view (and Sellars's view) is that perceptual beliefs are epistemically direct (that is, non-inferentially justified) but causally mediated.

Of course, it *could* turn out that what is required to explain hallucinations and illusions are certain *brain events*, items described in a vocabulary that is quite different from that of sensation talk. It might turn out, for example, that the scientific explanation to be given has nothing in it that very much resembles sensations. Perhaps in this explanation, the brain events have no direct accessibility – that is, there is no special automatic non-inferential introspective knowledge of their existence and of their properties – as sensations were sometimes thought to have. And perhaps these brain events do not have the same properties (or corresponding properties) as the physical objects do; so we won't talk about a *red* brain event in the same way it is natural to talk of a *red* sensation.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁵ On Sellars's approach, the 'red' in "sensation of red" is to be understood as a newly introduced predicate modeled on the colors that physical objects have. See EPM §60-61, and *Science and Metaphysics* (Sellars, 1967), chapter 1, section IV.

In any case, I do not mean to be exploring the issue of what if anything might be needed in a full explanation of the causal interaction of mind and world. I hope my view leaves a wide variety of options open about how that causal story might be filled out. These are important questions to answer. They are mostly empirical questions, though by no means non-philosophical questions. (Sellars certainly has things to say on this subject.³⁰⁶) But they are not the questions that this dissertation is concerned with. When it comes to sensations, my view is very much of a piece with Brandom's:

I do not see that we need – either in epistemology or, more important, in semantics – to appeal to any intermediaries between perceptible facts and reports of them that are noninferentially elicited by the exercise of reliable differential responsive dispositions. There are, of course, many *causal* intermediaries, since the noninferential observation report is a propositionally contentful commitment the acknowledgment of which stands at the end of a whole causal chain of reliably covarying events, including a cascade of neurophysiological ones. But I do not see that any of these has any particular conceptual or (therefore) cognitive or semantic significance.³⁰⁷

Hallucinations and illusions do not create the same kind of problems on the justificatory side of things as they do on the causal side of things. A straight stick partly submerged in water may prompt Jones to falsely token "that stick is bent". The judgment can still be justified even if it is false. Whether it is justified is, according to perceptual responsibilism, a matter of how responsible Jones is for the state of his perceptual disposition. Hallucinations don't cause any special problems either. Since I don't use the physical object to justify perceptual beliefs, I don't have a problem explaining how perceptual beliefs might be justified even in the absence of the physical object. It will be remembered that the norms of perception to which Jones is

³⁰⁶ See, for example, dialogue between Sellars and James Cornman on the status of sensations: Cornman (1970), Sellars (1971b), Cornman (1978).

³⁰⁷ Brandom (2000a), note 7, pp 205-206.

responsible for conforming make mention, in their *ceteris paribus* clauses, of standard conditions of perception. Failing to perceive things accurately while under the influence of LSD (for example) is not a reason to think that Jones is failing to live up to his epistemic obligations, for this is not a standard condition of perception.

Chapter Four: What Can Be Perceived?

In this chapter I continue to develop perceptual responsibilism, primarily by taking on the issue of what according to the theory can and cannot be perceived. In the process we will draw some important distinctions among kinds of observational concepts.

By now the reader is tired of hearing about the color *green*. In part I have tried to stick to examples using simple color concepts in order to maintain contact with other epistemological views according to which only such simple concepts as color or shape can figure in perceptual knowledge. But now it is time I said something about the limits on perceptual judgments so that I can justify using some more interesting examples. What can be perceived? What determines what can be perceived?

Sense-data theorists disagreed among themselves about how restricted (if at all) the vocabulary referring to sense-data should be. All agreed that simple colors and shapes (e.g., red and rectangular sense-data) were perfectly fine. One can have elliptical sense-data when looking at a penny, but should we say that one has *penny* - sense-data when looking at a penny? Or does one simply form the *judgment* that that is a penny, a judgment that is justified in virtue of having elliptical sense-data? Can one have Picasso sense-data when in front of a Picasso painting, or is it the case that all one *really* sees (that is, sees *directly*, or is directly *aware* of) is a configuration of shapes and colors, and one must *infer* that that configuration of shapes and colors is in fact a Picasso painting?

Though my view has nothing like sense-data in it, one might ask similar sorts of questions, namely, what sorts of judgments can be perceptual judgments? The answer is simple: sky's the limit. There is no privileged vocabulary for perceptual judgments (and hence for perceptual knowledge). This of course does not mean that all judgments are perceptual judgments, only that there are no *a priori* restrictions on the sort of vocabulary used in the content of perceptual judgments.

Basic and communal observational concepts

As I have already mentioned, there are certain observational concepts, such as simple color or shape concepts, that most of us are so good at observing instances of that there is not much room for improvement. It is worth saying something about the status of such concepts.

As I said, any concept may be an observational concept in the sense that there are no *a priori* constraints on which concepts might figure in a perceptually occasioned and perceptually justified belief. This was contrary to what many sense-data theorists held, namely that there are certain properties that we are naturally fit to directly observe; in other words, sense-data theorists treated observables as a natural kind. Thus a person could have round red sense-data (and thus directly, non-inferentially *know* that there was something round and red in her visual field), but she could not have Jackson Pollock sense-data and thus she could not directly, non-inferentially know that there is a Jackson Pollock painting in front of her. I, on the other hand, have said that I am perfectly willing to admit that someone can perceptually, directly (that is, *non-inferentially*) know that one is standing in front of a Jackson Pollock painting.

My hypothesis (though nothing on this dissertation turns on its being correct) about why (or at least part of the reason why) these sense-data theorists thought that humans were naturally fit to have direct knowledge of *certain* properties (and not properties like *being a Jackson Pollock painting*) is precisely that being an observational expert is, generally speaking, semantically required for those predicates. Not being able to pick out an instance of redness when it is staring you in the face just demonstrates (generally speaking, and defeasibly) that you don't have the concept of redness, that you haven't mastered the predicate 'is red'. But with that in mind, I can agree that certain concepts, like basic color and shape concepts, have a special status that other concepts that might figure in perceptually justified beliefs do not have. That is, I can agree with the sense-data theorists³⁰⁸ that simple color and shape (and perhaps other simple concepts) have a special observational status that *being a Jackson Pollock painting* does not have. Simply put, a *basic observational concept* is one such that being good at picking out perceptible instances is a requirement (absent strong reasons to think otherwise) of having the concept. For example, if Jones can't *know* a green thing when he *sees* one, then generally speaking, that is a strong reason to suspect that

³⁰⁸ And not *just* sense-data theorists. Many contemporary foundationalists (especially ones who think that the story of the justification of perceptual beliefs involves sub-doxastic states of sensory awareness of some sort) would also be loath to countenance direct knowledge of Jackson Pollock paintings, much less electrons and moral wrongness. Interestingly, McDowell also seems to think that observational predicates should be restricted in scope. When Brandom (2000b) asks whether McDowell would allow chicken sexers or physicists trained to report mu-mesons to have observational knowledge, McDowell (2000a) says *no*, but says that the question about what can be observed is an interesting one. He also says that the concept of *secondary qualities* cannot be used to answer it either but suggests (p.281) that "The older concept of proper sensibles might be a better focus" for answering it.

he doesn't have the concept of *green*. If *F* is a basic observational concept then being able to have perceptual knowledge that *that's F* is a necessary condition of (or at least a very strong requirement on) having the concept.

Sellars also thought that there were basic observational concepts in this sense. In Sellarsian terms, some concepts require, as part of their content, that the two hurdles be cleared. But I offer a different way of clearing the second hurdle than Sellars does. Given the account that I am defending, this means that for some concepts – the *basic observational* ones – one must already be a responsible steward of one's perceptual dispositions even to count as having the concept. Ought I say this?

Yes. It is reasonable to think that that epistemic responsibility *is* a part of the observational component at least for the concepts that require such a component, for the following reason. A person who shows no signs of discomfort, no attempt to rectify the situation, when confronted with a disposition that begins to diverge from what it ought to be seems to be *on automatic* in a way that a person operating with conceptually contentful exercises is not. It is like when a student says exactly the right thing, and you think, "ah, this student really understands what is going on!", but then you come to realize that the student is just repeating the same line over and over, and has no tendency to alter it in the face of potential objections, and a very limited ability to rephrase it or to see what might be evidence for or against it. Then you think, "ah, this student doesn't really have the concept here. He's just repeating something he heard." It is another manifestation of Ryle's point that there is all the difference in the world between a blind habit, and a *skill*. Exercises of intelligence, such as the having

of a concept, belong in the latter category. A person may seem to demonstrate with her inferential capacities that her words are conceptually contentful and not mere noise, but if the concept is one like *yellow*, for which the observational component is so crucial, then we may well take back our judgment that she has the concept when she shows that her disposition is a mere automatic response that she has no control over and cares not about. Thus I would agree that for such concepts a certain amount of perceptual stewardship is (strongly but defeasibly) required in order to count as having them.

Of course, I have been talking, for simplicity's sake, as though having concepts were an all or nothing thing. But obviously there is such a thing as having a concept more or less than someone else, understanding the concept more or less deeply. Sellars, in comparing the acquisition of concepts (which, for Sellars, is coeval with learning a language) to the learning of a game, says,

...knowing a language is a knowing *how*; it is like knowing how to dance, or how to play bridge. Both the tyro and the champion know how to dance; both the duffer and the Culbertsons know how to play bridge. But what a difference! Similarly, both you and I, as well as the theoretical physicist, can be said to manipulate an axiomatic system; but we are clearly at the duffer end of the spectrum.³⁰⁹

So it may be that someone who fails to exhibit a great deal of epistemic responsibility with regard to some particular perceptual disposition simply shows himself to be at the duffer end of the spectrum -- he *has* the concept, but not very deeply perhaps. He gets the basic idea, but we wouldn't want him to teach college courses on it.

Of course we must keep in mind that with more basic observational concepts -- concepts like *yellow* -- we're generally so *good* at them that it is hard to imagine

someone being *bad* at them and still being good *enough* to count as having the concept at all. It is easy to imagine someone getting the basic idea of something more complicated, like Rawls' veil of ignorance without having a very deep understanding of it. But what would it be like to "*kind of* get the basic idea" of *yellow* without having a very deep understanding of it? It's hard to feel like there's much of a spectrum between duffer and expert when it comes to the concept of *yellow*. But imagine that someone says "that's yellow" not only in response to yellow things, but also to things that look kind of peachy in color. If he thinks that those peachy colored things are also yellow, we might be inclined to say that he gets the idea of yellow *pretty well*, but that it could still use some work. And if he seems to resist any attempts at bringing the disposition into line, or resolutely fails to get the import of his mistakes, simply cannot be brought to see that he is making mistakes, he will definitely seem to be down at the duffer end of the spectrum. But it must be admitted that this has got to be pretty rare. For the vast majority of people, having the concept of *yellow* pretty much guarantees that you've got what it takes to have observational knowledge of yellow.³¹⁰

³⁰⁹ Sellars (1949), p. 151. (p. 311 of the original publication).

³¹⁰ As I have indicated, the observational requirement is defeasible – there can be conditions in which we would attribute a basic observational concept to someone even if they fail to clear the hurdles for perceptual knowledge. We might even be able to attribute a color concept to someone blind from birth, for example, though I can easily imagine wanting to say that such a person does not have the concept *as* deeply as a sighted person. The case of someone who has *recently* been blinded is an interesting one. My inclination is to say that there is a *sense* in which such a person might still retain a part of the perceptual skill required (though defeasibly so) by color concepts, (and so it might still be reasonable to say that she has a color concept quite deeply). For example, if we artificially stimulated the part of the person's brain in such a way that she has a color experience, and she is able to correctly classify it as a *red*

Some sense-data theorists (as well as foundationalists of other stripes) have thought that the special status of simple color and shape concepts is due to the fact that the human organism is naturally equipped to receive color and shape sense data. My view of justification does not involve anything like sense-data, but I do not want to totally deny that the body, *qua* natural organism, can be a part of the explanation for the fact that simple color and shape concepts are basic observational concepts. What I can offer, in place of the sense-data theorist's explanation of the special status of color and shape concepts is this. Having any observational concept requires that one be trained to have the appropriate observational dispositions. A necessary condition of having the concept of *red* is that one be able to respond to red items with tokens of "that's red." And in the early stages of conditioning, the tokens of "that's red" will be little more than noises. But facts about the body (e.g., what wavelengths of light trigger the rods and cones in the eye) can help to explain why it is easier to condition responses to certain stimuli than to others. So for example, it may be that facts about the structure of the human eye can help to explain why it is easier to condition a baby to make a certain noise in the presence of red objects than it is to condition a baby to make a certain noise in the presence of Jackson Pollock paintings. This fact can help to explain why some have thought that simple color and shape concepts had the special status that they were sometimes thought to have. So I can agree that the body *qua* natural organism needn't be wholly divorced from an explanation of why certain concepts are more likely to be basic observational concepts, even across cultures.

experience, this might be reason to think that the recently blinded person has a deeper

Note that perceptual judgments involving basic observational concepts are in some ways like judgments that are said to be *analytic* in the sense of "true by virtue of the meanings of the terms". According to a traditional empiricist line of thinking, a statement like "all squares have four sides" is such that if you understand the meanings of the terms, you can't fail to see that it is true. Similarly, if you're standing in front of a green apple and you have the concept of *green*, (and the conditions of perception are normal, etc.), then you can't fail (or it's pretty unlikely anyway) to see that it's green. Failing to perceptually know that it's green (defeasibly) implies a failure to understand the statement "it's green", just as failing to know that all squares have four sides implies a failure to understand it, according to this traditional account of analyticity.

Certain observational concepts might also be basic in another sense. Concepts such as these like these are typically taught to *everyone*. A child can easily be initiated into the world of concepts without having the concept of *spider*, say, but it would be weird (though certainly not impossible) to run across someone who didn't have the concept of *green*. It might well be part of the practices of the linguistic community to make sure that all children have a certain common set of basic observational concepts. This would be an extremely valuable practice, from an epistemic point of view, since it would make all language users observational experts with regard to a common set of concepts, and this common ground could be used to settle disputes at other levels. Let us call these *communal* concepts. Communal concepts are ones that we should expect almost everyone in the linguistic community to share.

understanding of the concept of the color red than the person blind from birth.

I have been speaking as though the difference between basic observational concepts and non-basic ones, as well as the difference between communal and non-communal concepts, were differences in kind. But really, of course, these are differences in degree. An observational concept F is *more basic* the stronger the reason we have to suspect that a person doesn't have concept F when she fails to perceptually know "that's F". An observational concept is *more communal* the more people in the linguistic community have the concept (as a matter of course, not as an accident). An extremely basic and extremely communal observational concept is the ideal concept to try to employ to settle a dispute because the person you are in disagreement with is very likely to have the concept (since it is very communal) and you are both likely to agree in your perceptual judgments involving the concept (since an observational misapplication of a basic observational concept would mean you probably don't have it). Here's a series of potential perceptual beliefs, each of which is more likely to get agreement than the previous:

"That's a tarantella."

"That's a spider."

"That's a hairy creature with eight appendages."

"There's something that looks like a dark brown blobby shape with thin wavy lines coming out of it."

The last employs concepts that are likely to be much more basic and communal than the concept of *tarantella*. One way of resolving a dispute about whether something in front of you is a tarantella is to first find some observational common

ground. Of course, it is certainly not *impossible* to have a disagreement about a basic and communal observational concept. (The example from the previous chapter where Jones and Smith disagreed about whether the tapestry was sea green or teal might be an example of what this kind of disagreement might look like.) But this is much less likely, since it is expected that almost everyone will have received expert-level observational training with regard to such concepts.

In the end then, I want to agree with certain foundationalists (for instance, sense-data theorists) who held that concepts like *red* and *round* have a special epistemological (perhaps we can even say *foundational*) significance. However, I have a different story about *why* these concepts have that significance. It is a matter of our linguistic upbringing, the training we receive from our linguistic communities, and not a matter of the *nature* of the human organism.³¹¹ However, as I said above, a human being's nature as a certain kind of organism can help to explain why certain observational concepts are easier to learn, and thus can explain why they are more likely to be communal.

This means, of course, that which concepts play this role -- which concepts are basic or communal -- and which concepts are not, is not static. In the future where spiders plague the planet, *spider* might well become a more communal observational concept, such that all children are taught to be experts at recognizing spiders. In that case, the perceptual judgment "that's a spider" might be as safe a common ground for

³¹¹ I say "human organism" to focus on a conception of our nature that would figure in a scientific ("first nature") description of us. See McDowell (1994, lecture IV) on the distinction between first and second natures.

resolving disputes as "that's a dark brown blob with wiggly lines." We might even imagine *spider* becoming a more basic observational concept if, for instance, arachnid science were less developed, or more unstable, or was simply not as reliable for telling spiders as looking at them. For example, suppose in this future spider infested world, the people are not so sure that all spiders have eight legs, or that they all spin webs or even that *only* spiders have eight legs and spin webs, but they sure know a spider when they see it. Perhaps they are at a stage where the question of whether or not all spiders have eight legs or whether or not all spiders spin webs is something that must be established *empirically*, by observing lots of spiders. In that case the observational component to the concept of *spider* would be a vital part of its content, and we can imagine that the concept would be more observationally basic than it is now. (Of course, like all concepts, it still must have *some* inferential connections, if the framework of Sellarsian semantics is on the right track.)

So we have some important distinctions among kinds of concepts:

- **observational concept:** F is an observational concept for S if S is an expert at perceptually judging "that's F", such that when such judgments are made they typically count as perceptual knowledge (or at least perceptually justified). Note that "observational concept" is relative to persons. What may be an observational concept to one person may not be to another. *Being a Seurat painting* may be an observational concept for the art history expert, but not for the man on the street.
- **basic observational concept:** Suppose a person fails to perceptually know "that's F" (in normal circumstances). If this is a strong reason to suspect that the person

does not have the concept *F*, then *F* is a basic observational concept. The stronger that reason is, the more basic the observational concept is. Note that which observational concepts are basic is relative to a particular linguistic community.

- **communal observational concept:** If, because of the regular practices of a particular linguistic community, *F* is an observational concept for practically everyone in that community (thus they are nearly all experts in perceptually recognizing cases of *F-ness*), then *F* is a communal observational concept. The more common it is for people in that linguistic community to have *F* as an observational concept, the more communal *F* is. Note that which observational concepts are communal is relative to a particular linguistic community.

A few examples of the sorts of things that can be perceived

Before saying a little bit about what makes a judgment a perceptual judgment, let me start with a few examples of the sorts of things I can easily imagine being perceptual judgments, though traditional foundationalists or sense-data theorists would never have allowed some of them:

"Ah... Fresh baked bread." -- Said by the person sniffing the air while walking by an open window. While almost all of the cases we've looked at so far have involved visual perception, obviously there can be olfactory judgments too. This case also demonstrates that perceptual judgments are not always formulated as nice simple declarative sentences, though they can generally be translated into them fairly simply.

"This is a 1997 Zinfandel." -- Said by a blindfolded contestant in a "guess the wine" contest. An example of knowledge by taste.

"The B-string on your guitar is flat." -- Knowledge by hearing.

"The movements are awkward. These dancers must be beginners." The expert dancer infers that they are beginners from the directly, perceptually known fact that their movements have a certain awkwardness to them. One can directly see *awkwardness* as much as one can directly see a patch of red. Of course, not everyone will be equally good at picking out awkwardness in dance movements. A veteran dancer or a dance instructor will be better at spotting it than someone who has never in her life seen anyone dance before. Similarly, two people could be standing before the same painting and where one (the art history major) may non-inferentially, perceptually, know that the painting is a Seurat, the other may not be able to perceptually know that it is a Seurat -- perhaps the amateur only comes to that conclusion as the result of inference from things he *does* know perceptually (like that the painting is made of little dots) with the help of other things he has learned about Seurat (like that he painted by using little dots).

John Haugeland provides another good example of the sort of thing that I think can be perceived (non-inferentially, perceptually known), and what he says about it seems to me to be exactly right:

The special case I want to consider is chess, when the game is played in a visible medium -- that is, such that one can *see* positions, threats, moves, and the like. I can, for instance, see you castling, early in the midgame; a little later, I can see your knight simultaneously threatening my queen and rook, in a so-called knight fork; and, before long, I can even see the untenability of my entire king-side defense, and conclude that I might as well resign. We should not try to imagine that these perceptual abilities are all built up out of a handful of "primitive" or "atomic" abilities, such as identifying the individual pieces and squares. I can recognize a knight fork just as "immediately" as I can recognize a knight or a square; and it may not even be possible to define

'untenable king side' in terms of pieces and locations – suggesting that they can *only* be perceived as gestalts.³¹²

Perception of theoretical entities

Let's now look at an example of a possible perceptual judgment, a potential candidate for perceptual knowledge that may be a bit more controversial than the previous ones:

"Hey look everyone! It's an electron!" -- Said by someone (let's call him Ernie) staring into an ionized cloud chamber as one of those little "zips" goes by. To make sure that this is really a case of perceptual knowledge, let us stipulate a few things about Ernie: (A) He knows enough about electrons to at least have the *concept* of an electron. Otherwise he couldn't even be making judgments about electrons at all. (B) He doesn't know very much about how the cloud chamber apparatus works. Otherwise it would be tempting to cast this as a case in which Ernie is actually *inferentially* justified in believing that there is an electron here, on the basis of what he knows about cloud chambers. (C) The scientists who work in the lab have trained Ernie to accurately pick out electrons in such cases, to tell the difference between a spurious zip and a zip that is actually an electron going by, etc. If he didn't have such a disposition it would seem a lucky accident if he actually picked out an electron this time. (D) Ernie has learned to be the custodian of his disposition, and he is now able to maintain its upkeep, correct for errors, etc., on his own. Otherwise it would be the *scientists* and not Ernie himself who we would credit with Ernie's successes; we might

³¹² Haugeland (1996) p. 247.

think of him as a mere reliable responder, like a thermometer, instead of someone worthy of being said to *know* that the electron is there.

Again, my account of perceptual justification does not, by itself, imply that anyone could perceptually know that an electron is present, that is, that (A) through (D) might really obtain. But such cases of knowledge are not ruled out by the account either. And, this cuts off a crucial line of argument that is used to support scientific anti-realism: given a certain philosophical understanding of perception, it is impossible to ever directly see an electron, and thus a belief in electrons must be based on a bunch of observable data and scientific theory which together is compatible with the non-existence of electrons. If we *can* directly observe electrons however, this argument from underdetermination loses its bite.

It will be worth our while to explore the possibility of directly observing electrons a bit further. Seeing why something that sounds initially so absurd is really not so will help us deepen our understanding of the account of perceptual knowledge I am defending.

Objection: Ernie is mixing up cause and effect. He didn't see the *electron*. What he really saw was just the little *zip*, an effect *caused* by the electron.

Response: This is just another way of saying that Ernie's belief is *inferentially* justified (justified by the inference from effect to cause), and so this objection is practically begging the question. But it brings up an interesting issue: given that there are a myriad of different ways of describing what is in front of Ernie, how should we decide what he *really* saw? Should we say that he really saw an electron? Or that

what he really saw was a zip in a cloud chamber? Or perhaps what he really saw was only a light blue line moving from left to right within a semi-transparent rectangle. Or maybe what he really saw was just electromagnetic radiation bouncing off various objects and into his eyes. Someone with a better imagination than mine could undoubtedly think of even more variations. How shall we decide among them?³¹³

Different people can be standing in front of the same thing and yet see different things. Clearly the *belief* that the person forms when standing there ought to help determine which we should say that they *see*. Ernie did not form the belief that there was a zip in the cloud chamber, or that there was a blue line in a rectangle, or that there was electromagnetic radiation in front of him. What he saw, if he saw anything, was an electron. The question we really need to settle is this: is he entitled to believe it, and if so, why?

Objection: Perception cannot be entitling him to believe that there's an electron there, because electrons are simply too small to see!

Response: Mt. Baker is usually too far away to see from my apartment, but on unusually clear days I can see it. Why shouldn't we say the same sort of thing about electrons? In certain circumstances (for example, when the cloud-chamber apparatus is set up) an electron will be visible to the trained eye. Everyone agrees that the blue zip in the cloud chamber is visible, so the question is whether we should say that the zip is the electron. (This is just the question we took up two paragraphs ago.)

³¹³ See Haugeland's (1996) way of answering this question. Much (but perhaps not all) of what he says is there is quite compatible with my perceptual responsibilist account.

I suspect that part of the trouble that philosophers have with the idea of directly observing electrons is that electrons are thought of as theoretical entities *par excellence*. Am I just throwing the theoretical/observable distinction right out the window?

No. Not completely anyway. But it is very much a part of the Sellarsian framework we have been operating within to think of the theoretical/observable distinction as a *methodological* one, a distinction that allows items to migrate from one side of the distinction to the other.³¹⁴ Today's theoreticals may be tomorrow's observables. And what is theoretical (i.e., known only inferentially, with the help of theory) to one person may be observable to another (or to the same person at a different date). This is really no different than the case in which one person directly observes that the painting is a Seurat and the other has to infer that it is a Seurat from observations of the colors and shapes of the paint together with the theory she has picked up in Art History 101. Another way of putting the same point: The properties picked out by observational predicates do not form a natural kind.

Moral perceptual knowledge

Here is another possible object of knowledge, also likely to be quite controversial:

³¹⁴ See Brandom (2000b), p. 96, his comments on Sellars's view: "...one consequence of thinking of observation in this way is that there is no particular line to be drawn between what is in principle observable and what is not.... Thus a properly trained physicist... [can] count as genuinely *observing* those subatomic particles."

"Someone ought to save that child!" --Said by Smith, as he suddenly notices a drowning child, right before leaping in to save it. Normative claims can, I am claiming, be non-inferentially, perceptually known. Someone who disagrees might concede that such a judgment might be non-inferentially *produced* on such an occasion, but still insist that an explanation of Smith's entitlement to believe that the child ought to be saved requires us to reconstruct the judgment *as though* it had been the conclusion of an inference. (E.g., "That child is drowning. Drowning children ought to be saved. Therefore, someone ought to save that child!") But this reconstruction (which makes the belief non-inferentially produced but inferentially justified) may not always be a faithful explanation of why Smith's belief is justified. Some evidence that the reconstructive explanation is not the right one might come from hearing what Smith himself might say in response to a justificatory challenge:

Challenger: "Wait a minute Smith! What makes you think someone ought to save that child? Is it because you think that all drowning children ought to be saved?"

Smith: "Look, I'm not thinking about other kids right now. I'm just -- I mean, *look* at that child! How can you look at it and not see that it's got to be saved?!"

The man has no principles on hand about saving children (or he doesn't find them particularly relevant to whether he should save *this* child right *now*), but instead just gestures toward the child in hopes that *we'll* have the same response to the drowning child that he did, that our justificatory challenge will be answered that way. His response seems to indicate that his judgment is justified, not because he has some principles in his head somewhere to back it up, but because he's *good* at making

judgments like that.³¹⁵ He knows a child that ought to be saved when he sees one. His judgments of that sort are likely to get things right because he is responsible in maintaining and improving those dispositions, etc., etc..

Of course, a judgment like this doesn't always have to be non-inferentially perceptually justified. It could have turned out that the inferential reconstruction *was* the best explanation of the man's entitlement -- especially if he is *not* always very good at recognizing a kid that ought to be saved when he sees one. Sometimes particular moral judgments may be justified in virtue of having moral principles to back them up sitting in one's head. But other times it may be just the reverse: moral principles may be justified as making the best sense of one's moral judgments in particular cases, in something like the way that generalizations are thought to be inductively supported by their instances.³¹⁶

A person will tend to have a lot of the same moral sensitivity and sensibilities as the community he was brought up in. The primary import of having moral sensibilities for our purposes is that it means that one will have a number of perceptual dispositions, dispositions to token moral judgments in response to certain events in the immediate environment.³¹⁷ And the content of moral judgments, if Sellarsian conceptual role semantics is on the right track, will be partly determined by the

³¹⁵ Compare Sellars (1971) lecture II, §37 p. 324, where he says that the positive justificatory status of perceptual beliefs "...can be traced to the fact that Jones has learned how to use the relevant words in perceptual situations."

³¹⁶ Elijah Milgram makes a case for this in his book *Practical Induction* (1997).

³¹⁷ That I have been much influenced by the ethical writings of David Wiggins and especially John McDowell should be obvious. See Wiggins' (1998) *Needs, Values,*

language-exit transitions - the connection of such statements to *action*. Part of what it is to believe "I ought to jump in and save that child right now" is to be disposed, *ceteris paribus*, to jump in and save it. As Sellars says, "Espousal of principles is reflected in uniformities of performance"³¹⁸.

Obviously if one can have genuine perceptual knowledge of some moral claim, then moral realism is true, since knowledge implies truth. But I do not mean to be arguing that perceptual responsibilism implies that moral realism is true.³¹⁹ Rather, it is simply *compatible* with moral realism. But that is still something of importance, for moral anti-realisms are often partly motivated by a picture of perception that seems to have no room for genuine perceptual moral knowledge. The anti-realist argument in a nutshell would go: "If there were genuine moral properties that were really "in the world", then we would be able to *see* them, wouldn't we? But it is impossible to *see* moral properties, to literally *see* the moral wrongness of an act. Thus there cannot really be moral properties in the world. Instead, we simply "spread" our affections on the world, "creating" value (or "value") in an intrinsically valueless world." Such arguments can be cut off at the knees if a theory of perception were defended in which genuine moral perceptual judgments were possible. (Notice that this argument is

Truth (3rd ed.) and the essays in part II of McDowell's (1998a) *Mind, Value, and Reality*.

³¹⁸ Sellars (1962), p. 216.

³¹⁹ I *do* happen to think that perceptual moral knowledge *is* possible and happens along the lines of the picture sketched in the preceding paragraphs. But to establish that we would have to take a more hefty detour into ethics. In any case what I would have to say on such a detour is not far from what McDowell already says in, e.g., the essays collected in his (1998a) *Mind, Value, and Reality*.

parallel to a certain argument for anti-realism about theoretical entities I mentioned in the previous section.)

Before ending this chapter, and now that we have a few examples (some controversial, some less so) of perceptual judgments -- the sorts of things that are candidates for perceptual knowledge -- let me say something about what it is that distinguishes perceptual judgments from others. First, we will make the following requirement of a genuine perceptual judgment: a necessary condition of one's having tokened a perceptual judgment is that one's sensory equipment (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin, sense of balance, etc.) -- or at least some of it -- was in proper working order at the time of the tokening. If the judgment did not rely on one's senses in some way, we would obviously not be inclined to call it a perceptual judgment. I am not, however, committing myself to any traditional categorization of the sense modalities. Perhaps there are five. Perhaps ten. It doesn't matter. The crucial point is that your body is in some way acted upon by its environment and that this interaction is somehow involved in the production of the judgment in question.

In the ideal case, where nothing goes wrong, we can tell a perceptual judgment because (a) it is (non-inferentially) caused by what it is about (e.g., a green apple causes the tokening of "that's a green apple"), and (b) the causal production involves one's sensory equipment. In the case of non-veridical perceptual judgments (for we will often still want to count as perceptual those judgments due to hallucinations or misperception) we can say that they count as perceptual in case they *would* be caused

by what they're about (with the help of one's sensory equipment) if they *were* true.

The above should be enough to get the basic idea across of what is meant by a
'perceptual judgment'.

Chapter Five: The Deontological Conception of Justification and the Internalism Externalism Debate

I've been saying since the very beginning that epistemic justification is a normative notion. But in fact there are two different ways in which someone might conceive of the normativity involved in epistemic justification.³²⁰ One of these conceptions (the *deontological* conception) seems to support the epistemological doctrine of *internalism*. The other (the *evaluative* conception) seems to support *externalism*. Alston and others have argued against the deontological conception.³²¹ I, however, think that justification does involve a deontological sort of normativity, so I will spend some time in this section trying to answer some of these objections. But in the process we will be able to sort out some larger confusions and show, for example, that there is nothing incompatible about defending the deontological conception (*sans* certain misunderstandings of it) while being an externalist. And in fact, what should come as no surprise by this point, that's just the sort of view that perceptual responsibilism is. As we will see, one of these confusions (to give away one of the punch lines of this section) is the idea that epistemic justification (if it is a normative notion at all) must be understood as involving either the deontological or evaluative conceptions, but not both. For in fact, I think that a good way of understanding Sellars's two hurdles is that the first is meant to satisfy the evaluative dimension of

³²⁰ See Alston (1985).

³²¹ See Alston (1985), (1988b), Bonjour (forthcoming) "The Indispensability of Internalism", Feldman and Conee (2001), Schmitt (2001).

epistemic normativity, while the second is meant to satisfy the deontological dimension of epistemic normativity. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Here's a rough map of what I propose to do in this chapter. First we need to get clear on the terms of the debate: deontological conception, evaluative conception, internalism, and externalism. Then I'll explain how the deontological conception is thought to motivate internalism. Next I'll discuss and respond to the two major objections to the deontological conception. Then I'll present some cases designed to show that a purely evaluative conception of justification is not satisfactory either. My intention is to make plausible a *dual-conception* of the epistemic normativity involved in justification. Along the way we'll sort out other confusions and make it clear where perceptual responsibilism sits in these debates.

By *internalism* I shall mean the view that all of the conditions on epistemic justification are internal to the cognitive system of the person whose belief it is, in the sense that she could, at least in principle, become aware, by introspection or something similar (say, the skillful deployment by someone else of the Socratic method), of what justifies the belief (Alston calls this the *epistemizer* of the belief). Feldman and Conee call this *access internalism* and distinguish it from their own preferred version, *mentalist internalism*.³²² Their version is motivated by attempts to avoid defects in the original. Although I might agree with some of their worries, I want to stick with the original, unmodified (access) internalism, since my task here is not to defend internalism but to examine a certain central motivation for it. By *externalism*, I shall

³²² Feldman and Conee, (2001).

mean the view that there are at least some justificatory conditions that the person needn't have any access to.

Now let's look the two different conceptions of the normativity at stake in epistemic justification. We'll start with the evaluative conception of justification.

Sometimes a normative judgment will reflect an interest in whether some good state of affairs obtains rather than in praising (or blaming) the person who brought it about. This kind of normative judgment involves evaluative normativity; it is focused on whether or not a good state of affairs obtains. Examples:

- "It's good that you're safe," said by a parent to a child coming home past curfew.
- "It's good that John didn't cheat on his taxes (even if it is only because he was being audited and didn't want to go to jail.)"
- "It is bad that the Titanic sunk."
- "It is good to have happiness in one's life."
- "Lisa is in good health."

If epistemic justification is understood as a normative notion in the evaluative sense, then being epistemically justified is a matter of being in some epistemically good state. As Alston puts it, to be justified in believing that p on this conception is for it to be the case that believing that p "is a good thing from the epistemic point of view."³²³

Deontological normativity, by contrast, focuses on the blameworthiness or praiseworthiness of a person or her behavior, instead of focusing on whether or not some state of affairs obtains. A person may be praiseworthy even if she fails to bring

about the desired outcome, and she may be blameworthy even if she succeeds.

Deontological normativity, in other words, concerns whether a person's behavior is *norm-governed* in the right way. Examples of deontological normative assessments:

- "Timmy was bad for coming home after curfew (even if nothing bad, in the evaluative sense, happened)"
- "John was brave (even if his actions had no effect on our attempt to win the battle)"
- "Frank was being cruel to that child (even if the child didn't realize she was being teased)"
- "Mary was being honest"
- "Samantha was being dishonest"
- "Uric was humble."

(Note: in order for these to be understood as deontological normative judgments, they must not occur in a context that would imply that the person is not really being guided by the appropriate norm. E.g., "Mary was honest, but that's only because she's worried someone will catch her if she lies and that wouldn't look good to the people she's hoping will elect her mayor." In that case it is clear that her behavior was *not* guided by the appropriate norm of honesty, but rather from some other, perhaps not so laudable rule, like "do you what you have to do to get elected.")

If epistemic justification involves deontological normativity then in saying that Jones is justified in believing that *p*, we are implying that Jones himself, in believing that *p*, is epistemically praiseworthy. He has fulfilled his epistemic duties, obligations,

³²³ Alston (1985), p.97.

or responsibilities. It is to give Jones credit for believing as he ought to. His believing so involves some sort of sensitivity to epistemic norms.

The point of Sellars's second hurdle is to accommodate the intuition that justification has a deontological component. Saying that someone's belief is not just true but that he or she *knows* it, is not just to say that the person just *happens* to be in a good, desirable state (e.g., having a reliable perceptual disposition) -- that would be to treat a knowledge attribution as a merely an *evaluative* judgment. Rather, it is also to give the person *credit* for being in that state; to *praise* them for having been guided by the appropriate epistemic norms. It is to say that a person's epistemic behavior doesn't just *happen* to conform to the appropriate epistemic norms but that this behavior is in some way informed or guided by a sensitivity to the norm.

Now of course the notions of *responsibility* and *duty* are deeply connected to the sort of normativity at play in a deontological normative judgment. Thus it is not uncommon to hear internalists invested in a deontological conception of justification saying that being epistemically justified is a matter of being epistemically responsible with respect to the holding of one's beliefs. Now as someone who shares with the internalist (or at least many of the internalists) the intuition that epistemic facts involve deontological normativity, I generally don't think it is too far off the track to talk of justification in terms of duty or responsibility, *so long as* these notions are not cashed out in overly simplistic or narrow ways.

For example, we must keep in mind that although terms like *duty*, *responsibility*, *obligation*, and the like are also used by ethicists, it is not being claimed

that the epistemic justification involves ethical duties or responsibilities or is a matter of being sensitive to ethical norms.

An example of this kind of mistake is made by Feldman and Conee.³²⁴ In a recent article, they try to defend internalism but to separate it from what they understand as the deontological conception of justification. At one point in the article while considering several different forms that the deontological conception might take, they suppose that this conception might understand justified belief as belief to which one has fulfilled all of one's obligations, so that one is blameless in holding the belief. Under the supposition that for the deontological conception, justified belief is blameless belief, they then argue that the conception must be mistaken because some justified beliefs are not blameless: "Someone who, for barely adequate epistemic reasons, accepts that a friend has been malicious is epistemically justified in that belief. But such a person may be blameworthy for having insufficient trust in the friend."³²⁵

Setting aside the perhaps too simplistic identification of justified belief with blameless belief³²⁶, I believe the argument betrays a misunderstanding about the nature of the sort of obligation in question. They seem to think that the sort of obligations the

³²⁴ Feldman and Conee (2001).

³²⁵ Feldman and Conee (2001) p. 240

³²⁶ There is an important difference between being free from blame and being deserving of praise. McDowell (1994, 8) complains that if the extra-conceptual given can only *cause* our beliefs, then it is unsatisfactory because "it is one thing to be exempt from blame, on the ground that the position we find ourselves in can be traced ultimately to brute [causal] force; it is quite another to have a justification. In effect, the idea of the Given offers exculpations where we wanted justifications." I think

fulfillment of which would make a difference to the justificatory status of one's beliefs needn't be restricted to *epistemic* obligations. The duty that one might have to trust one's friends is not an *epistemic* duty; it is more likely to be classified as a *moral* duty. Thus the example that Feldman and Connee present merely demonstrates a point that an epistemologist invested in the deontological conception need not dispute: that being *morally* blameworthy for failing to uphold one's *moral* obligations in no way implies that one's beliefs are *epistemically* unjustified. A person who takes epistemology to be a normative affair -- in particular, takes it to involve deontological normative judgments, judgments of the sort very much connected to notions of obligation, responsibility, and blame -- need not think that epistemology must therefore be just a subset of ethics. There are moral norms and then there are epistemic norms and it is quite plausible to think that they are distinct, that a bit of behavior might satisfy one but not the other. If epistemic justification is to be glossed as blameless belief, it must be understood as *epistemically* blameless belief, not *morally* blameless belief.

From deontology to internalism

For someone who has accepted that justification involves deontological normativity, the thought that motivates internalism is this: How can it be right to praise *Jones* for being in some good epistemic state when he has no idea that he's even in that state? If there's no good answer then we're stuck with:

R1: S is not praiseworthy for being in some positive epistemic state unless S is aware that she is in that state

McDowell would accept the deontological notion of justification, but he certainly does not equate justification with blameless belief.

If justification is a matter of being praiseworthy for being in some epistemically good state, and R1 is true, then we get internalism: you can't be justified unless you're aware of the justifying state. The way to undermine R1 while maintaining that justification involves a deontological dimension is to provide an answer to the above question and show how it can be that Jones is praiseworthy for being in some good epistemic state (for example, having a reliable perceptual disposition) even if he has no idea that he is in that state.

But that is precisely what I have tried to do – at least with regard to perceptual belief -- in developing perceptual responsibilism. Getting a grip on the idea of someone who engages in all the stewardship behaviors I have been discussing – someone who gets the "something ain't right" feeling in the face of disposition collision, and who has the right responses in those situations, correcting, improving, etc. – can help us to get a grip on the idea that it might be perfectly appropriate to say that Jones is praiseworthy for fulfilling his epistemic responsibilities even if he does not know that he does these things. Another example was the person who has praiseworthy driving skills without realizing that she has those skills. Yet another case might be when Huck Finn decides to help Jim to escape. Huck is not aware that he is doing the right thing (in fact, he thinks that it is the wrong thing), but neither is it a random accident that he does what he does; he is clearly sensitive to the appropriate norm, even if he does not know which norm he is supposed to be sensitive to.

I think when the question is asked, "How can Jones be praiseworthy when he has no idea about it?", the negative answer ("he can't, that's impossible") seems

plausible perhaps partly because the question puts us in mind of a situation in which Jones not only doesn't know about the situation he is putatively laudable for, but in which he is radically disconnected from it; a situation where he wasn't really involved in bringing that good state about (or maintaining it), where it looks, from the perspective of Jones and the sorts of activities *he* is engaged in, as though it is a total *accident* that he is in that good state. But once we see that Jones does not just *happen* to be in some epistemically positive state (a positive state like having a relatively reliable perceptual disposition), but rather, he engages in all sorts of behaviors that make it likely that he maintain or improve upon that state, then we see that it is no accident that he is in that good state. And the reason that it is no accident is not because nature (*first* nature, I mean) has guaranteed his reliability, or because it was on purpose, or because of anyone else, but because of Jones himself. He gets the credit for it. He is praiseworthy. If perceptual responsibilism, incorporating both deontological and evaluative elements, is correct, he is epistemically justified.

Objections to the deontological conception of justification

Now we will look at two substantial objections to the deontological conception of justification.

The first objection, raised by Alston (1985) is the problem of doxastic voluntarism. It can be put like this:

1. "It is...obvious... that responsibility, obligation, and their kindred attach to doing A only if the agent has an effective choice between doing and not doing A. If I would still have done A whatever I willed, chose, or preferred, I can

hardly be blamed for doing it."³²⁷ "It is... obvious that it makes no sense to speak of S's being permitted or forbidden to do A if S lacks an effective choice as to whether to do A."³²⁸

2. But belief is rarely if ever under one's direct control. I cannot believe what I want at will. For example: "Can you, at this moment, start to believe that the United States is still a colony of Great Britain, just by deciding to do so? ...Can you switch propositional attitudes toward that proposition just by deciding to do so? It seems clear to me that I have no such power. ... I very much doubt that any human beings are endowed with the power of taking on propositional attitudes at will."³²⁹
3. Therefore, we cannot use concepts of responsibility, duty, and the like, in connection with believing, and so the deontological conception of justification must be mistaken.

Let us take the first premise first. The idea that Alston expresses in what I have quoted there may be called the *voluntarist notion of responsibility*. The idea is that one can only be responsible for things that one can choose to do or not do. If, for example, one is unable to refrain from doing A, then one cannot be held responsible for doing A.

³²⁷ Alston (1988b), p.123.

³²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 118.

³²⁹ Alston (1988b), p. 122.

But we have already seen (in chapter three) reasons to reject the voluntarist notion of responsibility.³³⁰ We saw there the example of the man who is appropriately held responsible for the fact that he forgot his wedding anniversary, despite the fact that neither *forgetting* nor *remembering* are voluntary, intentional actions in any straightforward sense. Another case that shows that what one is responsible for is not necessarily tied to what one can and cannot do is that when I sign a year long lease I become responsible for paying the rent, even if I lose my job and am no longer able to do so. Another subset of cases involves the emotions. It may be that I can't help but fly into a rage when someone insults my clothing. Yet it still makes sense to hold me responsible for getting so angry.³³¹ The separation of freedom and responsibility leaves open the possibility that one may be held responsible for one's beliefs even if one does not have any control over them. We will return to this issue after looking at the second objection to the deontological conception.

Even if we leave untouched the voluntarist notion of responsibility in the first premise, Alston himself considers ways in which those committed to the deontological conception might expand the notion of *control* to get around the problem of doxastic

³³⁰ Again, this is something Angie Smith argues for in her dissertation (Harvard University, 2000) in which she argues for a rejection of the voluntarist notion of responsibility. What Alston finds too obvious to argue for, others are finding to be false. Another is David Owens: "I agree with internalists that talk of justification or rationality is in place only where we are willing to impute responsibility... I diverge from Enlightenment rationalism in rejecting the idea that such responsibility requires control." (Owens, 2000, p. 5)

³³¹ A similar example comes from Sellars (1969, section II), where considers the norm "One ought to feel sympathy for bereaved people." He considers this to be an ought-to-be rule (in spite of appearances), and notes that *feeling sympathy* is clearly not an action, something that can be done on command.

voluntarism. One might, for example, agree that no one has *direct* control over whether to believe that *p* or not. This seems especially true in the case of perceptual beliefs. But the deontologist might instead require a sort of long-range influence over our belief forming practices. Alston lists such activities as,

training myself to be more critical of gossip, instilling in myself a stronger disposition to reflect carefully before making a judgment on highly controversial matters, talking myself into being less (more) subservient to authority, and practicing greater sensitivity to the condition of other people. It is within my power to do things like this or not, and when I do them with sufficient assiduity I make some difference to my propositional attitude tendencies, and thus indirectly to the formation of such attitudes.³³²

Some of the sorts of behaviors perceptual responsibilism requires of the person who is an epistemically responsible steward of her perceptual dispositions might be just the sorts of behaviors that Alston has in mind that would effect long-range, indirect influence over one's belief-forming practices. Thus perceptual responsibilism might be a view of the sort that Alston would think does not fall to the problems of doxastic voluntarism. However, I must stress that I do not mean to save perceptual responsibilism from the doxastic voluntarist objection by conceiving of all the behaviors of the epistemically responsible person that have an effect on her belief-forming (and maintaining) practices as *voluntary*. Certainly not. Most of what the epistemically responsible person does in keeping her dispositions in good shape are *not* intentional actions in any obvious sense, but happen as a matter of course. I have been repeatedly stressing, however, that even if these behaviors are undertaken as a matter of course, as opposed to being intentional, this does not make them blind habits. My way of avoiding the doxastic voluntarist objection is not by focusing on higher-

level activities that are more likely to be under one's control than whether to believe that *p* or that *not-p*. Rather, I avoid that objection by rejecting the voluntarist notion of responsibility. The account that I have been developing, of implicit sensitivity to epistemic norms, is meant to render intelligible the idea that someone can be responsible for states of affairs (for example, the having of certain perceptual dispositions) that he did not *choose* to bring about (and perhaps were not even the sorts of things that he *could have* chosen to bring about or not bring about).

Let us now turn to the objections that purport to bring down the deontological conception even if it escapes the doxastic voluntarist objection. Frederick Schmitt,³³³ Laurence BonJour,³³⁴ and William Alston³³⁵ each have a version of a certain sort of objection to the idea that being epistemically justified is being epistemically responsible in one's belief practices.³³⁶ The objection seeks to show that it is possible to be epistemically responsible without being epistemically justified. This objection would of course directly bear on my own perceptual responsiblist account.

Schmitt's version involves a case in which we have a person (let's call him Roger) who believes in the doctrine of the holy trinity. After a long process of difficult philosophical reflection, Roger comes to see that the doctrine is not only totally unsupported by the rest of his beliefs but in fact is logically contradictory. He

³³² Alston (1988b), p. 138.

³³³ Schmitt (2001).

³³⁴ See Laurence BonJour, "The Indispensability of Internalism", forthcoming in *Philosophical Topics*.

³³⁵ Alston (1985), pp.95-96.

³³⁶ Feldman and Connee (2001) also launch a version of this objection. (See p. 240.) It falls prey to the same considerations I raise against Schmitt, BonJour, and Alston.

realizes that he holds the belief not because he has good reasons to believe it, but as the result of the religious indoctrination he received as he was growing up. Thus he comes to the conclusion that he ought to reject the doctrine of the holy trinity. The problem is, try as he might, he just can't shake it. No matter what he tries to do to rid himself of the belief, he still has it. We may even suppose that when good reasons fail to sway him, he even tries radical conversion methods – "brainwashing" techniques, shock therapy and the like. But to no avail. However, he has been an epistemically responsible agent: he has done all that he could to make sure that his beliefs were supported by good evidence. And yet, despite having been epistemically responsible, Roger's belief in the holy trinity remains, and is clearly unjustified.

BonJour's version involves a case of what he calls *epistemic poverty*:

It is certainly possible that the epistemic situation of some person or group of people, the kinds of evidence and cognitive tools and methods of inquiry available to them, might be so dire or impoverished as to make it difficult or impossible to come up with strong evidence or good reasons for beliefs about many important matters. In such a situation, it is far from clear that the people who accept beliefs on less than adequate evidence or reasons or perhaps even on none at all, while still doing the best that they can under the circumstances, are guilty of any breach of their epistemic duty or can be properly described as epistemically blameworthy or irresponsible.

Yet, says BonJour,

Such a person may well be making the best of a bad epistemic situation and may be entirely epistemically unblameworthy in doing so, but the basis upon which such beliefs are accepted still fails to make it likely to any serious degree that they are true and so does not amount to epistemic justification.

Again we have a case in which someone is purportedly epistemically responsible yet unjustified. Thus being epistemically justified cannot simply amount to the fulfillment of epistemic responsibility.

Alston provides several cases, each along similar lines as the previous two. In one, a person belongs in an isolated culture in which "everyone unhesitatingly accepts the traditions of the tribe as authoritative."³³⁷ If I was in such a culture, says Alston, then if

...I have never encountered anything that seems to cast doubt on the traditions and have never thought to question them, I can hardly be blamed for taking them to be authoritative. There is nothing I could reasonably be expected to do that would alter that belief-forming tendency. ...yet the fact that it is the tradition of the tribe that *p* may be poor reason for believing that *p*.³³⁸

Thus blameless belief is not justified belief. Another case involves

...a college student who just doesn't have what it takes to follow abstract philosophical reasoning, or exposition for that matter. Having just read Book IV of Locke's *Essay*, he believes that it is Locke's view that everything is a matter of opinion, that one person's opinion is just as good as another's, and that what is true for me may not be true for you. ...There is nothing that he could and should have done such that had he done so, he would have gotten this straight. He is simply incapable of appreciating the distinction between "One's knowledge is restricted to one's own ideas" and "Everything is a matter of opinion." ...[S]urely there can be such cases... And yet we would hardly wish to say that the student is justified in believing what he does about Locke.³³⁹

Again, the person is blameless but not justified. The upshot, according to Alston, is that the deontological conception of justification is fundamentally flawed because,

...we may have done the best we can, or at least the best that could be reasonably expected of us, and still be in a very poor epistemic position in believing that *p*; we could, blamelessly, be believing that *p* for outrageously bad reasons.

Before getting to what I think is the main problem with these cases, let me set aside some other problems. With Schmitt's case, one might worry, for example, about how plausible it really is that a person could fully explicitly believe (with no self-deception involved) that there is no good reason to believe that *p*, that there are many

³³⁷ Alston (1985), p. 95.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 95-96.

good reasons to believe not-p, and yet still believe that p. With the case of Bonjour's epistemically impoverished person, the coherence of the case might depend upon just how epistemically impoverished the people are supposed to be. He suggests that they might accept beliefs "on less than adequate evidence or reasons or perhaps even on none at all." But if the case were so extreme as to suppose that these persons could not see any inferential connections between their beliefs, this might give us some reason to worry whether, given the framework of Sellarsian semantics set out in chapter two, these persons would be intelligible as persons with beliefs at all. But set these worries aside for the time being.

The problem worth pointing out for our purposes is that all three of these authors assume that you can always fulfill your responsibilities simply by trying your hardest and doing the best you can; that when it comes to being responsible (at least *epistemically* responsible) there's no room for the notion that sometimes your best just isn't good enough. What that assumption implies is that one can have a responsibility to do x and can completely and adequately fulfill this responsibility without ever having done x; doing one's best in *trying* to do x will always be sufficient for fulfilling this responsibility. This implies, of course, that the less able you are to do x, the easier it will be to do your best in trying to do x, and hence the easier it will be to fulfill your responsibility to do x. Persons who are by their very nature incorrigibly incompetent might well be the most responsible since doing their best requires doing so little.

But it seems to me that the extent to which one is responsible is not something that is always graded on *effort*. Rather, sometimes we have a responsibility to merely

do our best to do x, and other times our responsibility is not just to *try* but to actually *do* x. Ought does not always imply can. There are lots of good examples of this. Contractual obligations are one sort. As I mentioned above, when I sign a lease I become responsible for paying the rent, even if I lose my job and am no longer able to do so. Other examples come from the run-of-the-mill moral norms that might be represented as categorical imperatives in the Ten Commandments. The responsibility that each of us has not to commit adultery applies equally to the incorrigible philanderer.

Hilary Kornblith, an externalist very much interested in the tight connection between justification and responsibility, appreciates such cases. But he also has the intuition that while responsibility may outrun the ability to fulfill it in individual cases, there is something implausible about the idea that the responsibilities that humans have would be completely disconnected and independent from the sorts of capacities and abilities that humans have in general.³⁴⁰ I admit having some sympathy with such a view. Of course it must be kept in mind that to concede that in many cases the limitations on the abilities and capacities that human beings have in general (as opposed to the limitations had by an individual person) might set limits on the sort of responsibilities we might have is not thereby to agree that what responsibilities we have is determined by or deducible from or reducible to non-normative facts about the abilities and capacities that humans have or lack. However we might, for instance run into a case in which (a) we have a strong intuition that humans have a responsibility to

do x, but (b) we get strong empirical evidence that no human could ever do x. In such a case we will have to figure out whether it makes more sense to say that our strong intuition that people have this responsibility is in fact mistaken, or to say instead that our limitations prevent any of us from fulfilling this responsibility that we nevertheless have. Christopher Cherniak provides a case of this sort in his book *Minimal Rationality*.³⁴¹ Certain traditional epistemologists have had a strong intuition that we have a responsibility to make sure that our beliefs form a logically consistent set. Yet Cherniak demonstrated that being able to determine if one's beliefs form a logically consistent set is something that is way out of the ballpark when it comes to human abilities and capacities. So should we say that we don't have this responsibility or that we are all irresponsible? In this particular case I agree with Cherniak: all things considered it is best to take the former route.

Schmitt's case, for example, the case of Roger who cannot give up belief in the doctrine of the holy trinity, does not present us with the same kind of difficulty as Cherniak's case. What Roger seems unable to do is not something that human beings in general are unable to do. Thus I see no special impediment to saying that we have an epistemic responsibility to reject a belief that we see to be contradictory and for which we see no good reasons to think is true and many good reasons to think is false. Roger's indoctrination is too strong for him reject the beliefs he sees to be inconsistent and poorly supported, but doing so is his (and our) responsibility nonetheless. He does

³⁴⁰ "Epistemic Obligation and the Possibility of Internalism", Hilary Kornblith (2001b), pp. 231-248.

³⁴¹ Cherniak (1986)

not fulfill his responsibility to reject the doctrine of the holy trinity merely by trying his best.

Now look at Bonjour's epistemic poverty case. The beliefs of the epistemically impoverished person are unjustified according to Bonjour because "... the basis upon which such beliefs are accepted still fails to make it likely to any serious degree that they are true and so does not amount to epistemic justification."³⁴² In other words, the justificational failure is due to the fact that the beliefs were not produced by a reliable belief forming process. The point I want to make here is that even if justification *were* to require reliably produced belief, it might be that one's epistemic responsibility is to have reliably produced belief, in which case there is not the gap that Bonjour would have us think there must be between responsibility and justification. This, of course, would mean that epistemic poverty would prevent the persons in that condition from fulfilling their responsibilities. But this is not an especially startling result once we've separated fulfilling one's responsibilities from doing one's best.

Alston's case of the student, who cannot understand Locke no matter how hard he tries, is similar to Schmitt's case of Roger who cannot shake his belief in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Understanding Locke's *Essay* does not require super-human abilities. There is no obstacle, generally speaking, to a person's being able to understand Locke's *Essay*, if one tries hard enough. Thus I see nothing that would prevent us from claiming that the student has an epistemic responsibility with regard to

³⁴² "The Indispensability of Internalism", section II.

understanding what he reads, even if doing his best is not sufficient to fulfill this responsibility.

Alston's other case involved a person from a primitive culture in which the traditions of the culture were taken as absolutely authoritative. The person, Alston claimed, would be blameless for believing something on the basis that it was one of these traditions, but this might nevertheless be a very poor reason for believing it. Here I must confess that I simply don't share Alston's intuition that this would be a poor reason for believing something. After all, Alston stipulated that the person hasn't seen any reason to think the traditions (let us think of these "traditions" as being a set of beliefs) false. For instance, suppose one of the traditions of the culture is that it never rains while the chief is speaking, and it never yet has – or at least not to the knowledge of Theo, a member of the tribe who believes this because it is one of the traditions. But if Theo has never seen an instance of rain during the chief's speech, then I should think that it is quite reasonable for him to believe as his culture does. However, if it *does* rain while the chief is speaking, and Theo witnesses this, then he will be in the position of either having to deny the evidence of his senses, or jettison the traditionally held belief. Now our intuition here is probably that epistemic responsibility would require him to jettison the traditionally held belief. If it turns out that Theo's cultural upbringing (his "indoctrination") is too strong for him to do that, I do not see that as being a reason to think that it is not his epistemic responsibility nonetheless. That would simply make Theo's case like the case of Roger, above, who

had a responsibility to reject the doctrine of the Holy Trinity even though his indoctrination was too powerful for him to be able to fulfill this responsibility.

I have been arguing that these cases fail because they all assume that doing one's best is always sufficient for doing one's duty (or fulfilling one's responsibilities), whereas I have claimed that that need not be the case. But here is another way of characterizing the mistake that these arguments against the deontological conception have in common. They each purport to present a case in which the deontological requirements are fulfilled (e.g., the person is blameless, or has fulfilled their responsibilities, etc.) and yet where the person has failed to reach some epistemically good state of affairs (like having supporting reasons which make the beliefs they support objectively likely to be true, or, in general, having reliable belief-forming practices, etc.). In other words, these philosophers find the deontological conception lacking because deontological norms can be satisfied without the evaluative norms being satisfied. This might well be seen as question begging by those who think that justification is a purely deontological notion.

But I think the real fault is the assumption that the deontological and evaluative norms are to be *separated*; that an account of epistemic justification must hold that justification either involves deontological or evaluative normativity, but not both. For the cases above all assume that if justification involves the satisfaction of deontological norms, then it will not necessarily also involve the satisfaction of evaluative norms. That is clearly not so. Indeed, we can see Sellars's first and second hurdles as involving the satisfaction of evaluative and deontological norms

respectively. It is a mistake to think that only one of these will do. Part of my strategy in the previous few paragraphs has been to marry them by suggesting that the satisfaction of the deontological norms might sometimes imply the satisfaction of the evaluative ones. If, for example, Jones is to be congratulated only if he manages to get his perceptual disposition to be sufficiently reliable, then the deontological normativity in play here would require more than just that he do his best. The point of the first hurdle is that the disposition in fact be reliable.

Too wide a separation can lead to mistakes on either side. If one recognizes only a deontological normativity (separated from the evaluative dimension), then one will have difficulty seeing the wrongness of a kleptomaniac's thievery; for on the assumption that the kleptomaniac is blameless, what dimension of criticism is left? On the other hand, if one recognizes only evaluative normativity, then one will have a difficulty seeing the wrongness in the incompetent would-be-thief who has never stolen anything (but wants to very badly); for given that no stealing has occurred, what dimension of criticism is left? Obviously, I overstate the cases here, exaggerating the differences between the two sides and pretending that no moves are open to either to accommodate the other side's points. But the point here is just to motivate the idea that each side has insights that need to be accommodated, and thus that a joint deontological-evaluative program (i.e., a *two-hurdle* program) is likely to be most fruitful. Also, we should not think of these two kinds of normativity as *separate but equally required* in a theory of epistemic justification. A theory of justification cannot simply require (a) that the justified person satisfies her epistemic responsibilities, and

then require also, as an independent fact, (b) that she happens to be in some epistemically good state. Rather, the two hurdles are connected. Clearing the second hurdle is supposed to be what it is in virtue of which you are (normatively) responsible for your continuing to clear the first hurdle (thus being in the epistemically good state).

I think that the conclusion to be drawn from the cases presented by Alston, Bonjour, and Schmitt is that the deontological conception of justification should not be separated from the evaluative conception. A deontological account of epistemic justification will not be satisfactory which conceives of the deontological norms as the sort that can be satisfied even when the epistemically good state that they are directed toward is not reached (i.e., that a person can fulfill an epistemic duty to achieve x without ever achieving x.) These cases demonstrate that the deontological norms must be understood in such a way that their fulfillment brings with it the attainment of the good epistemic state of affairs, the fulfillment of the evaluative norms. I agree that a purely deontological conception would not be satisfactory. But the conclusion that these authors draw is that there need be *no* deontological dimension to epistemic justification, and thus that a purely evaluative conception of epistemic normativity will suffice. So now let me turn to such a conception.

The evaluative conception of justification

On this conception, being epistemically justified in believing something is a matter of being in some epistemically good state. As Alston puts it (using 'J_e' to stand for "justified according to the evaluative conception of justification"),

S is J_e in believing that p iff S's believing that p , as S does, is a good thing from the epistemic point of view.³⁴³

Alston identifies the "epistemic point of view" as "defined by the aim of maximizing truth and minimizing falsity."³⁴⁴

One of the seeming advantages of the (purely) evaluative conception of justification (or at least, *some* will see it as an advantage) is that it makes it easier to see how epistemic justification might be naturalized; that is to say, how a descriptive, scientific account of justification might be given. The line of thinking I have in mind goes like this. If being justified is just being in a state that is good vis-à-vis the goal of truth, then the question of what it is to be justified turns into the empirical question what behaviors, dispositions, belief-forming practices, methods of inquiry, etc., are most conducive to that goal, the goal of truth. Being justified is then simply a matter of being reliable (or something along those lines), and it can be a matter of empirical study what belief-forming practices are in fact reliable. One might try to make an analogous move with a concept like *health*, which is an evaluative concept, a concept of a state that is *good* to be in. One might attempt to naturalize this concept by simply giving a scientific description of what the body needs in order to be healthy.

I am skeptical that this kind of project will succeed.³⁴⁵ But put that aside for the moment. Even if the evaluative normativity were to be successfully naturalized,

³⁴³ Alston (1985), p.97.

³⁴⁴ Alston (1985), p.97.

³⁴⁵ See Kornblith (1993) for a defense of this kind of project. He there tries to ground the evaluative normativity involved in justification by claiming that we ought to do what we can to have true beliefs because having true beliefs is instrumentally valuable in the service of fulfilling whatever desires we have.

Sellarsians who think that epistemic justification involves a deontological component will find this purely evaluative account lacking. So let me try to say a word or two in support of the idea that justification involves deontological normativity too.

As an opening volley, consider a computer that is programmed to provide information about state capitals. If you type in the name of a state – say, California – the computer will supply the capital city: "The capital of California is Sacramento." Now suppose some 13 year-old kid is testing out the program and says, "Wow, this computer really knows its state capitals!" Now there's more than one reason why what the kid says is not right. For example, it is wrong to say that the computer *knows* anything because the computer doesn't have any *beliefs* -- especially given the Sellarsian semantics we've been operating under. But I think another thing that is wrong with what the kid says is revealed by the fact that it would also be natural to respond to him by saying, "The *computer* doesn't know anything. It's the *programmers* who know the state capitals. The computer is just doing what they programmed it to do." I think what that response reveals is that an attribution of knowledge gives *credit* to whoever is claimed to know something. One of the reasons it is not right to say that the *computer* knows the state capitals is that the credit for its successes (it's reliability) with state capitals is really due to the programmers. To say that the *computer* knows the state capitals is in part to praise the computer for getting things right. This is some reason to think that knowledge (and so, most likely, the *justification* component of knowledge) is in part a deontological notion. Let's look at some more examples.

I think some of the cases given by internalists as putative counter-examples to externalism can be interpreted as intuition pumps for the idea that justification involves deontological normativity. A good example is Bonjour's case of Norman the clairvoyant.³⁴⁶ Norman doesn't know it, but he has a completely reliable faculty of clairvoyance. From time to time this faculty causes him to believe something and these beliefs he finds himself with are always true (though he doesn't realize this). Bonjour hopes to pump the intuition that even if the beliefs produced from Norman's faculty of clairvoyance are reliable, they are not justified because Norman has no reason to think that these beliefs are likely to be true. Although I share with Bonjour the intuition that Norman would not be justified, I am not an internalist. Instead, I explain the failure of justification here as due to the fact that Norman is too disconnected from his being reliable for it to make sense to say that *he* deserves the credit for it. This is demonstrated by the fact that the intuition that Norman's clairvoyantly-produced beliefs are unjustified can remain even if he knows that they are reliable. Suppose he starts tracking the success of the beliefs that just "pop" into his head and he finds that they are always true. He says to himself, "Well that's good, I guess. Better true than false. Still... in a sense it doesn't really matter since whether true or false, I can't help but believe these things..." When you focus just on the fact that Norman now has good reasons to believe these things, it can seem plausible to say that he is justified. But when we see that those reasons are totally inert, disconnected from and irrelevant to why he believes (and continues to believe) these things, then it

³⁴⁶ Bonjour (1985), p.41 ff.

seems (to me at least) that the availability of good reasons to believe does nothing to render the belief justified.³⁴⁷ Suppose the clairvoyance worked by way of an angel who would choose propositions she knew to be true and would then magically make Norman believe them. In that case I might be inclined to say something very much like what we said in the computer case: "*Norman* doesn't know these things. He's just the puppet of the angel. It's the *angel* who has the knowledge if anyone does."

One more case. Arnold hero-worships his big brother Willis. He thinks that Willis is the coolest, kindest, and smartest person on the planet. Arnold believes absolutely anything that Willis says. And it turns out, in fact, that Willis *is* one of the smartest persons on the planet, and a paragon of epistemic reliability. Thus *believing anything Willis says* is a very reliable belief-forming practice. Suppose also that, since Arnold knows just about everything about his big brother, he *knows* that the things that Willis says are extremely likely to be true. Arnold has checked his big brother's track record and found his beliefs to always be true. However, Arnold doesn't believe what Willis says *because* it is likely to be true. He believes what Willis says because he thinks that Willis is the most amazing person in the galaxy. Suppose Willis says, "Beneath the earth's crust is a layer of molten magma." Arnold thinks that that's the most bizarre thing he's ever heard of, but he believes it unhesitatingly. Is Arnold justified in believing that beneath the earth's crust is a layer of molten magma? My

³⁴⁷ The argument I give here is in some ways similar to the argument that Kornblith gives against the arguments-on-paper thesis. (See Kornblith (1980) p. 134-135.) There he argues for an externalist element in justification, but I think that his argument could be reinterpreted, as I do to BonJour's, as an argument for a deontological component to justification.

intuitions say *no*. He has done nothing to earn that entitlement. You do not earn your entitlement to believe something just in virtue of its being likely to be true. In a way, Arnold is as much a puppet of Willis as Norman is a puppet of the angel or the computer is a puppet of its programmers. It's *Willis* who is (presumably) justified in believing that there is magma beneath the earth's crust. Arnold is just uncritically taking on the belief. Uncritical belief is not justified belief. And a belief can be uncritically accepted (or maintained) even if you have reason to think that it is likely to be true. In a way, it is just a lucky accident that Arnold's belief forming practices are reliable, since he would believe whatever Willis says whether it was true or not. If those practices *are* reliable, its no thanks to Arnold.

I cannot claim that these cases provide anything like conclusive arguments for the claim that justification must have a deontological component. It is quite conceivable that others will not share my intuitions. If not, these cases will, I hope, at least help to make intelligible why persons find the deontological conception attractive.

Perceptual responsibilism and the dual-normativity conception of justification

Let me now wrap up the discussion of internalism, externalism, and the two conceptions of justification. I have argued that one of the major motivations of internalism is the attraction of the idea that justification has a deontologically normative dimension.³⁴⁸ I agree with this underlying motivation for internalism, but I

³⁴⁸ Again, I do not claim that internalists always are aware that this is at bottom the reason for their attraction to internalism, nor that it *always* is.

do not think that internalism is the only way to account for the deontological component. Perceptual responsibilism is an externalist view: it does not require that the agent have access to what it is in virtue her perceptual beliefs are justified. We saw arguments from Bonjour, Schmitt, and Alston which purported to show that the deontological conception was flawed but what they really show is that in epistemic justification the deontological conception cannot be separated from the evaluative conception. When the two are married, we can see that being epistemically justified can involve not just *trying your best* to do your duty, but must rather must involve actually *succeeding* at doing your duty. The satisfaction of the evaluative norm comes right along with the satisfaction of the deontological norm. I then looked at the purely evaluative conception of justification. I also noted that this way of looking at things can be attractive to the naturalist for it seems to hold out hope for a reductive explanation of justification. I tried to explain why someone might find the purely evaluative conception lacking – I gave reasons that were not tied to an intuition in the direction of internalism. Thus perceptual responsibilism, like Sellars's view, involves a dual-normativity conception of justification. The first hurdle makes sure that the evaluative component is satisfied by requiring that the person's perceptual belief is reliably produced. The second hurdle makes sure that the deontological component is satisfied. Sellars sought to overcome the second hurdle with an internalist requirement, (the requirement that the agent *knows* that her belief has been reliably produced) but I do not. According to perceptual responsibilism, an agent overcomes the second hurdle – that is, satisfies the deontological component of justification – by

being an epistemically responsible steward of her perceptual dispositions, even if she does not realize that she is.

I think the following is a fruitful (if simplistic) way of thinking about the internalism-externalism debate, exploiting the distinctions drawn in chapter two. First take the extremes, a stereotypical internalist view *I*, and a stereotypical externalist view *E*. (To make the point more clearly, let's suppose that *E* is not a *mixed* externalist view having internalist components as well, but is a *pure* externalist view, perhaps something like an early version of reliabilism.) *I* understands epistemology as involving deontological norms while *E* takes it to involve only evaluative norms. From the perspective of a proponent of *I*, *E* founders on the rocks of *conformism*, providing mere regularities, descriptive facts, where what is needed is genuine deontological normativity so that Jones's epistemic behavior is not just norm-conforming but norm-governed. While from the perspective of a proponent of *E*, *I* suffers from the symptomatic defects of *followism*, treating *believing* as though it were something someone *does* in order to *obey* a duty (follow a rule). In addition to the criticisms outlined in the previous section (e.g., that one can be blameless and still be in an epistemically bad state), *E* criticizes *I* both on the grounds (a) that believing is not a *doing* (this is related to the charge that the deontological conception implies doxastic voluntarism), and (b) that this strategy results in a regress: If the internalist maintains, consistent with the deontological conception, that the *awareness* of the justifier must itself be a norm-governed episode -- for example, a *knowing* -- then it might seem that in order to know that P you would need to know that you know that P,

which in turn would require further iterations, etc.. (Compare the regresses facing followism outlined in chapter two.) *E* thinks (and some recent internalists agree) that the culprit here is the deontological conception of justification. My diagnosis is rather that the suspect assumption is the idea that the followist strategy is the only possible way to cash out the norm-governedness of epistemic justification that is central to the deontological conception; that justified belief under that conception must be modeled after explicit rule following. It is my view that we must retain the intuition that justification involves deontological norms but reject the idea that someone could only be praiseworthy for something that they did *on purpose* with an explicit aim in mind.

Perceptual responsibilism is a middle way between followism and conformism. Like followism (and unlike conformism), it maintains that justification involves a deontologically normative dimension such that when we say "Jones is justified in believing that *P*", we're giving credit to Jones for being in an epistemically positive state. But like conformism (and unlike followism), it does not require any kind of explicit awareness of what it is in virtue of which a belief is justified. It also requires (by way of the first hurdle requirement), that Jones *is* in that epistemically positive state (i.e., his perceptual tokens are reliable). Thus perceptual responsibilism is an externalist view but one motivated in part by the deontological conception typically associated with internalism.

Unlike many externalist views today, perceptual responsibilism is not motivated by the concerns that motivate naturalized epistemology or naturalism in general. It is not, for example, motivated by a desire to show that philosophical

problems can be solved (or philosophical concepts can be adequately analyzed, explained, or understood) using only the concepts and methods of the natural sciences. (On the other hand, I have certainly not given any reason to assume that the findings of empirical science will be necessarily irrelevant to the philosophical enterprise. On the contrary, the arguments of Cherniak seemed to be a case in which empirical considerations were very relevant to deciding what epistemic responsibilities we in fact have.) Nevertheless, the difference in motivation is worth noting.

Chapter Six: Summary of Perceptual Responsibilism

Now it is time to put together the various things discussed in the last three chapters in a summary of perceptual responsibilism.

Jones spies a woodpecker in a nearby tree and spontaneously says, "Wow -- that's a woodpecker!"³⁴⁹ In order for this belief to be perceptually justified, to have the sort of positive justificatory status it would have to have in order to be a case of perceptual knowledge, a number of conditions must be met:

1. The tokening of "that's a woodpecker" must obviously be a conceptual episode, a believing *that* that's a woodpecker. This means that Jones must have the concepts involved – the concept of a woodpecker, for instance. And according to Sellarsian semantics, having one concept means having many – having a *language* in fact. For although there *may* be language-entry (observation) or language-exit (action) competences your having of which would count in favor of your having a concept (and in some cases would be strongly *required* by the concept), there is *always* a requirement of inferential competence. "That's a woodpecker" will not count as a genuine conceptual episode – a claim, a proposition, a belief – unless Jones has a grasp of what would follow from it, what it would follow from, what would be incompatible with it, etc. This is what it is for something to be "in the space of reasons": Its content is crucially determined by its rational relations to other claims – what it is a reason for or against and what would be a reason for or against

³⁴⁹ Everything I'm about to say applies equally if he doesn't say it out loud, but just forms the belief.

it. Different concepts vary with regard to how important it is that one can make the *non-inferential* transitions (i.e., in perceptual response to the world or in action).

2. The tokening of "that's a woodpecker" must be the result of a certain reliable perceptual disposition: a disposition to perceptually form the belief "that's a woodpecker" if and only if there is a woodpecker present *ceteris paribus*. The *ceteris paribus* clause leaves room for exceptions, some of which I already mentioned. If the circumstances of perception are abnormal, or if the woodpecker is obscured by leaves, or if Jones is not paying attention, or is not in a "look what we have here" frame of mind, or he is drunk, etc., then his failing to pick out the woodpecker (or, conversely, his tokening "that's a woodpecker" when none is present) will not count against his having the requisite perceptual disposition. And even when none of these situations occur, a flub every now and then won't count against Jones since the disposition doesn't need to be 100% accurate.
3. This perceptual disposition is *not* an inborn ability, hardwired like an animal instinct. If it were, not only would Jones deserve no credit for the disposition's accuracy, but it would be very difficult to *change* the disposition to make it better. Rather, the disposition initially comes about as a matter of training, learning. If the concepts involved are very basic or communal observational concepts, then we expect Jones's linguistic community to bring about the perceptual disposition as a part of their teaching him the language, right along with their training him how to

move about the space of reasons. With other concepts he may be a self-trainer³⁵⁰, or perhaps only with indirect help from the community through books or TV.

When the linguistic community is responsible for your perceptual disposition, their training behaviors³⁵¹ embody norms such as that it ought to be that one tokens "that's *F*" if and only if something *F* is present, *ceteris paribus*.

If conditions 1-3 are passed, then the first hurdle has been cleared (except of course, for *basic* observational concepts which require both hurdles to be cleared as a part of their content). If we left things here we might fall into the conformist strategy. But Jones needs also to clear a second hurdle, the point of which is to make sure that *Jones* (and not his parents or community) deserves the credit for his having these successful perceptual dispositions.³⁵² The second hurdle involves deontological normativity. Jones's practices must embody the same norms that the training and teaching practices of his community embodied. Thus:

4. Jones must be the responsible steward of his "that's a wood pecker" perceptual disposition. He must make sure that it stays on track, correct it when it needs correcting, improve it when it stands in need of improving. He must have his eyes open to possible error, and be able to tell whether the error is a fluke or is indicative of a disposition that needs tweaking. He must be able to listen to others, to profit from their successes and learn from their mistakes. He must know when

³⁵⁰ Once again, note that one can only be a self-trainer once one already has a system of concepts, a language. A person cannot bring about, by themselves, their own first language.

³⁵¹ On some details of this training, see, Rosenberg (1974), pp. 44ff.

to hold his ground when others around him disagree with him. And of course his own successes and failures must have a fruitful impact on the future course of the disposition. The perceptual disposition can accurately be called a *skill*.

His ability to detect error comes not from an ability to take a god's eye view, in which he would scrutinize the accuracy of the dispositions without needing to rely on any of them. Rather, he detects error by playing his dispositions off against each other, against other things that he knows, and against the dispositions and knowledge of others. Cases of error detection – disposition collision, as I called it – need not involve a belief or any conceptual awareness *that* an error has been discovered or *that* there is a tension that needs resolving. (Thus the perceptual responsibilism is an *externalist* view.) Often a response to a collision can simply involve the "something ain't right" feeling. This feeling can prompt a responsible resolution to the tension without needing to be mediated by conceptual awareness. (If all intelligent, epistemically rational changes to one's epistemic system required conceptual mediation of this kind we might find ourselves with the regress problems that the followist strategy faces. See chapter two.)

Epistemically responsible management of one's perceptual dispositions is more about knowing *how* than about knowing *that*. And this exhibited know-how, constitutive of responsible stewardship, being a kind of *knowledge* and not merely a habitual doing, is itself a norm-governed affair. But this does not mean that this perceptual stewardship skill must be managed and kept on track by some other

³⁵² Note that if the perceptual disposition came about through *self*-training, then the

separate skill. Rather, the same set of skills that enables Jones to detect and correct errors in his perceptual dispositions (i.e., the "something ain't right" feeling that results from disposition collision) also enables him to detect and correct errors in his detections and corrections. A tension may arise the best way to resolve which is to restore a judgment previously corrected or a disposition previously adjusted.

Perceptual responsibilism is an account of genuine non-inferential knowledge; "input from the world", in the only sense we can make of that phrase once we have cleared away the misleading notion of non-inferential justification which "comes from somewhere." The justification of perceptual beliefs like Jones's "that's a woodpecker" is traceable to his perceptual know-how, and *not* to his having other beliefs which support that claim. Thus perceptual responsibilism is not a version of coherentism. Responsible perceptual stewardship requires one to be *normatively* – and not merely *causally* – beholden to the way the world is.

Perceptual responsibilism avoids the given. It does not attempt to analyze or explain epistemic justification in non-epistemic, non-normative terms. Responsible stewardship and perceptual know-how are thorough-going epistemically normative concepts (in both evaluative and deontological senses).

second hurdle has probably already been jumped too.

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