Wilfrid Sellars on Truth

Between Immanence and Transcendence

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6   Appendices

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6.1 Two notions of science and science's privilege

For Sellars, ideal truth is semantic assertibility according to a conceptual scheme we would adopt at the ideal end of *scientific* inquiry. Here, I want to examine a question related to this emphasis on science. Sellars's thinking about science covers numerous topics, such as theoretical explanation and the theory-observation distinction (TE; PHM; LT; SRT), the relation between science, norms, and morality (OMP; SE), general considerations about epistemology and scientific reasoning (e.g., IV; OAFP; NDL; MGEC; SK), a defense of scientific realism (e.g., SM, chap. V and VI; SRI; SRT), and considerations about the final shape of a scientific picture of the world (e.g., PSIM; PHM; FMPP). I have touched on some of these topics, such as induction, in the main part of the book.

Sellars sees scientific inquiry as a privileged way of approaching the world when it comes to determining what is ideally true (EPM, §41). This appendix discusses how this privilege can be defended. Why should science, especially theoretical science, have a claim to uncover the truth about the world, which other forms of relating to the world lack? Even if we do not consider these other forms as serious contenders against science, we can still reasonably ask how we can justify science's privilege.

This appendix argues that Sellars's understanding of science comprises two different perspectives. The first perspective focuses on science as an actual practice that started to flourish in the modern age, a practice *distinguished* from commonsense[1] practice, with typical methods, and divided into different disciplines according to subject matter. This perspective emphasizes the specific shape of scientific inquiry in our circumstances. From a second, transcendental perspective, Sellars understands science as the systematic method of realizing the norms constituting any conceptual scheme. This perspective covers features that any practice must have to count as science in any circumstances. From this second perspective, science's privileged position in realizing ideal truth and determining

what there ultimately is can be straightforwardly justified. Science just *is* the practice of realizing the norms defining Sellars's regulative ideal. This second perspective emphasizes the continuity between science and common sense.

There has been a long-standing debate, especially during the 20th century, about a problem related to the discussion in this appendix. This is the so-called demarcation problem, i.e., the question of how to distinguish science from non-science systematically. I will not be directly interested in evaluating different ways of drawing the boundary between science and non-science, although Sellars's ideas about science have implications for the demarcation problem. Rather, this appendix asks how Sellars delineates science to see how the answer affects a possible justification for science's privilege concerning truth and ontology.

I will consider Sellars's account of science at a general level, i.e., I will not discuss the specific questions mentioned at the beginning of this appendix in detail. Some of these questions, e.g., those about the theory-observation distinction, arise only if we consider the shape that scientific inquiry assumes in our circumstances.[2] Instead of discussing these particular questions, this appendix wants to motivate the more fundamental idea that Sellars's thinking includes a second, transcendental perspective on science.

Two ways of understanding science

In Sellars's PSIM, we can find a direct expression of his first perspective on science, i.e., on science as an existing socio-cultural practice. In the essay, Sellars treats scientific inquiry primarily as an activity that generates the scientific image, a conception according to which the world and humans consist exclusively of the theoretical entities postulated by science (microphysical particles or, perhaps, processes). In the rhetoric of PSIM, this contrasts sharply with our manifest or commonsense understanding of the world. In the sense of PSIM, science is—among other things but also typically—the activity of devising theories and postulating theoretical entities to explain observable events. Not everything we call "science" has this character, and Sellars does not deny this. However, a part of scientific practice corresponds to Sellars's description, and that part is essential for him with respect to the question what the ultimate truth about our world is. At some point in the development of science, scientists began to postulate unobservable entities, and this turned out to be a more effective way of explaining, predicting, and controlling observable events than limiting ourselves to an appeal to observable entities. According to Sellars, by postulating theoretical entities, we can explain observable events, like the behavior of gases under high pressure, which would have to be treated

as anomalies if we limited ourselves to explanations provided by observational laws. By theorizing, we can also explain phenomena that cannot be explained at all in the observational framework, such as the emergence of human conceptual activity (PSIM, §15 and §49).

The train of thought that Sellars then develops is well-known. Because of this greater explanatory power, it is reasonable to claim that theoretical science develops the ultimately true picture of the world. These explanatory capacities justify the claim of theoretical science to ontological privilege. Sellars argues that

> to have good reason for espousing a theory is *ipso facto* to have good
> reason for saying that the entities postulated by the theory really exist.
> (PHM, n. 26)

where a good reason for accepting a theory is that the theory allows us to explain observed events and draw inferences about events that have not yet been observed (see Section 4.3). As it turned out, accepting theories devised by theoretical science allows us to achieve this end more effectively than merely accepting observational laws or generalizations.

However, the explanatory success of theoretical science seems to be contingent. In a different possible world, there might not have been any need for theoretical postulation to explain observable events, either because our observational capacities would have been different or because the world itself would have been made up in such a way that theoretical explanation would not be needed.

At first glance, the idea that the success of theoretical science underwrites claims to the truth of scientific theories in a contingent way has some affinities with attempts to justify scientific realism which emerged only after the peak of Sellars's career. Much of contemporary scientific realism centers around Hilary Putnam's claim that a realist position toward scientific theories is "the only philosophy which doesn't make the success of science a miracle" (Putnam 1975, 73). According to Putnam, to explain science's success, we must hold that "terms in mature theories typically refer," that "theories accepted in a mature science are typically approximately true," and "that the same term can refer to the same thing even when it occurs in different theories" (Putnam 1975, 73). Part of the effort of contemporary scientific realists concentrates on refining these claims to make them defensible against objections.

Many contemporary scientific-realist approaches try to find an inferential link between a theory's success, suitably defined, and the theory's truth or truthlikeness. This link is not established by conceptual analysis but by inference to the best explanation.[3] *Prima facie*, conceptual analysis does not seem like a promising strategy since a theory's success, even success at prediction

and explanation, does not seem to conceptually imply its truth. It seems that we can reasonably conceive of successful theories which are not true. Therefore, contemporary scientific realists typically start with the empirical claim that scientific theories have been and are successful and then offer the truth or truthlikeness of these theories as the best explanation of this fact.

This strategy is open to empirical support or objections. One of the most well-known attacks on scientific realism from empirical data is Larry Laudan's pessimistic meta-induction (Laudan 1981). Laudan appeals to the historical record and claims that many successful theories of the past have turned out not to be even approximately true. Consequently, we can reasonably expect our current successful theories to be not even approximately true, and truth or truthlikeness cannot be the best explanation of a theory's success. The countermove of modern scientific realists often consists in disputing this historical data or its interpretation.[4] For example, one scientific-realist strategy is to analyze discarded theories of the past to show that the success of these strictly speaking false theories was not accidental but due to core elements in these theories which have been retained, maybe under different labels, in current successful successors of these past theories, and thus have a claim to truth.

Sellars's scientific realism and modern scientific realism both claim that the success of existing scientific theories warrants calling these theories true. However, their justification of this claim differs.[5] In contrast to many contemporary scientific-realist approaches, for Sellars's scientific realism, the link between a theory's explanatory success and its truth is not that of inference to the best explanation. Instead, the connections he sees between a theory's success at fulfilling the aims of theory acceptance and its truth are conceptual. Only focusing on the transcendent concept of truth, Sellars defines ideal truth as semantic assertibility according to the Peircean scheme, i.e., according to a perfect realization of the norms constitutive of any conceptual scheme (including a norm of explanatory coherence). Accepting theories which, for the time being, foster explanatory coherence is a way of realizing this norm defining ideal truth. This does not guarantee that, at any point, an ostensibly explanatorily successful theory is ideally true (not even in the long run). Rather, the claim is that our concept of ideal truth is the concept of semantic assertibility in conditions where the norm defining what counts as explanatory success is perfectly realized. For Sellars, "to have a good reason for accepting a theory is to have a good reason for claiming it to be true" (IV, n. 9). The good reason for accepting a theory is that it helps us acquire or maintain explanatory abilities. This is a good reason for thinking the theory is true, but not because the theory's truth is the best explanation for the theory's explanatory success, but because, for Sellars, "true" means "semantically assertible according to an explanatorily coherent framework."

Still, this does not show that science as a project of theoretical explanation is *necessarily* privileged over other potential methods of inquiry. It only shows that theoretical, postulational science has a privileged position *as long as* it generates theories that are successful at explanation. But that it generates successful theories is itself a contingent matter. This makes the privilege of theoretical science in determining what is ideally true and what ultimately exists a contingent privilege in Sellars's framework. Such a contingent privilege is sufficient to justify science's privilege for many purposes. However, the second, transcendental perspective in Sellars's understanding of science, which I now want to turn to, can provide a necessary reason for this privilege.

Science's transcendental privilege

Let us look at Sellars's second perspective on science. From this perspective, we do not regard science primarily as an existing practice with specific methods like theoretical postulation. Instead, we consider it as a practice that must be in place if we are to count as concept users, regardless of what specific shape this practice assumes.[6] The postulation of unobservable entities is the particular method, or one of the methods, which has proved fruitful for this practice in our circumstances. From this second perspective, science's privilege regarding truth and ontology is necessary.

Several passages from Sellars's texts speak for this broader understanding of science. These appear particularly in EPM, where Sellars repeatedly claims that science and common sense are continuous:

> if, that is to say, scientific discourse is but a continuation of a dimension of discourse which has been present in human discourse from the very beginning, then one would expect there to be a sense in which the scientific picture of the world *replaces* the common sense picture; a sense in which the scientific account of "what there is" *supersedes* the descriptive ontology of everyday life.
>
> (EPM, §41; Sellars's emphases)

Two ideas need to be highlighted here. First, Sellars claims that scientific discourse is not qualitatively new. It is a refined form of an aspect of discourse that has existed "from the very beginning." Second, precisely this continuity makes us *expect* that scientific description will acquire an ontological privilege over commonsense description, even though Sellars does not clarify why this is the case.

This raises the question what the dimension "present in human discourse from the very beginning" is which scientific discourse is continuous with, according to Sellars. He certainly cannot mean contingent factors

in the development of human speech and thought (like our preference for the acoustic channel or the specifics of our classificatory systems). Rather, Sellars appears to mean something that he understands as a necessary feature of human discourse, i.e., an aspect of discourse that had to be present from the beginning of human conceptual practices because those practices could not have counted as conceptual practices otherwise. Since scientific discourse is continuous with this necessary aspect of discourse, science, as understood from Sellars's second perspective, does something that any of us must do to count as a concept user.

In Section 4.2, I argued that we can conceive of Sellars's ultimate conceptual framework as a framework that perfectly realizes the principles we must comply with if we are to count as concept users. One of those principles was that we be able to give reasons for what we say and infer further statements from it. Adopting inference principles that allow us to do so is nothing optional for concept users:

> The problem is not "Is it reasonable to include material moves in our language?" but rather "*Which* material moves is it reasonable to include?"
> (SRLG, §81; Sellars's emphasis)[7]

To count as concept users, we must include material moves and, therefore, principles like "Dry matches light if struck" into our language and thought, at least implicitly. Given Sellars's inferentialist approach to meaning and conceptual content, adopting inference principles is a practice that must be in place "right from the beginning" of human conceptual activity. However, adopting scientific laws or theories is adopting inference principles. Scientists, therefore, do what every concept user does, only more systematically and explicitly, or "writ large" (EPM, §40).[8]

Sellars highlights the continuity between commonsense and scientific practices of explanation, together with the idea that even commonsense concept users already use abductive methods, in another passage from EPM:

> the process of devising "theoretical" explanations of observable phenomena did not spring full-blown from the head of modern science. In particular, it obscures the fact that not all common-sense inductive inferences are of the form
>
> All observed A's have been B, *therefore (probably)* all A's are B, or its statistical counterparts, and leads one mistakenly to suppose that so-called "hypothetic-deductive" explanation is limited to the sophisticated stages of science. The truth of the matter, as I shall shortly be illustrating, is that science is continuous with common sense, and the ways in which the scientist seeks to explain empirical phenomena are refinements of the ways in which plain men, however crudely and

schematically, have attempted to understand their environment and their fellow men since the dawn of intelligence.

(EPM, §51; Sellars's emphasis)[9]

Thus, we can reasonably understand Sellars's necessary dimension of discourse, "present from the beginning," as the (implicit) acceptance of inference principles for the sake of explanation and prediction, including the acceptance of inference principles via abductive procedures. Scientific discourse is continuous with this necessary dimension but adds systematicity, focus, and resources.

The ability to place what we say into "a space of implications" (CDCM, §108) is probably not best understood as an all-or-nothing ability. Children grow through intermediate stages into fully competent concept users when they master a critical mass of material inference moves (deVries and Triplett 2000, 95). Adults, too, typically use single concepts with different degrees of comprehensiveness or ability. I have a basic concept of oxygen, while a chemist typically has a more developed concept. The space of implications in which she can place statements about oxygen is far richer than mine. Sellars suggests a similar view:

having the concept "φ" is a matter of degree, ranging from having a rudimentary knowhow to having a very subtle knowhow with respect to "φ."

(RM, 491)

The status of knowing how to use a specific concept is, therefore, only vaguely delimited. Consequently, Sellars ought to accept the idea that we can realize the principles we need to comply with to count as having specific concepts and to count as concept users in general to differing degrees.[10] For everyday life purposes, we might be able to make do with gappy knowledge of inferential roles or rough explanations. While we must recognize the norm requiring us to pursue an explanatorily complete conceptual scheme even in everyday life, other norms and considerations will often stand in the way of fully realizing this norm. Science, in contrast, is a practice explicitly dedicated to systematically developing our conceptual scheme to the finest detail in the light of the basic norms of concept use.

These considerations throw light on Sellars's claim that the continuity of science and common sense makes us *expect* science to replace our commonsense image of the world. Our ontology depends on our conceptual scheme, i.e., the inference principles we adopt (see Section 2.2). In this sense, even the necessary commonsense practice of adopting inference principles already determines "what there is." Science as a practice has

advantages over what non-scientists in everyday life can do to develop these resources. Scientists can suggest and test different ways in which our inferential resources could be developed without committing themselves to fully endorsing these new resources or applying them in everyday life. They can keep their theories at "arm's length" (SRLG, §87).

Since science pursues the same ontology-determining practice as common sense with more focus, it is reasonable to expect, from Sellars's perspective, that scientific ontology supersedes our commonsense ontology at some point. The reason is not that scientists do something qualitatively different from commonsense concept users. Scientists engage in the same practice, a practice that has always already been the arbiter in ontology, only with greater systematicity and focus.

On this understanding, science is defined not by its methods, such as postulating unobservable entities, but by its aim, i.e., the aim of being able to draw successful inferences about old and new cases of a type of entity. According to Sellars, "to be committed to [this end] is to have a certain intention which is constitutive of the scientific enterprise" (IV, §60). What results is a broader conception of science than the idea of science as a project of theoretical postulation, which Sellars emphasizes, e.g., in PSIM. From this perspective, science simply is any activity that systematically develops our conceptual resources following the principles constitutive of conceptual schemes, i.e., the principles that would be perfectly realized in a Peircean scheme. On this understanding of science, science thus has a necessary privilege in determining what is ideally true and what there ultimately is.

This delineation of science does not dissect science from a confrontation with experience. For Sellars, conceptual activity includes three transitions: the triggering of conceptual responses by causal impact from something non-conceptual (language-entry transitions), intra-linguistic transitions, i.e., inferences in the narrow sense, and the triggering of actions by intentions (language-departure transitions, see SRLG and MFC). Science needs to consider rules governing all three of these transitions (also see the discussion of coherentism in Section 2.3).[11]

As often in Sellars's work, what is a transcendental justification of a phenomenon from within our perspective as concept users can also be considered from an "external," scientific-explanatory angle. For example, the emergence of conceptual activity, which can only be understood as a "holistic jump" from within the manifest image, can also be scientifically explained (PSIM, §49). Similarly, some epistemic principles have an *a priori* justification from our viewpoint as finite knowers but, in principle, we can also empirically explain why they are likely to be true (by an encompassing theory of persons and their place in the world, MGEC, §84–5). Likewise, the emergence of science as the systematic development

of our conceptual resources can itself have a scientific explanation. Sellars gestures in this direction here:

> from the standpoint of the anthropologist, science consists exactly in the attempt to develop a system of rule-governed behavior which will adjust the human organism to the environment. […] This process of adjustment can be speeded up by the deliberate exploration of alternative linguistic structures.
>
> (LRB, §38)

Sellars's transcendental justification of science's privilege may appear somewhat disappointing. It cannot show that science as a specific cultural, historically developed practice necessarily brings us closer to "the truth." It also might appear almost devoid of content and unrelated to actual scientific practice. However, we can see Sellars's transcendental concept of science as one in a whole set of concepts linked to regulative ideals of language use. Such regulative ideals provide at least very general standards of criticism by which we can evaluate existing practices. Thus, we can evaluate, e.g., using historical or sociological data, whether and under what circumstances actual scientific practice accorded with the ideal of scientific inquiry.

It is probably no accident that Sellars's *scientia mensura* ("in the dimension of describing and explaining the world, science is the measure of all things, of what is that it is and of what is not that it is not," EPM, §41) appears in a context where he emphasizes the close connection between commonsense and scientific discourse. In these passages, Sellars suggests that because of this close link with a central aspect of commonsense discourse, science is privileged in determining what is ideally true and what there ultimately is. Science is the arbiter of what there is because it is commonsense explanatory procedure pursued explicitly and systematically. Even before the advent of theoretical postulation, our commonsense inferential procedures were always already the arbiter of what there is, in contrast to any "procedures" that do not contribute to realizing the metaconceptual norms constitutive of our status as concept users.[12] A discourse grown out of this initial commonsense discourse and abiding by the same principles, only more systematically, inherits this privileged status.

6.2 Truth and context

My aim has been to clarify how we can develop an intelligible concept of ideal truth in the context of Sellars's work, given the strong emphasis on immanence expressed in his basic concept of truth as semantic assertibility by us. Here, I will presuppose that we have developed such an account.

But that invites further questions. Regardless of the possible tensions between the two concepts of truth, we can ask whether we can adopt *two* such notions of truth in the first place. Furthermore, even if we can adopt the two notions simultaneously, it is not yet clear why we should, i.e., what point there would be in adopting two notions of truth rather than just one. I want to discuss these two questions here. In discussing them, we will need to stretch beyond Sellars's explicit claims. Still, the answers proposed here at least cohere well with some general traits of his thinking.

"True" and ambiguity

Sellars introduces a whole set of what he calls "different senses of 'true'" (SM, chap. V 53).[13] I will focus only on the two senses in the focus of this book, "semantically assertible by us" and "ideally true," here. Using the truth-predicate in one of these two senses has an endorsing effect, in contrast to Sellars's other senses of "true" (see below). Importantly, what I will discuss in examining these two senses of "true" is not standard truth pluralism. According to truth pluralism, there are different truth properties, concepts of truth, or meanings of "true" for *different* discourses. Sellars himself accepts a similar thesis (SM, chap. IV §26). However, this thesis is not the target of this appendix. My target is the idea that "true" can have two different senses when applied to the *same* discourse, which, in our case, is primarily empirical discourse.

Sellars claims that there are several *senses* of "true." One way to understand this is that "true" can contribute in different ways to the content of statements in which this expression appears. A straightforward way to secure this idea would be to say that "true" is ambiguous or at least polysemous. Ambiguous expressions, like "bank," or polysemous expressions, like "newspaper," can contribute in several ways to the content of the statements in which they occur since they have more than one meaning.

If "true" is ambiguous, it should have at least some potential for passing standard tests for ambiguity. There are several such standard tests. These tests are not unproblematic (see, e.g., Tuggy 1993) and their results depend to some extent on intuitions that are not necessarily universal. But they serve at least as a crude litmus paper. One of these standard tests is the so-called contradiction test (for discussion, see Gillon 1990). Sentences of the schema "This is an x but not an x" make sense if x is replaced by an ambiguous expression. In some situations, I can reasonably say "This is a bank but not a bank" (e.g., to say "This is a bank in the sense of a financial institution, but it is not a river bank"). If we shift from ambiguity to polysemy, the test becomes increasingly problematic but even polysemous expression can pass it. "I am a painter (an artist) and not a painter (who merely paints walls)" might be acceptable. A statement like "This is a book

(an informational structure) but not a book (a certain physical object)" would already need substantially more scaffolding, e.g., in a philosophy classroom, to be intelligible. But it is certainly not impossible to find it so.

In any case, for Sellars's two senses of "true," the test seems to fail. *Prima facie*, it is odd to say "*p* is true but it is not true." Even "*p* is true but (maybe) not ideally true" does not appear acceptable. This indicates that it might be problematic to treat Sellars's two senses of "true" as a simple case of ambiguity and even to treat it as a case of polysemy. At the same time, it does not seem impossible to say, on Sellars's approach, both

It is true that whales are mammals

in the sense that •Whales are mammals•s are semantically assertible by us, and

Einstein's theory of relativity might turn out not to be true

in the sense that what Einstein's theory of relativity says might not be correctly assertible according to the Peircean conceptual scheme. This needs an explanation. As we will see, the explanation which we can provide explains at the same time how Sellars can speak of different senses of "true."

The reason why it seems odd to say "*p* is true but (maybe) not true" is that both relevant senses of "true," i.e., "semantically assertible by us" and "ideally true," have an endorsing effect (NI §27 ff.; SM, chap. V §53; WSNDL, 79 ff.). In contrast, Sellars's other senses of "true" do not have this effect. For example, I can call a statement "true *quoad* CS_{1700}," meaning that it is semantically assertible according to the rules of a certain conceptual scheme in 1700. But this does not express my endorsement of the statement, i.e., this use of "true" does not create "a practical context" (MMM, n. 9), a license or commitment to assert something. Endorsement is expressed only if the respective truth-statement says that a statement is semantically assertible according to a scheme that is authoritative for the speaker: either their own scheme since it is theirs, or the Peircean scheme, which would be authoritative for any concept user.

Thus, to say that a statement is true in the sense of "semantically assertible by us" is, among other things,[14] to endorse it and to express one's readiness to assert it. However, to say that the statement might not be ideally true is to revoke this endorsement. Thus, "*p* is true, but (maybe) not ideally true" simultaneously expresses endorsement and withholds endorsement of *p*. And given the equivalence schema for "true" (roughly, "*p* is true ↔*p*"), which Sellars accepts, to say that *p* is true but not (ideally) true would be to commit oneself to saying that *p*, but not *p*.[15]

This accounts for why it seems odd to say that p is true but maybe not ideally true, i.e., why the standard test for ambiguity fails in the case of "true." One way forward would be to say that "true" might still be ambiguous or polysemous. The failure of the ambiguity test would not be explained by an absence of ambiguity in "true," but by the fact that the two proposed meanings of "true" both have an endorsing effect on the pragmatic level.

Nevertheless, I want to explore a further strategy accounting for this failure. This is because the idea that "true" is ambiguous is less able to cope with the following problem. In contrast to the odd statement "p is true but (maybe) not true," this statement might seem acceptable:

p is semantically assertible by us, but (maybe) not true.

An objector to Sellars's views could appeal to this statement to show that "true" could never mean "semantically assertible by us" in the first place. The statement above appears intelligible and it does not seem like a contradiction. The objector might also argue that we need to be able to formulate statements like the one above to be able to consider changing our conceptual scheme, i.e., changing what is assertible by us. However, if we substitute "true" for "semantically assertible by us" in the statement above, as Sellars's immanent approach to truth seems to allow, we get "p is true, but (maybe) not true" which commits us to the contradiction "p but (maybe) not p." This might suggest that "true" cannot mean "semantically assertible by us."

However, the statement above ("p is semantically assertible by us, but maybe not true") seems intelligible only on a specific reading of "semantically assertible by us." It is intelligible only if we understand the expression "semantically assertible by us" in this statement as not endorsing p in the first place. Thus, to use a statement like the one above in an intelligible way is already to put some distance between oneself and the rules determining what is semantically assertible by us. In this case, "semantically assertible by us" would have a merely descriptive function and thus would not mean "true" in the sense under discussion here. The statement above could then be understood on the lines of

p is generally accepted as semantically assertible by us, but maybe not true.

However, on an endorsing reading of "semantically assertible by us," the statement above remains odd since it simultaneously endorses p and withholds this endorsement. Below, I will argue that similar statements can only be intelligibly made in an epistemic context where there is doubt

about whether the conceptual scheme we have accepted until now should be accepted.[16] The proposal about the context sensitivity of "true," which I will explore below, allows us to circumvent this possible objection to Sellars's immanent account of truth. However, if we treat "true" as simply ambiguous, we have less resources to avoid the objection, since it is then at least not *prima facie* clear why we cannot replace "semantically assertible by us" with "true" in the statement above (just as we could replace "private financial institution" with "bank" in any context).

Someone might raise the reverse objection and claim that "p is true, but not (ideally) true" is intelligible, in opposition to what I have claimed. "True" could thus be straightforwardly ambiguous. One way to formulate this objection would be to appeal to Sellars's version of Kantian transcendental idealism. We might understand "our conceptual scheme" to constitute a quasi-Kantian phenomenal realm and the ultimate, ideal conceptual scheme to constitute a quasi-Kantian noumenal realm (for some remarks by Sellars to support the feasibility of this alignment, see, e.g., PHM, §86; SM, chap. V §79). Both Kantian realms comprise real entities in some sense of "real," entities about which we can make true statements in some sense of "true." If we accept transcendental idealism, we ought to be able to say, for some p, that p is true (in the phenomenal realm or our current conceptual scheme) but not ideally true (in the noumenal realm or Sellars's ultimate conceptual scheme). From this perspective, we could thus regard at least some instances of "p is true but not (ideally) true" as intelligible.[17]

But even provided that we can defend a strong parallel between Kant's transcendental idealism and Sellars's position, this objection encounters problems. As we have seen, Sellars is committed to the equivalence principle (roughly, p is true $\leftrightarrow p$, TC; CSGH, 26 February 1970). He also claims that to say that p is true is to express a license for and a commitment to the assertion of p. All this means, however, that asserting "p is true, but not (ideally) true" commits us to asserting "p but not p," i.e., to asserting a contradiction. The objector owes us an account of how Sellars's commitments to the equivalence principle and to the pragmatic effects of "true" on the one hand and to transcendental idealism on the other hand can be harmonized. The solution in terms of context sensitivity, which I introduce below, might offer precisely such an account. It ought to allow a transcendental idealist reader of Sellars to say much of what she wants while avoiding the problem just outlined.

"True" as context-sensitive

Let us take stock. Our problem was to clarify Sellars's claim that "true," as applied to one discourse, has different senses. When we examined how "true" behaves in a standard test for ambiguity, we saw that it produces

the odd statement "*p* is true but not (ideally) true." The statement is odd since both senses of "true" under consideration have an endorsing effect and the statement thus simultaneously endorses and withholds endorsement of *p*. While this does not yet exclude the possibility that "true" is ambiguous that possibility faces further problems. We need some approach that accounts for all this and can explain what it means to say that "true" has different senses.

We can start by observing that it might be possible to endorse a sentence and withhold endorsement of it in *different* contexts.[18] Imagine Linda, a philosophy teacher, who reads a bedtime story to her child about the adventures of a smart eggplant. At some point, the child asks whether it is true that eggplants are violet, and Linda affirms without second thoughts. She tells her child what is correctly assertible according to the rules of their conceptual scheme, namely that eggplants are violet. However, when she teaches her philosophy seminar, Linda, a Sellarsian, could also intelligibly say that it might not be true that eggplants, or what they would turn out to "really" be, are violet.[19] Still, it seems that Linda cannot make the complex statement "It is true that eggplants are violet, but it is not (ideally) true" for the reasons advanced above.

Within Sellars's scheme, we, therefore, must account for three intuitively acceptable phenomena:

For some *p*:

1. It is intelligible to say "*p* is true" in the sense of "*p* is semantically assertible by us."
2. It is intelligible to say "*p* is (maybe) not true" in the sense of "*p* is (maybe) not assertible according to a Peircean conceptual scheme."[20]
3. It is never intelligible to say "*p* is true, but (maybe) not true" or "*p* is true, but (maybe) not ideally true."

My focus on this triad is not meant to suggest that we could not and do not formulate *affirmative* statements about what is ideally true, i.e., "*p* is (ideally) true." However, because of the problem captured in (3), which we discovered in the discussion of ambiguity above, this triad is the main data point that Sellars's notion of "different senses" of "true" needs to be able to account for. But, of course, the account below also allows the formulation of affirmative statements like "*p* is (ideally) true."

Ambiguity is one way in which two utterances of the "same" sentence, e.g., "This is a bank," can have different content. However, this is also possible by means of context-sensitive expressions, like indexicals or demonstratives. These expressions have a specific content or contribute to the truth value of an utterance only within a context.[21]

If "true" were context-sensitive in this way, this would help to account for (1)–(3) above. Context-sensitive expressions, in general, exhibit a similar behavior. We can, e.g., construe a comparable triad for the indexical "now," here concerning truth value rather than intelligibility:

1i) It is sometimes true to say "Jim is hungry now."
2i) It is sometimes true to say "Jim is not hungry now."
3i) It is never true to say "Jim is hungry now and not hungry now."

"Now" contributes differently to the content of the whole utterance in different contexts of utterance, i.e., at different times of utterance.[22] This explains why the triad for "now" is unproblematic.

For the utterances in (1i)–(3i), the relevant contextual parameter is the time of utterance. It is sensible to assume that the contextual aspect relevant to "true" concerns our epistemic situation. Sellars distinguishes the two senses of "true" under discussion by which conceptual scheme is authoritative for us at the moment of making a truth-statement. That suggests that the contextual aspect relevant to "true" is which conceptual scheme is taken to be authoritative in the context. In a context where we take our current conceptual framework at face value (e.g., when reading our children bedtime stories), to say that *p* is true would be to say that *p* is semantically assertible by us. In contexts of doubt about our conceptual scheme, a statement like "*p* might not be true" will mean "*p* might not be semantically assertible according to the Peircean scheme." Similarly, in contexts of distance toward our current conceptual scheme but confidence about some aspects of the Peircean scheme, i.e., where we feel that "we are not without some glimpse of the end" (PHM, §104)—a context which Sellars sometimes writes from—we might say "*p* is true" with the sense of "*p* is assertible according to the Peircean scheme." These latter contexts may arise specifically in scientific or philosophical inquiry where a critical stance toward conceptual norms is typical.

These latter contexts can be characterized by what Sellars calls "uncertainty about what is certain":

> Let us suppose that a person has acquired a firmly embedded conceptual frame. In employing this frame, he will distinguish between those propositions which are *certain* and those which are *at best merely probable* on the evidence. The former will coincide with propositions which, in his frame, are true *ex vi terminorum*. Notice, however, that when the learning process begins to bring about a modification of his conceptual frame, he will admit to being "uncertain" of even those propositions which, in that frame, are true *ex vi terminorum*. It is clear from this description that *we are dealing with two different senses of the contrast*

between certainty and uncertainty. The first may be called the "intra-conceptual," the second the "extra-conceptual" sense. Thus, it makes good sense to say, "I am uncertain about its being certain that all A's are B." Uncertainty in this *second* sense is not something that can be remedied by "paying closer attention to what we mean." It can be over-come (should this be desirable) only by more firmly learning to apply the conceptual system in question to experience, without hesitation or uneasiness.

<div align="right">(ITSA, §66; Sellars's emphases)</div>

Sellars distinguishes two senses of uncertainty here. Let us call them "uncertainty$_1$" and "uncertainty$_2$." In epistemic contexts characterized by uncertainty$_1$, we take our conceptual scheme for granted. We are merely uncertain what the rules of our language would license us to say in our circumstances, either because we lack factual information or are unsure what these rules are. If we are uncertain$_2$, in contrast, we can have a per-fectly good grasp of the facts and of the rules constituting the conceptual scheme we have so far accepted. But we are uncertain whether these rules are the ones we ought to adopt.

According to the suggestion we are exploring, "true" would have the sense of "semantically assertible by us" in contexts where we are uncer-tain$_1$ or not uncertain at all. In such contexts, what is at issue is whether a particular statement is correctly assertible given our rules. In contrast, in contexts where we are uncertain$_2$, i.e., where we try to decide whether we ought to adopt the rules we have so far accepted, "true" would have the sense of "ideally true" or "semantically assertible according to the Peircean scheme." In such a context, we distance ourselves from the up to then firmly established rules of our conceptual scheme (see also WSNDL, 261–2).

One way in which this could work is to understand "true" as a cov-ertly indexical expression. Like other indexical expressions, "true" would have the same meaning on a context-independent level (what Kaplan calls "character," Kaplan 1989b). Based on this context-independent meaning, it would contribute differently to the content of the statement in which it appears depending on context. "True" could then have the context-independent meaning "semantically assertible according to the concep-tual scheme authoritative in the context of utterance." In any context, "conceptual scheme authoritative in the context of utterance" picks out one of two values: either "our" conceptual scheme (CSO) or the Peircean conceptual scheme (CSP). Depending on that context, "true" would then have the content either of "semantically assertible according to CSO" or "semantically assertible according to CSP."

Concerning ideal truth, I have concentrated on the formulation "*p* might not be (ideally) true." This is, first, because the failed test for ambiguity

showed that the formulation "*p* is true but not (ideally) true" is not accept-able, and this was a data point to be accommodated in the proposal on how to understand Sellars's claim about "true" having different senses. Second, it is because this use of the concept of ideal truth (a "cautionary" use, as Rorty calls it), will be more typical than the positive assertion "*p* is (ideally) true." We are hardly ever in a position to make well-justified claims about what would be assertible according to the Peircean scheme. Of course, this does not mean that we cannot make statements like "*p* is (ideally) true."

It is therefore not excluded that two speakers state "*p* is true," where one uses the immanent and the other the ideal concept of truth. In such cases, which of the two concepts of truth the respective speaker uses might be transparent from the context, e.g., after an evident shift on one of the speakers' parts to a context of epistemic distance toward our con-ceptual scheme.[23] Even if the context is not transparent to the audience, the two different truth-concepts will be distinguishable in their inferential relations. Depending on which truth-predicate is used, the speaker will justify her statement differently when challenged, drawing either on the resources of her current conceptual scheme or those potentially available in the Peircean scheme.

The solution proposed here throws further light on the statement "*p* is semantically assertible by us, but (maybe) not true." This statement could be intelligibly made only in a context of epistemic distance toward our conceptual scheme. This context is a context characterized by uncertainty$_2$, i.e., a context in which it is not clear what should be accepted as seman-tically assertible. Therefore, "semantically assertible by us" could not be understood as an endorsing expression in this context, i.e., it could not be replaced by "true." Since it is transparent that the statement above makes sense only in a context characterized by uncertainty$_2$, merely making this statement can shift the context toward a context characterized by uncer-tainty$_2$ (see below). This is why the statement sounds *prima facie* plausible. But since "true" does not have the sense of "semantically assertible by us" in this context, the fact that this statement is plausible does not show that a statement like "*p* is true but (maybe) not true" makes sense after all, nor does it show that Sellars's analysis of the basic sense of "true" as "seman-tically assertible by us" must be wrong.

The view that "true" is context-sensitive in the way suggested here seems to have a potentially unwanted consequence. On this view, a user of some conceptual scheme who says "*p* is true" and another user of *the same* conceptual scheme who simultaneously says "*p* is not true" seem not to disagree necessarily. This might happen when the first speaker speaks from a context of being "firmly embedded" in their conceptual scheme, while the second speaker speaks from a reflective epistemic position toward this

conceptual scheme. In this case, according to our solution, the first speaker says that p is semantically assertible by us. In contrast, the second speaker says that p is not semantically assertible according to the Peircean scheme. These claims do not conflict. However, it might seem counterintuitive to deny that the two speakers disagree when one claims that p is true and the other that p is not true (by the equivalence principle this would commit us to deny that the two speakers disagree when the first claims that p and the second that $\neg p$).

In Section 2.2, we have already identified a potential lack of disagreement between "p is true" and "p is not true" as a problem for Sellars's claim that "true" means "semantically assertible by us." On Sellars's approach, two speakers identifying with different linguistic communities could claim that p is true and that p is not true, respectively, but need not disagree. "We" and "us" are indexicals, so the two speakers in question would not disagree more than two speakers, respectively, asserting "I am French" and "I am not French."

But the problem is slightly different in the case of context sensitivity, which we are considering now, where "true" could either have the sense of "semantically assertible by us" or "semantically assertible according to the Peircean scheme" depending on the context. We can understand utterances like "p is (not) ideally true" not merely as an assertion about truth but also as an attempt to shift the context toward one characterized by epistemic reflection of our conceptual scheme. This new context does not need to be in place before the utterance. The utterance itself can induce or be an attempt to induce such a context shift (see the notion of accommodation in Lewis 1979).[24] So, in our case, the issue between the two speakers is not merely whether p is true but also from what epistemic context we should speak.[25] If the attempted context shift is successful, there might then be disagreement between the speakers about what is ideally true, or disagreement could at least persist at a second-order level concerning what epistemic context we ought to adopt. So, the approach suggested here need not have the consequence that our two speakers do not disagree at all.

The solution proposed here, i.e., that "true" has different senses depending on the epistemic context from which we speak, might seem like an *ad hoc* suggestion in relation to Sellars's thought. Sellars never explicitly makes this claim about "true." However, as I would like to show briefly, considerations about context sensitivity are ingrained in Sellars's thinking, though typically not under this label. A solution in terms of context sensitivity would thus be in the spirit of many of Sellars's philosophical proposals.

During Sellars's productive period, context sensitivity was not as intensively discussed as it is today. At the time, theories of context sensitivity were mostly focused only on indexicals in the narrow sense ("I," "here," "now") and demonstratives ("this," "that"). Indexicals and

demonstratives had been reflected already to some extent, e.g., by Frege (1918, 64–5), Russell (1940, chap. VII), or Strawson (1959, chap. 1) and Sellars was aware of the problems posed by such expressions. However, he never developed a systematic approach to context-sensitive expressions. When broader interest in context sensitivity was sparked by the work of David Lewis, Robert Stalnaker, and David Kaplan, among others, Sellars's productive period was already ending.[26]

Given all this, it is striking that many of Sellars's philosophical claims are based on the recognition that certain linguistic expressions are indexical or otherwise context-sensitive, often in a subtle way. Such claims are part of his theory of intentions and morality (e.g., SM, chap. VII, §34 and sec. XVIII), picturing (SM, chap. V §30), his theory of perception (IKTE, §10), his approach to existence statements (TWO), and, as already discussed, the idea that truth is semantic assertibility by us.

Context sensitivity is also central to Sellars's account of meaning statements. As we have seen, such statements are context-sensitive in several ways. Dot-quoted expressions, the essential ingredient in meaning statements, pick out a linguistic function only relative to a base language which is determined by context. As a consequence, all metalinguistic statements exploiting functional classification are context-sensitive for Sellars. This is a sizable class of statements that also includes covertly metalinguistic statements like modal statements, statements about abstract entities, or statements about events (see, e.g., TWO, 588). Meaning statements are context-sensitive in the further sense that what counts as relevantly similar functional roles of the expressions involved depends on context (see Section 4.1). Sellars also often gestures sympathetically toward Friedrich Waismann's concept of open texture (e.g., EPM, §18), one of the early instances of the contextualist idea that many expressions mean different things in different contexts and that we cannot anticipate all their potentially correct applications.[27]

A remarkable way of employing the notion of context sensitivity occurs in Sellars's essay "Reflections on Contrary to Duty Imperatives" (CDI). In the essay, Sellars explores ways of circumventing the problems created by so-called contrary-to-duty imperatives. Contrary-to-duty imperatives are statements about how we ought to act if we have already disregarded an obligation ("If someone steals a book, they ought to return it"). Chisholm (1963) claims that standard deontic logic generates contradictions when faced with contrary-to-duty imperatives. Sellars's solution to this problem is based on the idea that the truth value of statements like "He ought to *A*" depends on context (although he does not describe his solution in these terms). He claims that a statement like

Charles ought to return book *b*

can differ in truth value depending on the circumstances in which it is used. In a context that includes the fact that Charles has stolen the book, the ought-statement is true. In a context where no stealing has happened, it might be true that Charles ought not to return the book. Thus, it can be true both that he ought to return the book and that he ought not to return it. Still, *pace* Chisholm, no contradiction arises since the two statements would be evaluated as true in different contexts. These ideas on Sellars's part are an early instance of relativism about truth, an approach much debated today.[28]

The recognition that context sensitivity is a widespread phenomenon relevant to many philosophical questions is thus deeply rooted in Sellars's thinking. To suggest that "true," too, might behave in a context-sensitive way is, therefore, at least not a *prima facie* inappropriate move within his system.

So, there seem to be ways of defending Sellars's idea that we can simultaneously adopt two endorsing senses of "true." However, this raises a further issue: Why should we do so? Once we have developed a reasonable concept of ideal truth, why should we not drop the immanent notion of truth as semantic assertibility by us? After all, semantic assertibility by us looks like a second-rate concept of truth compared to ideal truth. It is at least not common among authors favoring an assertibility-based approach to truth to adopt two assertibility-based concepts of truth for the same discourse.

One possible proposal is that the analyses leading to Sellars's two concepts of truth are differently motivated. The claim that "true" has the sense of "semantically assertible by us" might be seen as an analysis of how "true" is in fact used. The transcendent sense of "true" as "semantically assertible according to the Peircean scheme" might, in contrast, be understood as a revisionary proposal, i.e., a proposal about how to improve our use of "true" (in the case of empirical and, maybe, normative statements). But this suggestion does not coincide with Sellars's claims. He suggests that

> however many sophisticated senses of "true" may be introduced, and however important they may be, the connection of truth with *our current conceptual structure* remains essential, for the cash value of S-assertibility is assertion by us *hic et nunc*.
>
> <div align="right">(SM, chap. V §53; Sellars's emphases)</div>

This indicates that the immanent truth-predicate is not something that ought to be replaced by an improved truth-predicate in Sellars's view. At the same time, when he introduces his transcendent concept of truth, Sellars claims that "in the case of factual propositions, we are haunted

by the ideal of *the* truth about the world" (SM, chap. V §55; Sellars's emphasis). This, in turn, suggests that, in his view, we already possess a transcendent concept of truth. His account of a transcendent concept of truth is the result of conceptual analysis, not conceptual engineering.

A more workable suggestion might be that the immanent concept of truth cannot be abandoned because it has a unique function for us. For example, the immanent sense of "true" might be the default sense, and the context in which we take our current conceptual scheme at face value might be the default context when we make a truth-statement. In contrast, the context of "extra-conceptual uncertainty," i.e., of uncertainty$_2$, would have to be induced by signals shifting the epistemic context.

Are there any reasons why "semantically assertible by us" should be the default sense of "true"? Again, this is not a question that Sellars explicitly discusses. Still, at least two reasons compatible with Sellars's commitments might support this claim. First, the occasions for speaking from a context of being "firmly embedded" in our current scheme might be more frequent than contexts of epistemic distance to our conceptual scheme. Thus, when we ask whether p is true, we might more often be interested in what can correctly be claimed within our conceptual scheme than in whether we should adopt new rules. When the child from our example asks Linda whether it is true that eggplants are violet, it would be inappropriate to answer that, given the conceptual changes suggested by current scientific theory, this is perhaps not true. In this situation, we show a child how to use our conceptual scheme. Even outside such pedagogical contexts, many questions about the truth of some p will take our conceptual scheme for granted (as when I ask someone whether what I read about some movie star yesterday is true).

Second, truth-statements have the form "It is true that p" and "that p" is a covert dot-quoted expression for Sellars. So, truth-statements look like this, according to him:

•S•s are true

However, dot-quoted expressions are context-sensitive. They pick out a linguistic function only relative to a base language determined by context. It is reasonable to assume that in the standard case, this base language coincides with the language that is salient when we ask according to what conceptual scheme the statement we claim to be true is to be semantically assertible. The most easily accessible base language is our language here and now. This could support the claim that the default understanding of "true" is "semantically assertible according to our language."

As Sellars claims, we can then "loosen" the connection of predicates like "true" to our conceptual scheme and extend their application to other

schemes, including Peirceish (SM, chap. V §63). However, such loosening seems more demanding from a cognitive perspective. Applying the concept of ideal truth has more demanding presuppositions than applying the immanent concept of truth. To use it, we need a second-order and third-order grasp of our conceptual scheme. We need to grasp our conceptual system as a conceptual system, i.e., as a set of interlocking rules. We also need to grasp that there are higher-order rules (e.g., the requirement of explanatory coherence) that tell us how the first set of rules ought to be made up. We need to grasp that our rules can fall short of realizing these higher-order rules and that other possible sets of rules might do so better. We might grasp all this merely implicitly but at least this implicit understanding would need to be harnessed to apply the concept of ideal truth. This seems cognitively more effortful than applying the immanent concept of truth. It would be most feasible in situations where something is at stake epistemically, e.g., when there is reasonable doubt about whether we should adopt the rules that we have adopted so far.

Thus, while there are questions about Sellars's two endorsing senses of "true" which we ought to raise, i.e., how we can and why we should adopt two such senses simultaneously, we can find answers to these questions which, while not explicitly given by Sellars, at least integrate naturally with typical lines of his thinking.

Notes

1 To avoid some metaphilosophical implications of the term "manifest image," I will primarily use the term "common sense." I rely on the fact that Sellars often uses the term himself as a contrast to theoretical scientific inquiry (PSIM, 55; PHM, §94; SM, chap. V sec. IX–X).

2 Different aspects of Sellars's philosophy of science are discussed in (deVries 2005, chap. 6; 2012, 2016; Gutting 1977, 1978, 1982; Lehrer 1973; O'Shea 2007, chap. 2; Pitt 1981; van Fraassen 1975, 1976).

3 For a classical account of inference to the best explanation (see Harman 1965).

4 For some contemporary discussions about scientific realism (see, e.g., Chakravartty 2007; Chang 2022; Psillos 1999; van Fraassen 1980).

5 In contrast to contemporary scientific realists, Sellars does not draw on empirical data from the history of science. He uses examples from the history of science only sparingly and without developing a detailed historical account of the respective theories and their development (e.g., Boyle's law and Charles's law describing the behavior of gases on the one hand and the theoretical van der Waals equation on the other hand, LT, §41).

6 Gutting (1977, 78) briefly notes a similar distinction between two different ways of understanding science in Sellars. However, Gutting claims that scientific realism would turn out to be a necessary truth on an *a priori* understanding of science. This claim may be too strong, at least if we understand scientific realism as the thesis that the *theoretical* claims of science can be true and refer

to things in the world. But as Gutting himself notes, it is only contingently true that science uses theoretical postulation.

7 See also (EPM, §40): "what we call the scientific enterprise is the flowering of a dimension of discourse which already exists in what historians call the "pre-scientific stage," and […] failure to understand this type of discourse "writ large"—in science—may lead, indeed, has often led to a failure to appreciate its role in "ordinary usage," and, as a result, to a failure to understand the full logic of even the most fundamental, the "simplest" empirical terms."

8 See also (SRLG, §82): "An understanding of the role of material moves in the working of a language is the key to the rationale of scientific method."

9 See also later echoes of this continuity claim, e.g., in (SM, chap. VI §36), where Sellars claims that the logic of scientific explanation "is, of course, just ordinary explanation writ large." EPM, with its emphasis on the continuity between common sense and science, was published several years before PSIM, where Sellars introduces his distinction between the manifest (observational) and the scientific (theoretical) image of humans in the world. Arguably, PSIM initiates a possibly misleading tendency to rhetorically deemphasize the continuity between science and common sense in Sellars's texts.

10 For a more recent inferentialist defense of the claim that competent users may differ in how comprehensively they master the inferential potential of an expression, see Drobňák (2021). Sellars himself is sympathetic to Putnam's ideas about the division of linguistic labor (RDP, 461).

11 From Sellars's perspective, science's privilege would not be confined to the function of what Huw Price calls "environment tracking" (Price et al. 2013, 39). Reshaping our inferential principles through scientific inquiry also impacts our practical reasoning for Sellars and ultimately determines what we ought to do (see, e.g., OMP; SM chap. VII; and Section 3.2).

12 For a similar understanding of "science" in Sellars, which also emphasizes some of these consequences, see Sicha (2014, §12(2) and §14).

13 For a helpful systematization, see Shapiro (2020).

14 Shapiro (2021) claims, for example, that the truth-predicate serves to acknowledge communicative authority.

15 Assuming that it is acceptable to move from "p is not true" to "not p." Given Sellars's commitments about ideal truth (e.g., bivalence) this move ought to be acceptable in his framework.

16 At the end of LRB, Sellars describes this as a situation where a set of up-to-now living rules becomes "dead." It "dies" and is replaced by a new set of living rules at the very moment where we start reflecting on a justification for these former rules (LRB, §43).

17 Thanks to Mahdi Ranaee for raising the objection.

18 Kölbel (2008) argues that "true" is ambiguous between a deflationary and an inflationary meaning, or that it is, in his words, "syntactically ambiguous" (while I will argue for what he calls a "semantic ambiguity" of "true"). However, he does not consider objections of the type advanced above.

19 According to Sellars, our final conceptual scheme would not recognize colored physical objects. Strictly speaking, "'Eggplants are violet' may not be (ideally) true" does not amount to saying "'Eggplants are violet' may be (ideally) false,"

at least if we understand ideal truth or falsity to concern what is assertible *in* the Peircean scheme. This is because we cannot even formulate the statement about eggplants with the conceptual resources of the Peircean scheme. Rather, as Sellars points out in a different context, "'Eggplants are violet' may not be (ideally) true" is the rejection of the whole conceptual framework where we can formulate such statements about eggplants (EPM, §41).

20 Of course, we can also sometimes say "*p* is maybe not true" where "true" has the sense of "semantically assertible by us," but this is not relevant here.

21 There is no consensus on what contexts are. I merely want to suggest that "true" might be a context-sensitive expression in Sellars's system on some suitable understanding of context.

22 For a classical account of indexicality, see Kaplan (1989b). There are many different views on whether and to what extent different types of context-sensitive expressions have a context-invariant meaning and what kinds of expressions ought to count as context-sensitive in the first place (see, e.g., Searle 1978; Recanati 2004; Cappelen and LePore 2005).

23 Thanks to Cord Friebe for pressing this point.

24 For Sellars, we may shift the context by, e.g., employing the word "really" in a particular "tone of voice" (see, e.g., WSNDL, 260) when we ask things like "Do *K*s *really* exist?".

25 In the discussion in EPM §41 referenced above, Sellars suggests the idea of such intended context shifts when he claims that statements like "There are no colored physical objects" should be understood as a "rejection, (in some sense)" of our entrenched, commonsense conceptual framework.

26 Hector-Neri Castañeda's work on quasi-indicators inspired some of these debates. Sellars and Castañeda engaged in intensive correspondence (though not about problems connected to context sensitivity).

27 Sellars further suggests a contextualist treatment of the verb "know" as used in communication. He claims that standards for when someone can correctly be said to know something vary with context (see WSNDL, 140–41). For a more recent exposition of this view, see Cohen (1999).

28 For the moral case, including empirical findings (see, e.g., Khoo and Knobe 2018). At points, Sellars's TWO also approximates truth relativism about tense.

References

Works by Wilfrid Sellars

I cite Sellars's texts using the abbreviations that have become a standard device within Sellars scholarship. In the few cases where no established abbreviation exists, I introduce one.

Where possible, I refer to places in Sellars's texts by using paragraph numbers. In some cases, these paragraph numbers do not appear in the original published version of the respective text but were added only later, often in the collections of Sellars's writings issued by Ridgeview. Nevertheless, this numbering system has become a standard tool for citing Sellars's texts. Information about the relevant collection of Sellars's texts can be found in this list. EPM is cited using the original paragraph numbers.

AAE   "Actions and Events." *Noûs* 7 (2): 179–202. DOI: 10.2307/2214491. 1973.

AE   "Abstract Entities." *Review of Metaphysics* 16 (4): 627–71. 1963.

BBK   "Being and Being Known." *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 34: 28–49. DOI: 10.5840/acpaproc19603413. 1960.

BD   "Berkeley and Descartes: Reflections on the 'New Way of Ideas'." In *Studies in Perception: Interpretations in the History of Philosophy and Science*, edited by Peter K. Machamer and Robert G. Turnbull, 259–311. Columbus: Ohio State University Press. 1977.

CC   "Conceptual Change." In *Conceptual Change*, edited by Patrick Maynard and Glenn Pearce, 77–93. Dordrecht: D. Reidel. 1973.

CDCM "Counterfactuals, Dispositions, and the Causal Modalities." In *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Vol. II*, edited by Herbert Feigl Michael Scriven and Grover Maxwell, 225–308. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1958.

CDI   "Reflections on Contrary to Duty Imperatives." *Noûs* 1 (4): 303–44. DOI: 10.2307/2214622. 1967.

CIL   "Concepts as Involving Laws and Inconceivable without Them." *Philosophy of Science* 15 (4): 287–315. 1948. Paragraph numbering cited according to reprint in PPPW, 86–114.

CPCI "Conditional Promises and Conditional Intentions (Including a Reply to Castañeda)." In *Agent, Language and the Structure of the World: Essays Presented to Hector-Neri Castañeda, with His Replies*, edited by James E. Tomberlin, 195–221. Indianapolis: Hackett. 1983.

CSBA "Correspondence between Wilfrid Sellars and Bruce Aune 1961–1979." In *The Metaphysics of Practice – Writings on Action, Community, and Obligation*, edited by Kyle Ferguson and Jeremy R. Koons, 658–731. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2023.

CSGH "Correspondence between Wilfrid Sellars and Gilbert Harman on Truth." www.ditext.com/sellars/sh-corr.html. 1970.

EAE "Empiricism and Abstract Entities." In *The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap*, edited by Paul A. Schilpp, 431–68. La Salle, IL: Open Court. 1963.

ENWW "Epistemology and the New Way of Words." *Journal of Philosophy* 44 (24): 645–60. DOI: 10.2307/2019792. 1947. Paragraph numbering cited according to reprint in PPPW, 28–40.

EPM "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind." In *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, edited by Herbert Feigl and Michael Scriven, 1: 253–329. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1956.

FMPP "Foundations for a Metaphysics of Pure Process." *The Monist* 64 (1): 3–90. 1981.

GE "Grammar and Existence." *Mind* 69 (276): 499–533. 1960.

IILO "Imperatives, Intentions, and the Logic of 'Ought.'" In *Morality and the Language of Conduct*, edited by Hector-Neri Castaneda and George Nakhnikian, 159–214. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. 1963.

IKTE "The Role of Imagination in Kant's Theory of Experience." In *Categories: A Colloquium*, edited by Henry W. Johnstone, Jr., 231–45. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University. 1978.

IM "Inference and Meaning." *Mind* 62 (247): 313–38. 1953.

ITSA "Is There a Synthetic a Priori?" *Philosophy of Science* 20 (2): 121–38. 1953. Paragraph numbering cited according to reprint in SPR, 298–320.

IV "Induction as Vindication." *Philosophy of Science* 31 (3): 197–231. 1964.

KPT *Kant and Pre-Kantian Themes: Lectures by Wilfrid Sellars*, edited by Pedro Amaral. Atascadero: Ridgeview. 2002.

KTE "Some Remarks on Kant's Theory of Experience." *Journal of Philosophy* 64 (20): 633–47. DOI: 10.2307/2024460. 1967. Paragraph numbering cited according to reprint in KTM, 269–82.

KTI "Kant's Transcendental Idealism." *Collections of Philosophy* 6: 165–81. 1976. Paragraph numbering cited according to reprint in KTM, 403–17.

KTM *Kant's Transcendental Metaphysics: Sellars' Cassirer Lectures and Other Essays*, edited by Jeffrey Sicha. Atascadero: Ridgeview. 2002.

LL "Draft for a Lecture in London on 23 May 1966." Document 31735062221357, Box 40, Folder 01–08. Wilfrid S. Sellars Papers, Archives of Scientific Philosophy, Archives & Special Collections, University of Pittsburgh Library System. https://digital.library.pitt.edu/islandora/object/pitt%3A31735062221357. 1966.

LLVI   "Draft of Locke Lecture VI/SM chap. VII." Document 31735062221431, Box 40, Folder 01–08. Wilfrid S. Sellars Papers, Archives of Scientific Philosophy, Archives & Special Collections, University of Pittsburgh Library System. https://digital.library.pitt.edu/islandora/object/pitt%3A31735062221431. 1965.

LRB   "Language, Rules and Behavior." In *John Dewey: Philosopher of Science and Freedom*, edited by Sidney Hook, 289–315. New York: The Dial Press. 1949. Paragraph numbering cited according to reprint in PPPW, 117–34.

LT   "The Language of Theories." In *Current Issues in the Philosophy of Science*, edited by Herbert Feigl and Grover Maxwell, 57–77. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. 1961.

MEV   "Mental Events." *Philosophical Studies* 39 (4): 325–45. DOI: 10.1007/BF00360342. 1981.

MFC   "Meaning as Functional Classification – A Perspective on the Relation of Syntax to Semantics." *Synthese* 27 (3/4): 417–37. DOI: 10.1007/BF00484606. 1974.

MGEC   "More on Givenness and Explanatory Coherence." In *Justification and Knowledge*, edited by George Pappas, 169–82. Dordrecht: D. Reidel. 1979.

ML   "Meditations Leibnitziennes." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 2 (2): 105–18. 1965.

MMM   "Hochberg on Mapping, Meaning, and Metaphysics." In *Midwest Studies in Philosophy II*, edited by Peter French, Theodore Vehling, Jr., and Howard Wettstein, 214–24. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1977.

MP   "Metaphysics and the Concept of a Person." In *The Logical Way of Doing Things*, edited by Karel Lambert, 219–52. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1969. Paragraph numbering cited according to reprint in KTM, 283–307.

NAO   *Naturalism and Ontology*. Atascadero: Ridgeview. 1980.

NDL   "Are There Non-Deductive Logics." In *Essays in Honor of Carl G. Hempel*, edited by Nicholas Rescher, 83–103. Dordrecht: D. Reidel. 1970.

NI   "Notes on Intentionality." *Journal of Philosophy* 61 (21): 655–65. DOI: 10.2307/2023043. 1964. Paragraph numbering cited according to reprint in PPME, 128–40.

NS   "Naming and Saying." *Philosophy of Science* 29 (1): 7–26. 1962. Paragraph numbering cited according to reprint in SPR, 225–46.

OAFP   "On Accepting First Principles." In *Philosophical Perspectives 2, Epistemology*, edited by James E. Tomberlin, 301–14. Atascadero: Ridgeview. 1988.

OMP   "'Ought' and Moral Principles." A lecture from 1966. In *The Metaphysics of Practice – Writings on Action, Community, and Obligation*, edited by Kyle Ferguson and Jeremy R. Koons, 79–96. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2023.

ORAV   "On Reasoning about Values." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 17 (2): 81–101. 1980.

P   "Particulars." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 13 (2): 184–99. DOI: 10.2307/2103871. 1952. Paragraph numbering cited according to reprint in SPR, 282–97.

PHM   "Phenomenalism." In *Science, Perception and Reality*, 60–105. Atascadero: Ridgeview. 1963.

PPME   *Philosophical Perspectives: Metaphysics and Epistemology*. Atascadero: Ridgeview. 1977.

PPE   "Pure Pragmatics and Epistemology." *Philosophy of Science* 14 (3): 181–202. 1947. Paragraph numbering cited according to reprint in PPPW, 4–25.

PPPW   *Pure Pragmatics and Possible Worlds*, edited by Jeffrey Sicha. Atascadero: Ridgeview. 1980.

PSIM   "Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man." In *Frontiers of Science and Philosophy*, edited by Robert Colodny, 35–78. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press. 1962. Paragraph numbering cited according to reprint in SPR, 1–40.

QMSP   "Quotation Marks, Sentences, and Propositions." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 10 (4): 515–25. DOI: 10.2307/2103418. 1950.

RDP   "Reply to Dennett and Putnam." *Synthese* 27 (3/4): 457–66. 1974.

RM   "Reply to Marras." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 2 (4): 485–93. DOI: 10.1080/00455091.1973.10716059. 1973.

RNWW(R)   "Realism and the New Way of Words." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 8 (4): 601–34. 1948. Cited from the revised version (RNWWR) reprinted in *Readings in Philosophical Analysis*, edited by Herbert Feigl and Wilfrid Sellars, 424–56. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts. 1949. Paragraph numbering cited according to reprint in PPPW, 46–78.

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SE   "Science and Ethics." In *Philosophical Perspectives: Metaphysics and Epistemology*, 209–32. Atascadero: Ridgeview. 1977.

SK   "The Structure of Knowledge." In *Action, Knowledge and Reality: Studies in Honor of Wilfrid Sellars*, edited by Hector-Neri Castañeda, 295–347. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill. 1975.

SM   *Science and Metaphysics – Variations on Kantian Themes*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1968.

SPR   *Science, Perception, and Reality*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1963. Reprinted by Atascadero: Ridgeview. 1991.

SRI   "Scientific Realism or Irenic Instrumentalism: A Critique of Nagel and Feyerabend on Theoretical Explanation." In *Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Vol. II*, edited by Robert Cohen and Max Wartofsky, 171–204. New York: Humanities Press. 1965.

SRLG	"Some Reflections on Language Games." *Philosophy of Science* 21 (3): 204–28. 1954. Cited from the slightly revised version in SPR, 321–58.
SRPC	"Some Reflections on Perceptual Consciousness." In *Crosscurrents in Phenomenology*, edited by Ronald Bruzina and Bruce W. Wilshire, 169–85. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff. 1978.
SRT	"Is Scientific Realism Tenable?" *Proceedings of the Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association* II: 307–34. 1976.
SSIS	"Science, Sense Impressions, and Sensa: A Reply to Cornman." *The Review of Metaphysics* 24 (3): 391–447. 1971.
SSMB	"A Semantical Solution of the Mind-Body Problem." *Methodos* 5: 45–84. 1953.
TA	"Thought and Action." In *Freedom and Determinism*, edited by Keith Lehrer, 105–39. New York: Random House. 1966.
TC	"Truth and 'Correspondence.'" *The Journal of Philosophy* 59 (2): 29–56. DOI: 10.2307/2023294. 1962. Paragraph numbering cited according to reprint in SPR, 197–224.
TE	"Theoretical Explanation." In *Philosophy of Science: The Delaware Seminar*, Vol. II, edited by William L. Reese and Bernard Baumrin, 61–78, New York: John Wiley. 1963. Paragraph numbering cited according to reprint in PPME, 141–56.
TTC	"Towards a Theory of the Categories." In *Experience and Theory*, edited by Lawrence Foster and J.W. Swanson, 55–78. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press. 1970.
TTP	"Towards a Theory of Predication." In *How Things Are*, edited by James Bogen and James McGuire, 281–322. Dordrecht: D. Reidel. 1983.
TWO	"Time and the World Order." In *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, Vol. III, edited by Herbert Feigl and Grover Maxwell, 527–616. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1962.
VR	"Volitions Re-Affirmed." In *Action Theory*, edited by Myles Brand and Douglas Walton, 47–66. Dordrecht: D. Reidel. 1976.
WSNDL	*Wilfrid Sellars – Notre Dame Lectures*. Edited by David Landy and Pedro Amaral. Atascadero: Ridgeview. 2018.

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