# Locating the Space of Reasons

## ——What it is like to be a good Sellarsian?

Naozumi Mitani

Introduction

The philosophy of Wilfrid Sellars has as one of its key thoughts the idea of 'the logical space of reasons.' According to this idea, expounded in *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, our intentional states or mental episodes, i.e., knowings or observings of things, reside in the logical (conceptual) space of reasons where things stand in normative, justificatory relation to each other. And what we have to notice about this Sellarsian thesis is that the episodes or states placed in the space of reasons are *sui generis*, hence irreducible to temporal-spatial-causal explanation of natural science in 'the realm of law.[1]'

This Sellarsian conception about the irreducibility of the normative has had an extensive effect on the philosophical scene, siring many successors in its wake, such as the philosophies of John McDowell and Robert Brandom. Both McDowell and Brandom, in *Mind and World* and *Making It Explicit* respectively, proclaim that profound and even decisive influence from Sellars lies at the heart of their works.

Yet, despite their bibliographical commonality, it must also be noted that those two philosophers diverge from each other at one crucial point, namely their ways of responding to Sellars' verdict on *empiricism*, and how to explain the objective purport of our knowledge. And the bifurcation is revealing.

Brandom takes it that what Sellars put forth was an obituary for empiricism and thus tries to expatriate every trace of empiricist thoughts about intentionality. Brandom's *Making It Explicit* offers 'a semantic explanatory strategy which takes inference as its basic concept, as opposed to the alternative strategy dominant since the Enlightenment, which takes representation as its basic concept.' For Brandom [and for Brandom's Sellars] 'if you can explain how the social practices we call "using language" came into existence, you have already explained all that needs to be explained about the relation between mind and world[2]'.

To this McDowell strongly disagrees. While admitting that Sellars ordered a complete expulsion of all forms of traditional sense-data empiricism, McDowell aims to rescue a non-

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1 McDowell's view on the conception of "nature" has a convoluted structure and needs some glossing. I shall touch on this point later.

2 Rorty, Introduction, p.7-8. ([ ] is my insertion.)

traditional version of it which will not fall into the Myth of the experientially Given. And his 'therapy' for the empiricist's quagmire is to revive such notions as 'second nature' and 'experience as an actualization of conceptual capacities in sensory consciousness.'

That being said, we have two distinct theories each of which offers its own understanding of the Sellarsian idea about intentionality. One flatly renounces the traditional order of explanation which takes representation as its basic concept and tries to establish a social pragmatist approach to objectivity. The other clings to the idea that the objective purport of empirical thought consists in the representational relation between mind and world, and tries to retain such notions as 'tribunal of experience' and 'mind's directedness to world'. My aim in this paper will be to look into the details of this controversy over the structure of the space of reasons, hence the idea of objective purport in general, under the guise of an exegetical concern.

*Sellars on the Space of Reasons*

Let us begin by reviewing Sellars's original description of the logical space of reasons. The citation below is from §36 of *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (henceforth EPM).

> The essential point is that in characterizing an episode or a state as that of knowing, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or a state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says[3].

As is already indicated, Sellars is insisting that knowledge intrinsically resides in the normative dimension, and that explanations pertaining to this dimension should be distinguishable from any kind of naturalistic or empirical ones. Epistemological justification cannot be obtained by tracing spatiotemporal routes, and reducing epistemic facts into the non-epistemic is "a mistake of a piece with the so-called 'naturalistic fallacy' in ethics[4]."

Generally, Sellars's essay is registered as a decisive refutation of the foundationalist moves in epistemology dominant since the time of Enlightenment. As is testified by the recurrent phrase of the "Myth of the Given," the best way to catch the main drift of Sellars's essay is to read it as an attempt to attack and destroy the idea of the "experientially given." What Sellars aims to show is that there's no privileged class of cognitive states which, despite its epistemic independence of all the other pieces of knowledge, still constitutes the ultimate court of appeal for all knowledge of matters of fact.

Sellars's enmity toward "the immediately given" becomes most conspicuous when he discusses noninferential (observational) report, such as "This is green." Given the judgments we arrive at noninferentially—paradigmatically through perception—, how can we secure the epistemic authority of those observational reports as such, without "insensibly sliding into the constellation of

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[3] Sellars, EPM, §36.

[4] Sellars, EPM, §5.

philosophical commitments [called] the Myth of the Given[5]"?

According to Sellars's stipulation, a "foundationalist" account of knowledge requires: (1) there must be *an ultimate court of appeals for all factual claims*. (2) The credible knowledge belonging to this stratum is constituted by *knowledge which is noninferentially known to be the case*. (3) This class of knowledge *presupposes no other knowledge either of particular matter of fact or of general truths*[6].

Roughly, Sellars's strategy is to opt out of this classical line of thought by denying (3) while accepting (1) and (2). That is, Sellars seeks to pin down the structure of a credible stratum of knowledge that is noninferentially elicited even though it does presuppose other knowledge of matters of fact. This is quite a novel approach to empirical knowledge, the possibility of which had been concealed by the traditional way of understanding epistemic "foundation," which demands that the knowledge that presupposes other knowledge must be inferential. What Sellars is trying to show is that "this ... is itself an episode in the Myth[7]."

> There is clearly *some* point to the picture of human knowledge as resting on a level of propositions—observation reports—which do not rest on other propositions in the same way as other propositions rest on them. On the other hand, I do wish to insist that the metaphor of "foundation" is misleading in that it keeps us from seeing that if there is a logical dimension in which other empirical propositions rest on observation reports, there is another logical dimension in which the latter rest on the former[8].

Since Sellars's radical insight is dependent on the insistence of the second logical dimension mentioned here, his problem will be to make clear how this nearly oxymoronic conception, that the knowledge that presupposes other knowledge of matters of fact can nonetheless be noninferential, is possible.

Sellars's reply consists of stipulating "two conditions" which tokenings of observation reports have to meet in order to qualify as expressing observation knowledge. "The first hurdle" concerns the authority. In order for an utterance token "This is green" to qualify as empirical knowledge, that claim has to be credible enough to license an inference from the factual premise that "someone makes this report" to the conclusion that vouchsafes the presence of the reported object. Sellars's first hurdle is to impose a reliability constraint on empirical knowledge.

The second hurdle to be jumped would be called, in a contemporary idiom, an "internalism requirement".

> ...no tokening by S *now* of "This is green" is to count as "expressing observational knowledge"

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5 Brandom, Study Guide, p.120.

6 cf. Sellars, EPM, §32.

7 Sellars, EPM, §32.

8 Sellars, EPM, §38.

> unless it is also correct to say of S that he *now* knows the appropriate fact of the form *X is a reliable symptom of Y*, namely that ... utterances of "This is green" are reliable indicators of the presence of green objects in standard conditions of perception.[9]

Offhand, this should be an unnerving remark for traditional empiricists. For, admitting that observation knowledge presupposes knowledge of the form "*X is a reliable symptom of Y*" flies in the face of empiricism's most basic conviction, that any knowledge gained noninferentially through perception must "stand on its feet." Otherwise, it would not function as appropriate foundation for knowledge in the required sense.

At the same time, Sellars is saying that to qualify as credible knowledge, the report must "*in some sense*" be recognized by the perceiver himself[10]. This remark must also be disturbing in a contemporary sense. For, as a glance at the literature in recent epistemology will reveal, Sellars is proposing two seminal but not mutually congenial ideas about epistemology—justificatory internalism and reliabilist externalism—at one time. The purpose of ensuing argument in this paper will be dedicated to elucidating and evaluating this puzzling proposal made by Sellars.

*Brandom and Social Pragmatist Reading of Sellars*

Brandom is unhappy with Sellars's endorsement of justificatory internalism and reliabilist externalism at one time. According to Brandom, Sellars is surely right in discerning that reliability alone would be insufficient to set a satisfactory condition of knowledge, but when he proceeds further and insists that noninferential reports must be taken or known to be reliable by the perceiver himself, he may have taken an unnecessary step and "in this perhaps he goes too far[11]." Let us make clear the meaning of this comment by Brandom.

Brandom offers his reading of Sellars in an essay titled "The Centrality of Sellars's Two-Ply Account of Observation to the Arguments of "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind." In this essay, Brandom insists that noninferential reports are product of two distinguishable capacities: *a reliable differential responsive disposition* and *the capacity to take up a position in the game of giving and asking for reasons*[12].

The former, the capacity reliably to respond to environmental stimuli and elicit discriminatory response covarying with the differential input, may be a necessary condition for perceptual knowledge, but it is also clear that this much is not sufficient. For, under this condition, even a creature or a device furnished with the same kind of tendencies will show enough reliability to count as knowers. For example, a parrot trained to say "This is red" in the presence of a red thing, a thermostat designed to turn on the heater when the temperature drops to 20 degrees would be said

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9 Sellars, EPM, §37

10 Sellars, EPM, §35.

11 Brandom, Study Guide, p.157.

12 Brandom, The Centrality of Sellars's Two-Ply Account of Observation to the Arguments of "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," p. 350. (Henceforth "Two-Ply Account of Observation".)

to "know" that something is red or the temperature is 20 degrees. This means that some extra condition has to be added to distinguish a genuine reporter of perception from a creature or a mechanism which reacts differentially to environmental stimuli.

The second element in the "two-ply account" is to provide the wanted condition and Brandom tries to explain this crucial demarcation in terms of the difference between mere sentience and genuine sapience. Whereas a parrot that can recognize red objects does the classification as a result of its differential responsiveness, a genuine observer must be able to respond to the stimuli by "applying concepts." Sapient beings must possess not only the reliable dispositions to classify objects but also the capacities to give conceptual articulation to his responses to the stimuli.

According to Brandom, Sellars's master thought about the "conceptual articulation" can be characterized as a social pragmatist theory of meaning: being able to apply a concept means having practical mastery over the inference in which that concept is used. For example, the parrot, while showing a reliable differential responsive disposition toward red-colored objects, cannot treat "red" as implying "colored," or as implied by "scarlet," or as incompatible with "This is green." On the other hand, a genuine observer is defined as an agent who can make those conceptual articulations about his report in the game of giving and asking for reasons.

This view of "applying a concept" is further elaborated by introducing some original vocabularies proposed by Brandom: "commitment" and "entitlement." Imagine a case where a twenty month old toddler walks into the room and says, "The house is on fire!" Her making this noise is not counted as a standing in the space of reasons, as she doesn't know what she would be committed to by that particular claim: She simply doesn't know what the inferential consequence of her claim is, nor does she know what her claiming follows from. In contrast, her seven year old sister knows what she's committing herself to by screaming out the same sentence: Her claiming "The house is on fire!" entails another claim that the whole family has to evacuate. And when asked what entitles her to that claim, she can cite a "reason" for it: "I saw red flames in the kitchen!"

The elder sister is able to justify her claim by giving a reason for it, and in this respect, she has the practical mastery over the use of the concept of "fire" and thus is regarded as a genuine reporter in the inferential game of giving and asking for reasons. She has a kind of know-how about what follows from the applicability of a concept, and what the concept of "fire" follows from.

*Inferentialism and the Internalism Requirement*

With this two-ply account in the background, Brandom challenges Sellars's internalism requirement and tries to find an "inferentialist middle way between justificatory internalism and reliabilist externalism[13]." Here is one statement where Sellars expounds his view on internalism.

> ... for a *Konstatierung* "This is green" to "express observational knowledge", not only must it

[13] Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, p.218.

> be a *symptom* or a *sign* of the presence of a green object in standard conditions, but the perceiver must know that tokens of "This is green" *are* symptoms of the presence of green objects in conditions which are standard for visual perception[14].

To nail down what Sellars is aiming at, a reference to the traditional conditions of knowledge—justified true belief—would be helpful. As is well discussed, Plato's original motivation for placing the justificatory leg in the tripartite model of knowledge was to preclude the cases where beliefs are merely accidentally true. And it is precisely concerning this point that a most powerful shift in the epistemology of recent decades—the reliabilist move in epistemology—comes to the fore. The "Founding Insight[15]" of reliabilist epistemology, as Brandom calls it, claims that a true belief can come to qualify as genuine knowledge even where the candidate knower cannot cite the justificatory reason for her belief, on condition that the belief has been formed by a reliable formation process. One paradigmatic example Brandom adduces is this:

John is an industrial chicken sexer. He has had enough experience at his job and is skilled enough to sort out chicks into males and females. Also, he has mastered how to use his noninferential report linguistically, that is, he understands what his claiming "This is female" amounts to, and if necessary, he can use his own report as a premise of an inference. Expert as he is, John's opinions about chicken sexing are sufficiently reliable that those who believe in his experienced credibility have come to endorse the inference from his *reporting* "This chick is female" to the veridical fact that the chick is female. Meanwhile, on the part of John himself, it happens that he just can't spell out the mechanism or reasons that are supposed to underwrite his sorting out the chicks. In fact, as it turned out as a consequence of research, John is relying on his olfactory perception in spite of his personal conviction that his discriminatory capacity is based on visual perception[16].

Thus, although John himself cannot cite specific reasons to support his claiming noninferentially that P, it is clearly in order for one to come to believe that P on the basis of John's reporting that p. Likewise, it is also natural to conclude that John's reporting that P functions as a sufficient warrant for the knowledge that P to obtain. From this line of thought, reliabilists conclude that John knows that P, for, after all, this is all that is required for their attributing to John the normative standing as a knower in the space of reasons. Using Brandom's idioms, John's commitment to the claim that P is normatively entitled by his fellow practitioners' attributing the credibility to John. In a word, John can be justified without being able to justify himself. Brandom says:

> Faith—understood broadly as undertaking commitments without claiming corresponding

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[14] Sellars, EPM, §35.

[15] Brandom, *Articulating Reasons*, p.97.

[16] cf. Brandom, ibid, p.104.

> entitlements—is surely not an incoherent concept. (Nor is it by any means the exclusive province of religion.) And should the convictions of the faithful turn out not only to be true but also (unbeknownst to them) to result from reliable belief-forming processes, I do not see why they should not be taken to constitute knowledge[17].

However, at the same time, Brandom doesn't forget to warn us that we must not let the reliabilist's founding insight make us underappreciate Sellars's contribution. Sellars is still undoubtedly correct in making out that the contents of beliefs should be articulated inferentially, namely, vis-à-vis the reason mongering practices. Full-fledged external reliabilists fail to meet this fundamental semantic requirement when their epistemologically correct externalism induces them to overreach and demand the overall replacement of normative reasons with reliability forming mechanism.

That being said, our next step will be to stop and examine what is going on under Brandom's social pragmatist renovation of Sellarsian space of reasons. However, before setting out to that task, let us review and consider another perspective contained in the idea of the space of reasons, so that an interesting contrast will come into sight.

*Mind and World: a transcendental anxiety*

John McDowell, another representative figure among the philosophical heirs of Sellars, also proclaims that the conception of the logical space of reasons stands at the heart of his project, in that he as well opposes "epistemic facts" against "natural facts[18]".

Concerning this, McDowell repeatedly points out that EPM is loaded with the spirit of Kant in a fundamental way. That the space of reasons is described as an intrinsically epistemic space, and that merely naturalistic explication of our cognitive states or episodes will fall short, help us make clear what McDowell implies by saying this. Two points are worth mentioning.

First, the influence of Kant on Sellars is explained by the well-known phrase, "intuitions without concept are blind." The upshot of this Kantian theme becomes most conspicuous when Sellars deals with the problem of perception: To reveal the structure of perceptual experiences as essentially concept-involving is one of the central topics discussed in EPM.

The second point concerns the idea of "intentionality." For McDowell, Kant and Sellars are philosophers of intentionality rather than of epistemology. Their concerns mainly lie in the question of "how to give a philosophically satisfying exposition of directedness of thoughts to the world," rather than "how knowledge in general is possible." This rather surprising remark is made in a series of lectures delivered in 1997, which can be characterized as a sequel to *Mind and World*:

> I have been urging that Sellars's nontraditional empiricism is not only a picture of the credentials of empirical knowledge, a topic for epistemology in a narrow sense, but also a

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[17] Brandom, ibid, p.105f.

[18] McDowell, Having the World in View, p.433; Sellars, EPM, §17.

> picture of what is involved in having one's thought directed at the world at all, the topic of reflection about intentionality. .....
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> Against a "neo-Kantian" reading of Kant, Heidegger says: "The *Critique of Pure Reason* has nothing to do with a 'theory of knowledge'." I think we can make the point Heidegger is trying to make more effectively ... by saying, not that epistemology is no concern of the first *Critique*, but that it is no more the concern of the first *Critique* than it is of "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind" or of *Science and Metaphysics*[19].

In addition to the distinction made, McDowell also assumes an order of precedence between intentionality and epistemology. At one point in *Mind and World*, after referring to his own project as an attempt to revitalize a non-traditional version of empiricism, McDowell says this;

> ... It may seem surprising that I am associating empiricism with a philosophical anxiety about the possibility of *thought*. Surely, it may be objected, empiricism is an epistemological position, and the relevant question should rather be this: "How is it possible for there to be empirical *knowledge*?" What that comes to ..... is something on these lines: "How can experience ... return a verdict sufficiently favorable for the belief to count as a case of knowledge?"
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> ... This would be a difficulty about how experience can return any verdicts on our thinking at all, and that is surely more fundamental than a difficulty about how experience can return a particular kind of verdict, one that reaches some high level of favorableness.
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> It is true that modern philosophy is pervaded by apparent problems about knowledge in particular. But I think it is helpful to see those apparent problems as more or less inept expression of *a deeper anxiety*—an inchoately felt threat that a way of thinking we find ourselves falling into leaves minds simply out of touch with the rest of reality, not just questionably capable of getting to know about it. A problem about crediting ourselves with knowledge is just one shape, and not the most fundamental, in which that anxiety can make itself felt[20].

The "deeper anxiety" mentioned here is dubbed "transcendental" on later occasions, in the sense that this pertains to "conditions for it to be intelligible that our thinking has objective purport at all." And according to McDowell, his main purpose is to give an account of the transcendental anxiety in a "diagnostic spirit" and to propose a direction of "cure" based on the diagnosis. In a nutshell, his diagnosis is composed of explaining how this philosophical discomfort comes to be influential and his recommended cure is to unmask the troubling appearance as only an illusion.

McDowell's diagnosis is given in accordance with the Kantian insight, that both sensibility and

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[19] McDowell, Having the World in View, p.436.

[20] McDowell, *Mind and World*, p. xiiif. (The third emphasis is mine.)

spontaneity have to be in operation in order for our empirical knowledge to obtain. The fundamental slogan of Kant, "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concept are blind[21]" makes vivid the logic of how the gulf between mind and world looms into our view. The dual sources of our cognition, when too much emphasis is put on either side, create an "interminable oscillation."

> One phase is the Myth of the experientially given, which, according to my suggestion, owes its temptingness to the inchoate influence of the transcendental thought. Dislodged from that by a glimpse of the sort of consideration Sellars brings to bear, but keeping the thought about sensibility, one would try to renounce the idea of experience as an external rational constraint on the fixation of belief. Dislodged from that, in turn, by its failure to satisfy the inchoate transcendental motivation, one would be pushed back to the Myth of the experientially Given. And so on without escape. The epistemological obsessions that characterize a certain strand in modern philosophy are really, I suggest, expressions of an inchoate transcendental anxiety on those lines[22].

On the one hand, when the epistemic pendulum swings to the side of conceptual understanding, the element of "freedom"[23] goes unconstrained and we lose our thought's bearing on independent reality, resulting in a Davidsonian coherentism called a "frictionless spinning in the void[24]": a worldview in which "nothing can count as a reason for holding a belief except another belief[25]."

This conclusion, in turn, leads to the other side of the seesaw. We are tempted to recoil from the unpalatable spinning and to regain our mind's having a direct latch onto the rest of the world. We are tempted to postulate a privileged stratum of knowledge—a class of knowledge which extends beyond the space of concepts and still provides us with some sort of brute confrontation with extra-conceptual reality. However, as Sellars's important lesson teaches us to discern, this attempt is doomed to fail again. All that this amounts to is no more than a resurrection of causal friction between mind and world, whereas what we are in need of is the establishment of a normative tribunal of experience, i.e., a rational friction between belief and reality. That "justifications of empirical judgments stop at objects of pure ostentation, uncontaminated by conceptualization" is only a Myth.

Confronted with this philosophical divide, McDowell proposes that we should be released from an underlying assumption shared by coherentism and the Myth of the given: that there is a sharp demarcation between two epistemic dimensions of the "realm of law" and the "space of

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[21] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A51/B75.

[22] McDowell, Précis of *Mind and World*, p.366.

[23] McDowell doesn't hesitate to equate the operation of spontaneity with that of freedom. Disturbing as this may be as an interpretation of Kant, I will not touch on this point.

[24] McDowell, *Mind and World*, p.66.

[25] Davidson, A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge, p.310; McDowell, *Mind and World*, p.14.

reasons." As was already mentioned in connection with Sellars's original case, the realm of law is the space composed of "natural" occurrences, in the sense of "nature" dominant since the advent of Galilean conception about it. According to this "modern" conception, nature is regarded solely as the locus of nomological events, leaving no room for conceptual or normative elements to survive. This "new[26]" nature is "disenchanted," devoid of conceptual meaning, and extra-conceptual deliverance of receptivity in the form of sensory input is the only interface that obtains between mind and world. In this worldview, the role of conceptual capacities is constricted to the making of "inner" kind of episode and the space of reasons is "interiorized," so to speak.

As I said, McDowell's main thrust is directed toward undercutting this assumption and pointing out the possibility of an alternative that has been overlooked for a long time. McDowell tries to reject the shared picture of "sensory experience as non-conceptual," which, on the one hand, led coherentist camp to allege that it has only causal impingement and thus cannot play any justificatory role, and on the other, induced the "Myth of the given camp" to crave a privileged stratum of non-conceptual knowledge that can be located at the end of the chain of justifications extending beyond the space of reasons.

In sum, the key thought McDowell offers to avoid the pitfalls is this.

> The relevant conceptual capacities are drawn on *in* receptivity. ... It is not that they are exercised *on* an extra-conceptual deliverance of receptivity. We should understand what Kant calls "intuition"—experiential intake—not as a bare getting of an extra-conceptual Given, but as a kind of occurrence or state that already has conceptual content. In experience one takes in, for instance sees, *that things are thus and so*. That is the sort of thing one can also, for instance, judge[27].

What McDowell says is this: perceptual experience may be passive—you cannot spontaneously make yourself see a red triangle when there is none, nor can you deny that you see a red triangle in front of you when indeed there is one. However, McDowell warns, the passivity of experience does not preclude the possibility that perceptual experiences are nonetheless conceptually loaded: objects of perception are in a sense given, but none is possible without concept's being in operation *in* the experience itself. In other words, "transcendental relief comes ... from a notion of experience as an actualization of conceptual capacities in sensory consciousness[28]"

What, then, is the implication of this transformation of perceptual experience? The best way to describe the answer is to emphasize the way the cooperation works as a way out from the subjectivity's alienation from the rest of the world. According to the view of experience as a combination of spontaneity and receptivity, conceptual capacities are already in play even at the

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[26] Putnam, McDowell's Mind and McDowell's World, p.174-175.

[27] McDowell, M*ind and World*, p. 9.

[28] McDowell, Précis of *Mind and World*, p. 367.

level of perceptual—and so passive—mode of experience.

The world appears to us in an already conceptualized form, and perceptual experience thus understood allows us to embrace the view that the objective layout of reality itself imposes a rational constraint on our thinking. Otherwise put, McDowell's mind is no longer an inner, self-standing realm transparent only to the subject of experience. Rather, mind is directly confronted with a "partially re-enchanted" nature, in that conceptual contents are now incorporated into the side of the world. The sphere of the conceptual has no interiorized boundary any more, and in this sense, there exists no more a gap to be bridged between mind and world. Our experience has regained its openness to world, and "reconciliation between nature and reason" has now been accomplished[29].

*The two conceptions of the space of reasons*

The contrast between Brandom's and McDowell's construal of Sellars is now perspicuous. Both talk of perceptual reports, decline to place it in the "naturalistically" structured realm of causation, and accentuate the importance of locating observational episodes in the conceptual, reason-governed space. However, in taking up the justificatory aspect which accrues to this normative space, the two philosophers diverge from each other.

Brandom, on the one hand, takes an inferentialist move, postulates that the threshold of the space of reasons must be put as the practical mastery over the use of a concept as a premise or a conclusion of an inference. Hence, importantly, Brandom demands that any trace of empiricist tradition be ostracized from epistemological reflection. For Brandom, "One of the major tasks of the whole essay [of Sellars, i.e. EPM] is to dismantle empiricism[30]" and "readers of 'EPM' seldom realize just how radical is its critique of empiricism—just how much of traditional empiricist ways of thinking must be rejected if Sellars's arguments are accepted[31]."

Contrastively, for McDowell, Sellars's whole point lies in the project of renovating empiricism by adopting a novel approach—by hammering out a new conception of "experience" as an actualization of conceptual capacities. In spite of its passivity, perceptual experience qualifies as an episode in the space of reasons so long as reason/spontaneity side of our capacities is involved in it.

Their difference becomes most palpable, I think, when Brandom takes up and rejects Sellars's espousal of justificatory internalism. As we already saw, what Sellars said about the internalism requirement was this:

> The second hurdle is, however, the decisive one. For we have seen that to be the expression of knowledge, a report must not only have authority, this authority must *in some sense* be recognized by the person whose report it is. And this is a steep hurdle indeed. For if the

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[29] McDowell, *Mind and World*, p.85.

[30] Brandom, Study Guide, p.167.

[31] Brandom, Two Ply Account of Observation, p.348.

> 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. In other words, for a *Kontatierung* 'This is green' to 'express observational knowledge,' not only must it be a *symptom* or *sign* of the presence of a green object in standard conditions, but the perceiver must know that tokens of 'This is green' *are* symptoms of the presence of green objects in conditions which are standard for visual perception[32].

Also, as we have seen, Brandom's comment on this internalist move of Sellars was that Sellars "perhaps goes too far" when he required that the report "must be known by the reporter to be reliable[33]". Here is a statement of Brandom on the same point:

> Sellars's view is that the reliable reporter can count as being entitled to a noninferentially acquired commitment, and so the assertion by which that commitment is acknowledged can be cognitively authoritative in licensing or entitling others by the standard assertional mechanism of communicative entitlement inheritance, *only* if the reporter can inferentially *justify* the noninferential claim. Such a justification consists precisely in exhibiting the inference whose premises are the reliability of differential responsive dispositions to make such claims and responsive elicitation of the claiming in question and whose conclusion is another tokening of the claim itself[34].

Offhand, it seems that the claim of Sellars is so strong that Brandom's comment is on the right track. After all, most of us would not be able to give an adequate (inferential) explanation for our perceptual state. For example, I would not be able to justify the presence of a green object in front of me by citing physiological mechanism of my eyes or informational state of my brain as the premises of my "reliability inference." In addition, as Brandom's example of the chicken sexer shows, there's nothing incoherent about committing oneself to a claim one can not produce as a licensed conclusion of an inference. The chicken sexer's seemingly "irresponsible[35]" claim may either be justified "ex post facto[36]" or his fellow attributer (deontic scorekeeper) can give the entitlement to the reliability inference from the implicit premise of the reporter's reliability to the claim that what he says is the case (Say, by showing statistical data about the credibility of his

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[32] Sellars, EPM, §35.

[33] Brandom, Study Guide, p.157.

[34] Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, p.217.

[35] Brandom, *Articulating Reasons*, p.105.

[36] Brandom, *Articulating Reasons*, p.104.

reports). In any case, simply adhering to the tenet of justificatory internalism would be question begging when confronted with the founding insight of reliabilism.

*Sellarsian Space of Reasons revisited*

However, against this line of argument, I think there's room left for us to examine whether Brandom's attack on Sellars's internalist proclivity is fair enough. To do justice to Sellars, at least, it seems worthwhile to point out that a strong penchant of Brandom is sneaking into his reading of Sellars.

As we saw, Brandom's "Two-ply" account of knowledge alleges that the entry transition from sentience to sapience consists in the agent's mastery over the practical use of his claims. To be able to apply concepts is the primary and decisive condition to enter the space of giving and asking for reasons, and to give inferential articulation to claims by using them as premises and conclusions of inferences is the core element of normative/conceptual activities in general. However, it is this by-now familiar feature of Brandom's inferentialism that makes us suspicious about the success of his attack on Sellars's internalism.

At one point in the "Two-ply" article, Brandom says, "What otherwise would appear as language-entry moves, without language-language moves, are blind. What otherwise would appear as language-language moves, without language-entry moves, are empty[37]," thereby meaning to characterize Sellars's ("his") position as a "version of a broadly Kantian strategy." However, is Brandom's transformation of Kantian insight into a "broadly Kantian" social pragmatism a tenable claim as an exegesis of—or even as a variation of—Sellars's Kantianism, when it replaces the cognitive collaboration between receptivity and spontaneity with that of "reliable differential responsive disposition" and "the inferential use of claims in a social pragmatic game of articulating reasons"? Richard Rorty once remarked that Brandom is trying to cash out the "promissory notes" Sellars issued, but it is precisely this attempt to inherit Sellars's philosophical legacy that makes us suspicious. Mightn't Brandom have missed the whole point of Sellars, thus "thrown the baby out with the bathwater?"

What I have in mind when I'm saying this is, of course, McDowell's empiricist conception of the space of reasons. Sellars's insistence about the justification condition concerning "*Konstatierung*," when reconstructed from McDowell's perspective, might command an entirely different outlook than it did under the guise of Brandom's inferentialist interpretation.

Our earlier point was that McDowell's gloss on EPM aims to provide a new version of empiricism, rather than to dismiss the whole project. According to McDowell, Sellars is trying to establish a new conception of experience which can sidestep the Myth of the given. In pursuing this possibility, McDowell puts an emphasis on the notion of "experience as an actualization of conceptual capacities in sensory consciousness," thereby holding that our perceptual experience is placed in the space of reasons, not in the mechanistic nexus in the realm of law. Experience as it

[37] Brandom, Two Ply Account of Observation, p.352.

stands constitutes a normative tribunal of judgments.

With these preliminaries in mind, let us review an important paragraph in the last section (and indeed the second to last paragraph) of part VIII of EPM.

> If I reject the framework of traditional empiricism, it is not because I want to say that empirical knowledge has no foundation. For to put it this way is to suggest that it is really 'empirical knowledge so-called,' and to put it in a box with rumors and hoaxes. There is clearly *some* point to the picture of human knowledge as resting on a level of propositions—observation reports—which do not rest on other propositions in the same way as other propositions rest on them. On the other hand, I do wish to insist that the metaphor of 'foundation' is misleading in that it keeps us from seeing that if there is a logical dimension in which other empirical propositions rest on observation reports, there is another logical dimension in which the latter rest on the former[38].

What we have to be careful about is the distinction between the two sorts of "logical dimensions" Sellars talks about. One dimension, it is clear, alludes to the space in which empirical propositions stand in "inferential" relationships to each other. Importantly, the possibility of the latter dimension's being composed of Reliable Differential Responsive Dispositions, as Brandom's Two-ply account would insist, is already precluded. For, this second dimension is said to be a conceptualized, justificatory dimension consisting of propositions. The challenge here, then, is how to identify the specific features accruing to the second logical dimension Sellars is referring to.

A glance at another paragraph from a previous section will help us unravel the structure of the second dimension. This time the passage comes from the very first paragraph of chapter VIII of EPM.

> One of the forms taken by the Myth of the Given is the idea that there is, indeed *must* be, a structure of particular matter of fact such that (a) each fact can not only be non-inferentially known to be the case, but presupposes no other knowledge either of particular matter of fact, or of general truth; and (b) such that the noninferential knowledge of facts belonging to this structure constitutes the ultimate court of appeals for all factual claims—particular and general—about the world. It is important to note that I characterized the knowledge of fact belonging to this stratum as not only noninferential, but as presupposing no knowledge of other matter of fact, whether particular or general. It might be thought that this is a redundancy, 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[39].

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[38] Sellars, EPM, §38.

[39] Sellars, EPM, §32.

Basically, what Sellars tries to convey in this passage is that there could be a uniquely structured—in fact, privileged—logical dimension in which empirical propositions are noninferential but nonetheless presuppose other propositions of matters of fact. More carefully, Sellars is trying to annihilate the "redundant" assumption that knowledge which presupposes other knowledge must be inferential, and suggests a new stratum of knowledge which sidesteps a variation of the Myth of the given.

This counterpart stratum of knowledge, only dimly hinted at in §32, is given its positive (but slight) exposition in §35, as an "alternative" to the traditional version of empiricism housed in the Myth of the given, resulting in the terse mentioning of "another dimension" in §38 quoted before. This sequence of arguments, I think, of itself indicates the philosophical intention embedded in part VIII of EPM: Sellars is trying to propose and establish an *empirical* dimension of logical (conceptual) relations, which is not inferentially structured but still carries some sort of normative/justificatory standing with it. The upshot of the arguments should be something that traditional empiricism cannot achieve, and more importantly, something which the second leg of the two-ply account seems unlikely to accommodate. One apparent obstacle to this reading is that Sellars doesn't give an explicit account about the detailed structure of this second dimension, but my prospect is that McDowell's theory of experience can be read as supplementary material to the elucidation of this point.

*The logic of "seeing"*

In several essays on epistemology, McDowell talks of a certain "deformation" of the Sellarsian image of the space of reasons and indicts it as the source of an unwanted predicament[40]. This deformation is principally called an "interiorization of the space of reasons, a withdrawal of it from the external world," and McDowell also applies other nomenclatures such as a "Cartesian divide[41]" or "Cartesian threat of losing the world[42]", echoing the peculiar oscillation he described in *Mind and World.*

> In a fully Cartesian picture, the inner life takes place in an autonomous realm, transparent to the introspective awareness of its subject; the access of subjectivity to the rest of the world becomes correspondingly problematic, in a way that has familiar manifestations in the mainstream of post-Cartesian epistemology[43].

To clarify the implication of this passage, let us consider the "Argument from Illusion" and its plausible consequences as a case of this picture.

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40 McDowell, Knowledge and the Internal, p.395.

41 McDowell, Singular Thought and the Extent of Inner Space, p.241.

42 McDowell, ibid, p.238.

43 McDowell, ibid, p.236f.

As a starting point, compare the following two cases; (a) It looks to me that things are thus and so and I take things to be thus and so, which happens to be the case. (b) It looks to me that things are thus and so, and I take things to be thus and so, which indeed is not the case. From this, we can say that experiencing (seeing) something can be deceptive or fallible, in that things may not be as I believe them to be or as they appear to me.

However, at the same time, as long as the inner space to which you have a privileged, transparent access is concerned, both of deceptive and non-illusory cases seem to possess similar or identical experiential contents which appear to be indistinguishable to the perspective of the subject of experience. If so, it is tempting to suppose that a "highest common factor" is shared between illusory and non-illusory cases of experience.

From this, it follows that the truth condition of experience is somewhere outside of the agent, insulated from the inner sphere of the perceiver. This, combined with the thesis that the inner realm of the subject is the original locus of conceptual justification, will lead to a conclusion that truth requirement cannot be met by the capacities located within the space of reasons. Truth is ousted from the space of justificatory reasons, and this is how "the interiorization of the space of reasons" gets completed[44].

McDowell's alternative to this unwelcomed situation is this: as it turned out that the root of the plight was the postulation of a worldview that deprives us of the power of "seeing" the way the world is, to secure a sufficient entitlement to the power of seeing will enable us to opt out of the Cartesian predicament. That is, to excise the pernicious effect emanating from the interiorization, McDowell proposes an epistemological worldview in which truth and entitlement do not come apart. (Remember the "medical" metaphors deployed in *Mind and World*, that the diagnosis of the source of ailment should point to the remedy. In this case, it is the interiorization of the space of reasons that is identified as the cause of the affliction and to undercut that assumption is the "therapy" proposed by McDowell.)

Otherwise put, with the withdrawal of the Cartesian divide, the space of reasons is thrown back to the side of worldly state of affairs and the world is "partially re-enchanted," in the sense that the worldly state of affairs is granted the power to justify the perceiver's perceptual content. In this interiorization/illusion-free worldview, having good standings in the space of reasons—being justified—do not come independently of worldly state of affairs, which is to say, a subject's seeing that P constitutes falsehood-excluding justification for believing that p.

My seeing that things are thus and so is veridical when things are thus and so; my seeing that things are thus and so is false when things are not thus and so. "Connivance with the world" comes and supports the justificatory status of experience, therefore, "when one thinks truly, what one thinks is what is the case. So since the world is everything that is the case ..., there is no gap between thought, as such, and the world[45]. Of course, at the same time, it is only in so far as "we

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[44] cf. McDowell, Criteria, Defeasibility, and Knowledge, p.385ff.

[45] McDowell, *Mind and World*, p.27.

are not misled by experience[46]" that "the subject can have an entitlement consisting in the fact that she sees that there is a candle in front of her[47]."

> ...we are fallible in our judgments as to the shape of the space of reasons as we find it, or—what comes to the same thing—as to the shape of the world as we find it. That is to say that we are vulnerable to the world's playing us false; and when the world does not play us false we are indebted to it. But that is something we must simply learn to live with, rather than recoiling into the fantasy of a sphere in which our control is total[48].

As McDowell approvingly says, this may be no more than a platitude when taken at face value. However, this nearly platitudinous insight of McDowell turns out to be of crucial importance when it is applied to the problem of Sellars's talk on "another logical dimension." That being said, we are now in a position to raise the final topic of this paper: what is the consequence of the "coalescence between the idea of the space of reasons as we find it and the idea of the world as we encounter it[49]", especially when it is examined in terms of Sellars's internalism requirement?

*A verdict on the debate*

As has been repeatedly mentioned, Brandom's "Two-ply" account is a version of externalist reliabilism in which inferential moves in the game of giving and asking for reasons are invoked as the justificatory device[50]. And here, what we ought to register is the fact that Brandom's inferentialist model of the space of reasons exactly overlaps the move of interiorization McDowell is criticizing. The following sentence from Brandom testifies to this point.

> What about the truth condition? To take someone to have the status of a knower one must take it that the justified belief in question is also *true*. What is it to do that? Taking the belief in question to be true is not a matter of *attributing* a commitment, but of *undertaking* one—endorsing the claim oneself. For taking-true is just believing, that is, committing oneself, adopting a standing or status. What sort of case leads us to distinguish justified beliefs that are true from those that are not? If you are standing in a darkened room and seem to see a candle ten feet in front of you, I may take you to have good reason for believing that there is a candle

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46 McDowell, *Mind and World*, p.143.

47 McDowell, Knowledge and the Internal Revisited, p.99.

48 McDowell, Knowledge and the Internal, p.407f.

49 McDowell, ibid, p.407.

50 One gloss is in order to be more careful. Consideration of a somewhat different variation of reliabilism, rather than the strong, justification-free version of reliabilism, will be the point of interest to us. For, as Brandom rightly pointed out, the latter, which commands a full scale withdrawal from the space of reasons, would be a position to grant a thermometer as a candidate knower. This latter version can be put out of our concern as long as the image of the space of reasons within the Sellarsian framework is the matter of pursuit, since it would result in a "frictionless spinning in the void".

> in front of you, and so take you to be entitled to your commitment. But that may be my attitude even if I know, as you do not, that there is a mirror five feet in front of you, and no candle behind it, so that I am not in a position to endorse or commit myself to what you are committed to. ... Thinking of things this way, assessing someone as having successfully achieved the status or standing of a knower involves adopting three different attitude: *attributing* a commitment, *attributing* an entitlement, and *undertaking* a commitment[51].

The basic point, which is similar to the one delivered in the case of a chicken-sexer, is that the truth of a perceiver's belief is determined in accordance with social procedures. In Brandom, to be social means to be a participant of the game of giving and asking for reasons, and a commitment undertaken (a belief taken to be true) is attributed an entitlement (is justified) by a deontic scorekeeper via the intrinsically inferential practice of using a claim as a premise or a conclusion of an inference. So, the relationship between truth and justification is explained in the following way.

> The standard way [to approach the notion of truth] is to assume that one has a prior grip on the notion of truth, and use it to explain what good inference consists in. [i.e., a good inference never leads from a true claim to one that is not true.] Rationalist or inferentialist pragmatism reverses this order of explanation. ... It starts with a practical distinction between good and bad inference, understood as a distinction between appropriate and inappropriate doings, and goes on to understand talk about truth as talk about what is preserved by the good moves[52].

For Brandom, as the example of a candle in the previous citation shows, entitlement and truth are two separate things, in the sense that merely taking something to be true (undertaking a commitment to the proposition that I see ...) will fall short of factiveness. Taking true is something the perceiver himself does, whereas attributing entitlement to it is another thing someone other than himself does. (Notice that this is just the reverse side of Brandom's attack on Sellars: We can be justified without being able to justify.) Like this, Knowledge conditions are all encapsulated in the space of reasons as a social, discursive practice, which is inevitably insulated from the "outer" realm of law. The upshot of this move is clear: Brandom, when he added an inferentialist twist to Sellars, has committed an "interiorization of the space of reasons."

In contrast to this, for the Sellars read by McDowell, standings in the space of reasons are achieved simply by "opening [our] eyes[53]". Namely, justification (entitlement) for my observation report, "There is a pencil in front of me" comes with "my seeing that there is a pencil in front of me". Visual experience works as the tribunal of my report. By now, I hope, it has become clear that this is what substantiates the "two hurdle" theory of Sellars put forth in part VIII of EPM. Let us

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[51] Brandom, Knowledge and the Social Articulation of Space of Reasons, p.903.

[52] Brandom, *Articulating Reasons*, p.12. [ ] is my insertion.

[53] McDowell, Knowledge and the Internal Revisited, p.105.

consider the example below.

> Jones: "That ball is green."
> Smith: "How do you know?"
> Jones: "Because I see that this is green! And I know that most of the time I see green objects in standard lighting conditions like this, things are indeed green-colored!"

The fact that I'm a reliable reporter of green objects directly justifies my reporting that the ball is green (the first hurdle), and this justificatory transition is made by my conscious experience, rather than by an inferential activity of giving and asking for reasons (the second hurdle).

Now, let's go back to Sellars's original claim of contention:

> ... for a *Konstatierung* "This is green" to "express observational knowledge", not only must it be a *symptom* or a sign of the presence of a green object in standard conditions, but the perceiver must know that tokens of "This is green" *are* symptoms of the presence of green objects in conditions which are standard for visual perception[54].

What Sellars requires is only that the perceiver know that most of the time he sees green objects in standard lighting conditions, things are indeed green-colored. Reliable reporters are, so to speak, experienced experiencer of the perceptual world, who can make correct uses of "I see ..." or "It looks ... to me": I have been trained to acquire a conceptual capacity of seeing green objects—my parents taught me what greenness consists in, and with my experience the existence of green objects is rightly placed in the space of reasons.

This, I think, is the illuminated version of Sellars's "another logical dimension," the conceptual dimension of "acquired second nature" in which the "dependence of observation report on experience" comes to light[55]. Brandom, when he denied sensory experiences the power of justification, seems to have stepped out of the "Sellarsian" space of reasons[56]. Following Henry James, who shows up in the concluding sentence of EPM, out verdict on the case of the space of reasons might be written down like this: "*No theory is kind to us that cheats us of seeing*[57]".

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[54] Sellars, EPM, §35.

[55] A reading of the section on "looks" talk in EPM might vindicate the exegetical advantage accorded to McDowell. Brandom comments that the utterance of "It looks to me ..." is a withdrawal of commitment, compared to a fully committed statement of "This is ...," thus implies the possibility that "looks" statement might not be counted as a move in the space of reasons. However, at one point in EPM, Sellars explicitly declares that "looks" statement does qualify as an observation report, and hence is incorporated into the space of reasons. (See §16 of EPM)

[56] Of course this does not mean that Sellars would have been in complete agreement with McDowell. After all, McDowell is a "naturalized Platonist" and Sellars is a psychological nominalist. A comparative study on their ontologies would be an interesting topic to pursue, but obviously this is something beyond the reach of this paper.

[57] Henry James to Robert Louis Stevenson, January 12, 1891. The citation appears in Putnam, *The Threefold Cord*, p.3.

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