Realism, Nominalism and Wilfrid Sellars: A Critical Evaluation of the Metaphysics of Epistemology and Ontology

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

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M. Klaponski's Thesis Abstract:

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Principle Claims of the Thesis:

Through a critical evaluation and elucidation of the philosophies of Realism and Nominalism, I argue that Philosophical Realism provides a better ontological and epistemological account of attribute agreement, subject-predicate discourse and abstract reference.

Wilfrid Sellars argues that his system of metalinguistic nominalism provides a better account of reality than Realism and other forms of Nominalism. I argue that this form of nominalism does not adequately explain the problems of attribute agreement, subject-predicate discourse and abstract reference. I will claim that Sellars's invocation of distributive singular terms, which are given the ontological status of particulars, and linguistic tokens (representing *a specialized form of the copula*), are actually a new set of universals, which are actually functioning as linguistic types. I argue that any and all types are actually abstract entities that refer to universals.

I take the exemplification *nexus* to be primary and irreducible. Thus, *nexus* acts as the ontological primitive upon which we establish Realist metaphysics. As a corollary of taking exemplification to be primary, one may avoid the regresses which prey upon both Realism and Nominalism. Thus, by positing universals as the true ontological ground of reality, we provide a better account of attribute agreement, subject-predicate discourse and abstract reference.

Chapter I

Section I: The Problem of Universals

This thesis argues that Realism provides a better ontology than nominalism for understanding the essence of reality, especially the particular problems of attribute agreement, subject-predicate discourse and abstract reference. The realist ontology posits universals, which are the abstract and extra-linguistic objects of the realist ontology, in addition to particulars (which Nominalists claim are the only objects of reality). W. Sellars' metalinguistic nominalism (also called psychological nominalism or verbal behaviourism) holds that "thinking is a linguistic affair". Two outcomes of this form of nominalism are that: there are no abstract entities and that the Given is a myth.

This thesis will be an exposition and critique of the sophisticated theory of meta-linguistic nominalism of Wilfrid Sellars. Once the analytical groundwork for our examination of Sellars' of nominalism is in place, we may carefully proceed to an educated critique of the position, in the spirit of a *Realistic* ontological view of reality.

Following suit with Sellars' own *praxis* and opinion of what the ultimate goal of philosophy *should be,* we shall proceed with caution as we attempt to examine how things 'in the broadest possible sense' hang together 'in the broadest possible sense' of the words. But such aphorisms in and of themselves prove to be more enigmatic than enlightening to our discussion, for the nature of metalinguistic nominalism is decidedly mired in the complex diction and semantics of the Sellarsian philosophy of language and of mind. As such, to make our discussion applicable to the broad purview of the *problems of philosophy* in general, we must de-mystify the trappings of Nominalism and Realism with a thoroughgoing elucidation of the central claims of both

philosophical positions. This will require detailed analysis of not only the claims central to the various theories of Nominalism and Realism respectively, but also the elaborate and often confusing philosophical postulates of Sellars' own arguments for his metalinguistic nominalism, which spans the course of several decades of scholarship. This will prove to be our greatest task, for Sellars is a philosopher's philosopher, one who truly shakes the very foundations of orthodox conceptions of philosophy.

In the 'broadest possible sense' of the terms that one might endeavor to apply to a sensible and rational discussion of *the problem of universals*, let us begin by simplifying Sellarsian metalinguistic nominalism. Immediately we begin to risk an over-simplification of Sellars' theory (in doing this), resulting in 'missing the forest for the trees'. For now, let us throw caution to the wind and assert that metalinguistic nominalism holds that all thought, and essentially, all thinking, is reducible to language. More specifically, this entails that there can be no pre-linguistic awareness in logical space, or that thinking is *a linguistic affair*. This idea, of *psychological nominalism*, is best articulated in Sellars' groundbreaking work, Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind:

> ...(according to which) *all* awareness of *sorts, resemblances, facts,* etc., in short, all awareness of abstract entities - indeed, all awareness even of particulars - is a linguistic affair. According to it, not even the awareness of such sorts, resemblances, and facts as pertain to so called immediate experience is presupposed by the process of acquiring the use of a language.[1]

As well, we should note that the primary connotation of 'psychological nominalism' that Sellars intends is "the denial that there is any awareness of

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[1] Sellars, W., *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind,* sec.29

logical space prior to, or independent of, the acquisition of a language"[2]. This only gives a fragmented aspect of the broader conclusions that Sellars' theory will yield, namely that there are no abstract entities whatsoever and all that we hold to be *given* in our sensory experience, is a myth. When one claims that there are no abstract entities (that is, when one claims that the existence of any *abstracta* is altogether impossible), they enter into the illusory world of the Nominalist. This is said tendentiously, as this writer now has revealed the obvious bias of a Realist (which I shall soon clarify), and over the course of this analysis it shall be made clear why the Nominalist's position is less reasonable to assert than that of the Realist. The nominalist not only assumes that abstract entities do not exist, but nominalists argue tooth and nail to prove this notion, and it is within this attempted 'proof' of the denial of abstract entities that I shall show the ultimate failure of nominalism. For now, let us return to the more relevant problems posed by the outlining of metalinguistic nominalism, as they pertain to the problems of ontology.

In the spirit of elucidation, let us continue our merely topical discussion of Sellars' total nominalistic project in the simplest possible terms available to us at this juncture. As our analysis progresses, so will the theory's semantical underpinnings progress (i.e., the complex explanatory language used to give *meaning* to the theory) and in addition, the language we examine becomes exponentially more detailed, perhaps until we reach a boiling point, and we arrive at our many exciting conclusions. This will not be for some time, as we are merely 'grazing' in the field of various theories of reality at this point. Once we begin to digest the ontological, epistemological and metaphysical 'truths'

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[2] Ibid., sec.31

proposed by the various theories of Realism and Nominalism yet to be examined, only then shall we see the emergence of a deep chasm which bifurcates and dissects two distinct portraits of reality. What this study will attempt to show is that it is realism, rather than nominalism, which provides philosophers with a better ontology for dealing with the complicated metaphysical problems that arise from the phenomenon of abstract entities.

Put differently, I shall argue that it is more reasonable (i.e., *rational*) to be a Realist about reality than it is to be a Nominalist about it. In order to establish this, we will need to carefully examine the ontological grounds for Realism, and the consequent Nominalistic denial of these grounds. If we can shown that the nominalist 'misses' something in the analysis of reality, and in their attack on Realism, then it will not be a difficult philosophical move to assert the validity of Realism. This of course will require careful attention on our part, as it will be Sellars' own metalinguistic nominalism that will prove to be the most difficult version of nominalism to counter, itself providing more than enough fuel with which the savvy nominalist may hope to set ablaze the ontological foundations of Realism.

Let us now briefly sketch a picture of the apparent ontological rift between Realism and Nominalism, which will be discussed at a much greater length later in our analysis. Realists hold that there are at least some abstract entities 'out there' in the world. Immediately, the nominalist might say, 'where are they, these abstract entities you speak of?', perhaps followed by, 'they don't exist, for you simply imagined them'. The compulsion to think that there is 'a page in front of me' and there 'are words on the page' emerges out of our most

primitive and instinctual psychological impulses. It is not, however, folk-psychology and instinct that concerns us here, but rather the question of 'what there really is, *out there*'. Most philosophers will agree that there is a mind-independent world of 'reality' existing, and that when we die, reality continues to exist, without our minds and our bodies *living* in it. But this fails to acknowledge a fundamental Realist thesis, that not only is there a reality 'out there' beyond the mind, but that there are 'things' in this reality as well, which seem to have no apparent materiality, in the same way that our bodies and our brains possess materiality (as to whether the 'mind' is material or immaterial is another dilemma altogether). Thus for the Realist, immaterial entities are *real* and exist mind-independently; whether their mysterious ontological nature is anything akin to our own has yet to be determined.

The Nominalist disagrees fundamentally with this picture. She will say, 'No!', that which has no mass, or that which does not occupy any obvious 'spatio-temporality' is not real, "it does not exist!" This is why nominalists will all-too-often appeal to some form of 'ideal science' to tell them what is real. Thus shapes and colours are only as real as our sense-experience of them is, and the thought of *possible* 'green-triangles' poses as a mere (semantic) annoyance in the face of ideal science. We recall the Quinian delusion that "to be is to be the value of a variable"[3]. Ironically, as we shall soon see, Sellars too will deny this notion, (i.e., that the standard of ontological commitment is the value of a variable of quantification). This is ironic because it is exactly the view we might expect to see emerging from certain versions of nominalism (although Quine himself allows for at least some types of 'universals', i.e., certain *sets*,

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[3] W.V. Quine, *On What There Is, p.9*

(implying an *a priori* nature to mathematics) calling into question Quine's own allegiance to the Nominalist project)[4], and this rejection of the Quinian picture will only serve to make our own examination of Sellars' nominalism all the more challenging.

Let us return, for a moment, to the aforementioned 'green-triangles', in order to further demonstrate the distinction between a realist and a nominalist. Faced with a green-triangle, surely both nominalists and realists will say that there is a green-triangle before them: they may say that they 'see it', or they are 'perceiving a green and triangular thing' or that they are 'sensing 'green-ly' and 'triangular-ly', and perhaps even 'there is a green triangle before me, and I believe it, I know it, and my senses are not deceiving me'. However, (without getting into the problem of error and veridical perception at this time), let us simply take for granted that there is a green triangle before us. The fundamental difference, between Realism and Nominalism, is that the Realist will want to make a further ontological step in that, it is not only true that there is the experience of a green triangle before them, but that their greenness and triangularity are really *out there* in the world. Plato said that *universals* like this exist in an 'ideal realm of forms', and some Realists still agree with him. Other Realists believe that the qualities of greenness and triangularity are exemplified by the object of perception (or the *thing itself*). Perhaps the greenness and triangularity are, in fact, 'spatio-temporally located' at the exact place in the universe where that object happens to co-exist, (perhaps as a singularity, similar to a black hole's event horizon, the *known* laws of science and physics disintegrate) but this is another more sophisticated problem that will be dealt

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[4] (Whether the allowance for certain *set universals* commits Quine to Realism is questionable.)

with in later chapters. For now let us simply concentrate on the greenness and the triangularity of the objects themselves.

The realist will call 'green' and 'triangular' *universals*. Something that is green thus shares in the *universal* of *greenness*. Something that is triangular possesses the *universal* of being triangular. Let us imagine two triangles in our minds, we draw them out, the contrasting blackness of the pencil jumps out at us, off the whiteness of the page, and we see two triangles. We use a ruler and carefully try to make each triangle a replica of the other. We use our green pencil crayon now and fill in the triangles. There are two green triangles on the page now, and the realist will say that they are the same[5]. Further more, we can say that they are 'next to each other on the page' adding another universal quality of location, which is a relation (the idea that something can be beside something else). The nominalist disagrees. The nominalist denies that universals are real. Thus, the triangularity of the first triangle on our work of modern art is not like that of the second triangle. They are not the same. The nominalist is not denying that there are two green triangles before them, rather, they are denying that both images possess the universal qualities of being green and triangular. This fundamental distinction is at the source of the debate between these two vastly differing schools of philosophy, and it will be our goal to discover why we have ample reason to believe that the universals of greenness and triangularity (among many other universals) are not only reasonable to assume exist, but also why a realistic metaphysical ontology gives the best possible explanation of our reality. In addition, if it can be shown that intentional (i.e., meaningful) behaviour and thinking involves universals,

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[5] This relation of exact similarity is obviously not a *numerical* one (which would be absurd) but rather it is a *qualitative* sameness that the two universals share.

nominalism fails.

Section II: Realism

M.J. Loux argues (and I agree), that only the theoretical mechanisms offered by realism can adequately explain these phenomena. As to the issue of subject predicate discourse, there is both a linguistic and non-linguistic element that makes statements true. It is the correspondence between them that gives us truth (for realism). Realism provides a more satisfactory account of subject-predicate truth in its analysis of predication and attribute agreement. As to abstract reference, the abstract singular terms of realist ontology can play both the role of subject term and predicate terms, which actually 'pick out' properties and kinds, which are universals. The argument is that "unless we take abstract singular terms to be devices for referring to universals, we cannot provide a satisfactory account of the sentences in which they appear". Abstract singular terms function as the names of universals.

The debate between realism and nominalism has been one of the most important debates in philosophy since the time of Plato. It was Plato who first postulated a transcendental *Realm of Forms*. It was in this special realm of forms that *universals* existed. In the *Parmenides*, Socrates explains that,

> There exist certain *Forms* of which these other things come to partake and so to be called after their names; by coming to partake in Likeness or Largeness or Beauty or Justice, they become like or large or beautiful or just.[6]

What we call *universals* today are a contemporary descendent of the *Forms* that Plato's Socrates spoke of. [7] In the Republic, Plato further explains that while we

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[6] *Parmenides*, from Hamilton and Cairns (1961) 130E-131A
[7] It should be noted that Plato has three different abstract expressions which specify these entities, two of which occur in the Parmenides. These are *genos*, which Cooper explains is "a term restricted to the part of the dialogue preceding the "Deductions",

may have *many* objects, such as beds and tables, "there are only two forms of such furniture, one of the bed and one of the table".[8] Plato establishes an important need for forms to be 'one' and to exemplify all and only the things that they characterize (and as well, establishes a *caveat* to nominalists) in a successive verse from *Parmenides*, that reads, "I assure you (says Socrates) that you do not yet have an inkling of how great the difficulty is if you are going to posit one form in each case every time you make a distinction of things"[9]

We begin to see that even through a contemporary interpretation of these historical passages of Plato's dialogues, there is still much serious metaphysics to be analyzed here, and we would do well to take a closer look at what is meant by the meaning of it all. We somehow come to know *forms* through our faculty of knowledge, but what is the mediation between ourselves (i.e., our minded-bodies) and the *Realm of Forms*? We learn in the *Parmenides* that there is a distinction that should be noted,

> Things in us do not have their power in relation to forms,
> nor do they have theirs in relation to us... forms are what
> they are *of* themselves and in relation to themselves, and
> things that belong to us are, in the same way, what they are
> in relation to themselves.[10]

Thus, in an important sense, we can never get directly *at* the forms, rather, only indirectly can we know them through the cultivation of the proper faculties of knowledge (i.e., *episteme*); and can we come to see how the forms are *exemplified* in the world. More importantly, we must note the mind-independent

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rendered as "kind," and *eidos*, rendered as "form." Later he will use a third term, *idea*, rendered as "character". John Cooper (1997), <u>Plato: Complete Works</u>, p.363
[8] <u>Plato: Complete Works</u>, Republic 596A
[9] <u>Plato: Complete Works</u>, Parmenides 133B
[10] <u>Plato: Complete Works</u>, 134A
[11] M.J. Loux, <u>Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction</u>, p.22

nature of the forms. Forms exist within a completely independent realm of being from that of human thought and action. That is, the forms are seen as prior to existence, and thus they form the ontological ground for all existence. Things are what they are because they participate in the forms. The notion of how we verify the existence of universals and abstract entities will become extremely important objection to realism which must be addressed in later sections. But for now, let us establish a strong case for realism before we begin to look at its alternate theories.

Michael J. Loux explains that what Plato's theory of forms quoted from above, is really establishing, is a general schema for explaining attribute agreement. What this schema essentially proposes is that,

> Where a number of objects, $a \ldots n$, agree in attribute, there is a thing, ϕ, and a relation, R, such that each of $a \ldots n$ bears R to ϕ, and the claim is that it is in virtue of standing in R to ϕ that $a \ldots n$ agree in attribute by being all beautiful or all just or whatever. [11]

Thus, under this *Platonic* conception of realism, things come to share or exemplify certain properties which in turn correspond to a *universal* property or relation that all things of that *type* share in common. Those who agree with this general schema we may call *metaphysical realists*, or simply *realists*, and those who oppose this view we may call *nominalists*. Nominalists will claim that the metaphysics behind the realist schema is fundamentally flawed and that we require another system or theory to adequately account for attribute agreement.

Nominalists will claim regresses created by the use of universals produce an unnecessary number of entities to postulate, but realists claim that there is great benefit to this system, which accounts for a wide range of phenomena.

D.M. Armstrong describes nominalism as the view that *"all things that exist are only particulars"*[12] While nominalists all agree that the only things that exist are particular, they disagree about "the way that the problem of apparent identity of nature is to be solved"[13]. While Armstrong classifies and analyses five various views of nominalism in <u>Nominalism and Realism</u>, (including Predicate, Concept, Class, Mereological and Resemblance Nominalism), it will be a special form of *Metalinguistic Nominalism,* as presented by Wilfrid Sellars, which will be of greatest interest to this thesis in coming chapters.

We recall that Realists insist that there are two distinct kinds of objects that exist: particulars and universals. Particulars are 'concrete', physical things that exist in the world, and can range *from cabbages to kings.* Particulars are thought to only exist in one spatio-temporal location at a given time. Universals are conceived of as repeatable entities (or *repeatables),* and "at any given time, numerically one and the same universal can be wholly and completely exhibited or, as some realists typically put it, exemplified by several different spatially discontinuous particulars."[14] Thus we can have two people exemplifying the character trait (and universal) of virtue, or we might have two apples, both being red in colour, thus exemplifying redness.

In addition to these *one-place,* or, *monadic universals,* mentioned above, realists also posit relations as universals. That is, something which is to the left of me partakes of a spatial relation between two objects, namely me and the thing which is to the left of me. We could think of something being a mile away

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[12] D.M. Armstrong, <u>Nominalism and Realism</u>, p.12
[13] Ibid., p.12
[14] Loux, Ibid., p.23

from us, and this would also constitute a symmetrical relation.[15] Not all relations are symmetrical, such as being someone's father, (which would be an asymmetrical[16] relation). There is a further Aristotelean distinction that Loux notes, between properties and kinds (which are "things like the various biological species and genera"[17]). Most importantly, "objects exemplify properties by *possessing* them, things exemplify kinds by *belonging to* them".[18] It is the Aristotelian conception of realism that shall be favoured over the Platonic version by me in my thesis, which roughly holds that all universals must be exemplified by some object in order to have existence.

One very interesting observation that we can make here is that universals themselves will themselves possess properties and stand in relation to other universals (i.e., wisdom and patience are both *virtues*), and we can presumably make infinite regressions of this kind.[19] Thus, Plato will require forms themselves to possess properties that they are forms of, *viz a vis* problems raised by the "third man argument". Again, this will be a source of weakness to the realist's project that nominalists will focus upon, and must be properly addressed if our realist thesis is to hold.

Loux explains that the two most relevant phenomena, at the forefront of the modern debate between realism and nominalism, concerns *subject-predicate discourse*, and the second, with *abstract reference*. The realist will argue that

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[15] Loux explains that a symmetrical relation is one that, "given any pair of objects, *a* and *b*, such that *a* bears either relation to *b*, *b*, in turn, bears that same relation to *a*." Loux, p.23

[16] Thus, a is the father of something b, but b is not the father of a.

[17] Loux., ibid.,p.23

[18] Loux., ibid.,p.23

[19] Plato's third man argument describes this regress, if a man is so called because of the form in which he participates, then we need a 'third man' which is another form of which both the man and the 'form of man' possess, and thus we can regress infinitely in this manner, producing an infinity of forms.

only the theoretical mechanisms posited by metaphysical realism are capable of adequately explaining these important philosophical phenomena.

Let us begin our elucidation of realism and nominalism by analyzing some of the complexities associated in the discourse of subject-predicate logic. Let us take for instance the statement:

(1) The lion is tawny.

In this statement we find one subject, and something which is predicated of that subject. Thus in (1), the 'lion' is the subject and 'tawny' is its predicate (or is predicated of it). To say that *only* the lion plays a referential role to an object is an incomplete analysis of (1) say realists. Rather, realists will say that there is something else that this analysis fails to pick up on. Thus, we have a linguistic element to the truth of (1) and we have a non-linguistic element as well.[20] Realists claim that there is a correspondence between the linguistic element and the non-linguistic element of (1) which makes it true. Thus, in (1) the role of 'tawny' is not merely linguistically descriptive, but it also refers to or picks out some object. Thus, if (1) is true then both the subject term and the predicate term must have a referent, and as Loux adds, "the referents of these two terms must be related in a way that ensures what (1) says is true".[21] Let us consider,

(2) The tiger is tawny

The realist will claim that 'tawny' plays the same referential role in both cases, that of the universal of *being tawny*, or *'tawnyness'*. What we should note here

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[20] Loux claims that "the relevant way the world is, on the other hand, is a matter of non-linguistic structure; it is a matter of how certain things in a sector of the world are and how they are related to each other"p.26

[21] Loux, ibid., p.26

is that

> The universal that is the referent of a predicate term is precisely the universal that must be exemplified by the referent of a subject term if that referent is to be something that instances the case of attribute agreement marked by that predicate term.[22]

Thus, the realist's account of predication goes hand in hand with an account of attribute agreement, and "the two accounts mesh in just the way they must if we are to provide a satisfactory account of subject-predicate truth".[23]

In addition to solving the problems of predication, the realist thesis will also solve many of the problems associated with abstract reference. This phenomenon is made explicit through the use of *abstract singular terms*, (which include 'triangularity' 'wisdom', 'mankind', etc.). These terms can play both the roll of subject term, or predicate term (i.e., 'triangularity'/'triangular', 'wisdom'/ 'wise', etc.). *Prima facie*, the abstract singular term functions as a device that picks out properties or kinds, and the general term appears to be an expression true of all and only the objects that exemplify that property or kind. Thus,

> The realist insists that this intuitive account is correct and claims that unless we take abstract singular terms to be devices for referring to universals, we cannot provide a satisfactory account of the sentences in which they appear.[24]

Thus, sentences such as "Courage is a moral virtue" and "Triangularity is a shape" can only be properly interpreted through a realistic metaphysical system. Loux argues that the intuitive account gives us exactly the correct story of how abstract singular terms function as "they are playing referential roles of

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[22] Loux, ibid., p.31
[23] Loux, ibid., p.31

[24] Loux, Ibid. p. 31

the most straight forward sort; they are functioning as names of universals"[25]. There is a great advantage in adopting a realist ontology about universals; we are provided a better account of the meaning of sentences containing abstract singular terms, because by allowing for the existence of abstract entities we are also positing an ontology that gives a better analysis of predication and abstract reference.

There are some important distinctions that we should mention at this point. While the version of realism that has been presented so far can be said to represent the general aims of *realist metaphysics*, there are some important restrictions on our theory that require further elucidation. We recall the paradoxes that might arise when we conjure such dilemmas as the *third man argument,* and it will be useful to elaborate upon them. The main thrust of one such objection to realism, as we mentioned briefly above, is the problem of exemplification. That is, when a thing exemplifies a universal, both the particular and the form (i.e., the *repeatable*) must exemplify properties of that universal. At this point, realists must give an account for expressing the truth of subject-predicate truth within a realistic ontology. To these ends, let us thus say that

(3)   *a* is *F*

what we are really saying as realists is that,

(4)   *a* exemplifies *F-ness.*

The problems begin for the realist when we must now introduce a new predicate ('exemplifies *F-ness*') in addition to a new universal (the exemplification of *F-ness*). Now in order for (4) to be true, the referent of *a* must

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[25] Ibid., p.32

exemplify this new universal. Thus, we get the statement,

(5)   *a* exemplifies the exemplification *F-ness*

We can easily see a regress in this line of rational, similar to that of its ancestor, the third man argument. Loux offers a solution to the two regresses by suggesting that "we need merely to set restrictions on the use of the Platonic schema and its associated theory of predication"[26]. In dealing with the first regress, that of Plato's third man, we can simply deny that "every distinct form of attribute agreement involves a separate and distinct universal" and namely this is to deny that "where the agreement consists in a number of objects exemplifying a universal, there is a further universal supporting the agreement".[27] Given the problems encountered with the second regress, we can "deny that every semantically distinct general term expresses a distinct universal"[28] and in doing so we claim that while in (4) there is some universal that corresponds to the predicate of that sentence form, we can deny that this correspondence exists for (5) and its successors. By restricting the applicability of the Platonic schema and by restricting the realist's theory of predication we avoid these regresses. Loux explains that this is a plausible move because

> If, as the argument claims, the explanation introduces a new case of attribute agreement, realists are free to apply the Platonic schema to the second case; but they are under no obligation to do so. In particular the success of the original application of the schema to explain the first case of attribute agreement does not hinge on their explaining the second; and the same holds for each of the cases of attribute agreement allegedly following upon this one. So if the regress is real, it is not vicious; and accordingly, no restriction on the use of the Platonic schema is called for.[29]

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[26] Loux, p.38
[27] Ibid., p.38
[28] Ibid., p.38
[29] Ibid., p.38

Another approach to this problem is to say that the nature of this regress affects both the realist and nominalist accounts which aim at delineating the ontological grounds of subject-predicate truth. I argue that it is only through the theoretical mechanisms available in a cohesive system of realist metaphysics that we might be able to adequately account for the phenomena that we have been discussing thus far. I shall attempt to show that, while nominalism provides a *plausible* account of how to explain away these various phenomena, it may fail in its very *oversimplification* of the issues. That is, nominalism does not provide a *probable* account of subject-predicate truth, abstract reference and thus, we should adopt a thesis of metaphysical realism.

Chapter 2

Section I: Some Preliminary Words on Nominalism

Sellars' theory of perception will not allow for direct acquaintance with objects. Rather, thinking (i.e., all intentional acts) is a process of referring and characterizing. This is because what seems given to us in sensory perception is only a myth. For something to be given we need a pre-linguistic awareness of it (which is impossible says Sellars). Sellars argues that "classifying involves meanings and meanings are linguistic roles". Thus, intentionality emerges from language (and not vice versa as realists would prefer). Realists argue that thinking and perceiving is a kind of commerce with extra-linguistic and abstract entities. Realists argue that if thinking is an intentional act at all, it is extra-linguistic and involves universals. Thinking is a process of becoming aware of universals in their instances.

In a series of lectures, recorded and inscribed by Perdro V. Amaral, entitled, <u>The Metaphysics of Epistemology</u>, Sellars furthers his portrayal of metalinguistic nominalism in a very clear and concise fashion. Beginning with the history of the various problems surrounding the philosophy of mind and of ontology, Sellars' exegesis enlightens the orthodox problems of philosophy. Let us now examine the stirring thoughts of those lectures.

The problem of sensuous *qualia* and intentionality is at the forefront of our discussion. For the sake of space, we may only delve into these immense fields of philosophy topically, as their full weight will invariably go beyond the scope of this thesis. Interestingly Sellars' proposed solution to the mind/body problem will prove to be similar to that of his father's, Roy Wood Sellars', solution, and will be of great interest to us in coming sections. For now, we shall begin to highlight the key tenets of the *Amaral lectures*, so that we may erect a more concrete foundation for Sellarsian metalinguistic nominalism. The

Physical Realism of Sellars *pere* turns out to mirror that of *fils* and proves to be significant in the way both philosophers will come to think of the world, and our place in it. This similarity is particularly well exemplified in the groundbreaking paper "The Double Knowledge Approach to the Mind-Body Problem", which we will turn to later after our discussion of the lectures contained in <u>The Metaphysics of Epistemology</u>. For now, let us attempt to articulate a simplified picture of the problems of classical (or orthodox) philosophy as Sellars sees them. Of course, we are primarily alluding to the problem of universals, and another problem that Sellars thinks is causally responsible for many misconceptions about reality, namely, the Myth of the Given. This is best articulated by Sellars as the problem facing the sense-datum theorist in which they must choose between two possibilities, namely

(a) It is *particulars* which are sensed. Sensing is not knowing. The existence of sense data does not *logically* imply the existence of knowledge, or

(b) Sensing is a form of knowing. It is *facts* rather than *particulars* which are sensed.[30]

The sense datum theorist, thinks Sellars, will have to insist that both that "sensing is a knowing and that it is particulars which are sensed".[31] To this end, if sense content is deemed a *datum* then it is to imply that someone has "non-inferential knowledge only if to say that a sense content is given is contextually defined in terms of non-inferential knowledge of a fact about this

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[30] EPM Sec. 3
[31] EPM Sec. 3
[32] EPM Sec. 4
[33] EPM Sec. 4

sense content".[32] This amounts to the false hope of the sense datum theorist to make such claims as "x is a red sense datum" being equivalent to saying, "x is non-inferentially know to be red", which Sellars thinks is the real origin of the Myth of the Given.

It is important to define one's terms carefully in philosophy. At this point it would be useful to list the terms and concepts relevant to our discussion, and explain away any misconceptions that may arise. Let us begin our analysis by posing the question, "What is the ontological status that we can reasonably ascribe to both kinds of entities, *concreta* and *abstracta?*" Thus, "What are the things in reality whose essence is *perceived?*". To this we may wish to say that it is true of concrete individuals, which are the objects of our sense perception. Of the question "What are the things in reality whose essence is *conceived?*". To this, the nominalist will say that this is true of abstract individuals, that is, *their being* is mind-dependent. Of concrete individuals, we can say that they have a unique location in space time, that they somehow 'endure' through time (or to follow Armstrong, that they must possess *a mass*), and that they are singly located. On the nature of abstract individuals, we can say that they are 'repeatable' and that they are multiply located. This leads us into the world of *Universals*, of which kinds we may list: qualities, relations, kinds and types of essences (i.e., triangularity), properties, facts, numbers, etc..

For Sellars, sentience is emergent, and in his brand of critical realism, there is only room for indirect knowledge of objects (opposing direct or naïve non-critical realism). As well, critical realism supposes a representative picture

of awareness (as opposed to the presentative, and non-inferential awareness of non-critical realism). In the opening chapters of the *Amaral lectures*, Sellars describes two distinct ways of knowing, typical of the classical view: dispositional and occurent. There are pure occurent believings, and there are pure occurent knowings (which, of course, is in opposition to the behaviouristic picture which will become tantamount to our discussion in later sections), but in the biographies of our minds, so to speak, *acts occur*. The problem will become one of how to analyze 'the pink surface of the ice cube' as we shall see shortly. It seems as though we 'know' some objects, that we are acquainted with them (as Sellars says, it is as though it were a *'Mountie knowing'* (as in *'the Mountie always gets his man'*), or in this case directly being acquainted with the object of perception). As well, we think that we have facts about our perceptions; and this goes for the perception of *concreta* as well as *abstracta*. Facts are introduced (into knowledge) by singular terms, by universals, and by the use of abstract singular terms. For Sellars, normativity is built into our very knowing: it involves an 'oughtness', and if we do away with this, the normative is illusory.

We should carefully distinguish between basic knowledge (which is non-inferentially justified) and derivative knowledge (which is inferentially justified), through which our beliefs render themselves evident. Relationism defines knowledge as a relation between a mind and a fact, and allows us to introduce propositions as objects of belief, disbelief, doubts, or supposal (see Ducasse) which alludes again to the identity approach which will be discussed in later sections. Propositions are often thought of as possible states of affaires, that is the object of a belief (or as Santayana claims, is actualized in the realm of

matter). Of this, J.A. Bailey concludes that we may conceive of two ways in which things oppose nothingness; by existing or by subsisting (i.e., by being an *essence*). To this Sellars would most likely object, "There are just too many *realms* here!"

We are merely assuming that there is a causal interface here, but what we really want to know is how that access actually works. Here we are promoting a view of states of affairs (i.e., the immanent objects of thought) as being immaterially in the mind (and metaphysically transcendent) but having intentional existence (having *intrinsic* meaning, in and of itself). Sellarsian theory proscribes such talk and we will discover why in, more detail, as our debate progresses.

What Sellars prescribes (perhaps better said as *describes*), is a theory of perception common to the classical conception. That is, the notion that

$$\text{Seeing}_1 = \text{seeing}_2 + \text{believing} \ [33]$$

This describes perception in the *manifest image* (which ultimately proves to be radically false and misleading for Sellars). Believing in this sense is a kind of *referring* and *characterizing*. To elucidate a bit more, let us imagine a blue rectangle in our immediate sensory perception. The experience of this we may call 'a mental act', but here Sellars distinguishes the very sensation of that blue rectangle as somehow "in the mind"[34]. Thus, the sensation itself is not a mental act, for Sellars, but then what is it? Is it an object of a sense datum, or some sort of adverbial modifier, which picks out a sense datum?

The problems of direct realism involve, among other things, the problem of error and the very relation to material things. In his paper, *Physical Realism*,

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[33] Sellars, The Metaphysics of Epistemology, p.29
[34] Ibid., p.36

Sellars accuses the objective relativists of "overpopulating" the world by claiming that 'everything is out there in the world' [35]. On the issue of sensibility versus understanding, the of-ness of sensation seems to oppose the of-ness of thought (a Kantian notion). Experience, says Sellars, is not 'about' sensations (perception is not 'about' sensation) but believing is referring and realizing and characterizing. Thus, thinking itself consists of referring and characterizing. Yet, a state of affairs does have some kind of intentional *inexistence*, in that it does not make me or my mind the object itself. But this criteria of being will not be enough for Sellars to label this kind of existence as *existence proper*, whereas for the realist this will surely suffice.

Here the phenomenalist may wish to enter the debate and claim that, "material objects *are* sense data"! This resembles well the *manifest* image that Sellars will describe at length, and which still merits much elucidation (but let us save this for later sections, until we have established a little more groundwork towards the overall theory). Under the phenomenalistic conception, physical object propositions will in turn imply propositions about our sense experience. The problem is that they *ought* to be identical in meaning, but what if circumstances affected a 'proper' perception (i.e., blindness, or loss of other senses)? Thus, phenomenalism presupposes realism. Of course, Sellars will reject this realistic-phenomenalistic talk outright, for if things had *being for sense*, they would literally be *in* the sensibility! Realistic phenomenalism fails for metaphysical reasons, while idealistic phenomenalism fails for idealistic reasons.[36] The phenomenalist will want to establish a logical equivalence

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[35] Sellars, Physical Realism, p.19
[36] Peirce's objection to phenomenalism is that physical object propositions don't factor into sense data whereas the phenomenalist will say that there is an equivalence.

between physical object propositions and the categorical and hypothetical propositions about sense data, but even if we do conceive of a logical equivalence, we still do not achieve a true synonymy. The idea here is that while an equilateral triangle and right-angle triangle may have logical equivalence, they still lack the relation of genuine synonymy between them.

Let us now elucidate more of the theory of appearing (a tenet of the direct/naïve realistic tradition). Sellars describe a classical *triadic relation,* which is ultimately irreducible and unanalysable. This triad is formed by the perceiver, the object of perception and the relation between them. Let us say that Jones is looking at a blue and rectangular book. There can be no appearances without persons being appeared to, and there can be no appearances without bodies appearing either. For Sellars, however, the blueness and the rectangularity are somehow 'in you', but could we not say that the way that the book looks is actually the way that it is? Realists draw distinctions between 'being real' and 'being for sense' as well as 'being for thought'. Thus, for the realist, real being is independent of anyone's conceiving of it. Here we may wish to ask, can there be experience with out appearances? More poignantly, we should wonder how it is that sense data gives us knowledge of material objects.

The Myth of the Given, explains Sellars, is why we come to think that we can attain knowledge through direct acquaintance. This is the logical fallacy of perception that our *sensa* are *given* to us through our very experience of the world. Of course, for Sellars, there will be no pre-linguistic conceptual awareness of items in logical space (especially of particulars, universals and facts). For something to be *given,* is essentially to have a pre-linguistic

conceptual awareness of it. However, according to psychological nominalism it is only through enculturation that 'one is tuned in'[37], and our environment directly evokes the belief in us that objects can be colourful and extended.

Mentalistic and behaviouristic concepts both give a picture of the mind body-problem. What one should be after in any rational solution to the mind-body problem is how the same attributes found in the mental realm are to be perceived in behaviour. Identity theorists, for instance, claim that pain is a brain state. There is clearly a problem within the Sellarsian picture of thought in infants and animals, which will provide the fuel in later sections for a strong rebuttal of metalinguistic nominalism, but for now let us say a few words on the double knowledge theory to the mind-body problem.

W. Sellars' father, Roy Wood Sellars is a physicalist in the broad sense of the term, in that all real things exist in space-time. He is also a materialist in that inorganic concepts suffice to explain behaviour, as well as holding the notion that there need be no reference to life and sentience in explanation. Thus, sentience is emergent (and not internationality or thinking). Derivative grades of knowledge (believing, introspection, or higher grade versions of these) are all there is. Here we must carefully distinguish what it is to *feel* a pain and what it is to *recognize* a pain. We are working with a theory that thinks of the faculty of recognition as *a recognizing* of something *as*; that is, classifying involves meanings, and meanings are linguistic roles. Our 'raw feels' prove only to be sensations, and we do not get a direct acquaintance (i.e., Mountie knowing) of objects. Pain is a 'state of one's self', which promotes a distinction between inspection versus introspection. Perception is more misleading that

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[37] Metaphysics of Epistemology, p.97

introspection. Most importantly, what we need to get a sense of here is that for Sellars (*fils*), sentience is a phenomena that is emergent, but intentionality is not. Intentionality is emergent from language, and this is summarized by a statement to the extent of *thinking is languaging*. Thus there can be no meaning *proper*, without someone, somewhere, speaking a language.

Some words should be said at this point regarding the problem of intentionality. Sellars summarizes the issue nicely in the appendix to his correspondence with Chisholm, in their collaborative work entitled Intentionality and the Mental. The problem of intentionality, thinks Sellars, can be thought of as

> ...the problem of interpreting the status of the *reference* to objects and states of affairs, actual or possible, past, present or future, which is involved in the very meaning of the 'mentalistic' vocabulary of everyday life. Believing, desiring, intending, loving, hating, reasoning, approving – indeed, all characteristically human states and dispositions above the level of mere sensory consciousness – cannot be explicated without encountering such reference or aboutness.[38]

Sellars' nominalistic project will conclude that all *intentional* acts are necessarily *linguistic* acts. All intentionality emerges from our linguistic ability to speak a language. Realists will deny this line of reasoning and claim that intentionality is not emergent from thinking (here defined in the Sellarsian sense of *languaging*), but rather thinking and perceiving necessarily involves a commerce with abstract entities (in this sense, *extra-linguistic* entities). As far as intentionality is concerned, thinking is an intentional act for realists, and intentionality is essentially *extra-linguistic*.

There is a very Kantian feel to the Sellarsian project. Sensing is

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[38] Sellars, Chisholm, Intentionality and the Mental, p.507

antonymous to thinking (classifying). We recall the theory of perception that we have been working with thus far:

perceiving = sensing + believing

There is no reference here to becoming aware of any universals in their instances, and this is thought of as the cornerstone of intelligent behaviour for realists. Realists will, as well, draw a parallel between perceiving and introspection. Objects of perception are represented via meanings and objects of introspection are also represented via meanings. But this creates the dilemma of discovering what the *meanings* themselves are, and how it is that we access them.

For Sellars, the noumenal order can only be accessed by ideal science (putting an immense burden on the shoulders of ideal science, it would seem). But what of 'having a character'? It seems reasonable to say that any character is a universal (we recall Santayana's *essences*), and that *pure* characters are unexemplified universals. *Impure* characters are thus exemplified universals, characteristics, embodied in matter, and *given* in sensation or consciousness. Characters can also sometimes be the contents of concepts. Sellars' analogue for direct acquaintance (Mountie knowing) is a direct awareness combined with the unlikelihood that our perceptions are mistaken. It all seems to revolve around our having raw feels and sensations. But if all our mental events are equivalent to having propensities, the realist must aim to refute this type of eliminativism. We are examining logical possibilities versus metaphysical possibilities here, and the most important aspect is perhaps the notion that "the "have" of exemplification is non-relational". This idea alludes to the *shadow* of my principle defense of realism, which will be elucidated in the last chapter.

That is, the notion of *nexus*, and how we must take the universal of exemplification as our metaphysical primitive.

Section II: The Theory of Metalinguistic Nominalism

Nominalists like Rudolph Carnap and Sellars wish to introduce 'nominal' semantical resources into the language so that we may circumvent the need for universals and the ontological confusions that arise with their usage. Sellars argues that the mere power to save appearances is not good enough a reason to adopt a realist system. He suggests that this is another way of preserving the analytic/synthetic distinction. Sellars does not want this to lead to "picking out a new category of entities". Sellars will argue that "it is the thesis of psychological nominalism that the questions as to the role of "___" thus understood requires no use of semantical or syntactical terms in the answer". Thus, Platonic metaphysics errs in equating the word "means" with the word "names".

It was through the analysis of Rudolph Carnap's theory of nominalism that Sellars came to a greater embellishment of his own metalinguistic-nominalistic position. The following section will elucidate a critical paper of Sellars', *Empiricism and Abstract Entities*, in which Sellars lays down the semantical and ontological framework for his theory of metalinguistic nominalism. Carnap asks, "what resources would have to be added to a language which did not enable one to say, e.g. "there are propositions" in order for this to become possible."[39]. The solution seems relatively simple on the surface; with the addition of new variables, (namely, p, q, p or not p), which allows for substitution into (declarative) sentences. Thus, Carnap envisions a

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[39] Revue International de Philosophie, XI (1950), 20-40

"construction" of the "framework of propositions". Sellars remarks upon this notion that the "resources introduced" (i.e., the variables and the term "proposition") function only because the language already contains the sentential connectives with their characteristic syntax "by virtue of which such sentences such as "Either Chicago is large or Chicago is not large" is analytic". Put another way, "the introduced *nominal* resources mobilize existing *syntactical* resources of the language to make possible the statement "There are propositions".[40]

Carnap highlights two essential steps in the acceptance of a linguistic framework of abstract entities, namely 1) the introduction of a 'general term' (a predicate of a higher level) "for the new kind of entities, permitting us to say of any particular entity that it belongs to this kind (e.g. red is a property)"and 2) "the introduction of variables of the new type... with the help of the variables, general sentences concerning the new entities can be formulated"[41]. Thus, Sellars will claim that "to accept a framework of entities, then, is to adopt a certain form of language". [42]

Carnap also distinguishes between two classes of questions, that is, external questions such as "What is truth?" (i.e., philosophical questions concerning the nature of existence and reality) as opposed to internal questions such as "does A follow from B?" (questions that deal primarily with the acceptance of the 'new linguistic forms', which will become critical to our discussion in a moment). On the more general question of whether it is reasonable to accept a framework of entities altogether, Sellars points out

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[40] Empiricism and Abstract Entities, The Philosophy of Rudolph Carnap, Schilpp p.431 Ed. 431-468
[41] p.30 Revue International de Philosophie, XI (1950), 20-40
[42] p.432, Empiricism and Abstract Entities

Carnap's oscillation and ambivalence, in that (Carnap) seems to justify the need for such a framework as "unpacking" of "expediency" or "fruitfulness". This does not necessarily commit him to a metaphysical doctrine concerning the 'existence' of entities, because the important point here is that the internal assertion "there are propositions" is not metaphysical, but "analytic". Realists will want to make a claim along the line that, "only after making sure that there really are entities of the kind in question, are we justified in accepting the framework by incorporating the linguistic forms into our language"[43]. Sellars quickly points out that this methodology itself appeals to a bogus method of justification (for a framework of entities).

At this point, the realist may wish to step in and speak in defense of abstract entities. In defense of Platonic Realism, she may wish to parallel the existence of abstract entities to the existence of molecules, and claim that this is altogether a valid parallel to draw. She may wish to claim that the realistic theoretical language is sound in structure, especially in that it has the power to "save appearances" (as Sellars himself points out). As well, there is the potential argument that abstract entities are neither mental, nor physical, nor "a third class of entities coordinate with these"[44]. In the spirit of Carnap, one might reply that "no such additional information is necessary as internal assertions of the existence of abstract entities spring from analytic sentence forms and analytic sentence forms can never formulate a hypothesis which saves appearances"[45]. This notion will prove to be critical to our overall debate, as Sellars asks, "Is a framework of abstract entities to be justified as a device for

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[43] Ibid., p.35
[44] Ibid., p.434
[45] Ibid., p.435

saving appearances?".[46]

Put another way, as Quine might phrase the question, is this a means of preserving the analytic/synthetic distinction? It would be useful at this point to analyze an important syllogism that arises in the debate: (*if*) analytic sentences (forms) are 'categorical' (categories) analogous to: "v is a proposition" (introduced in terms of analytic$_2$, v or not v) (*then*) descriptive terms (theoretical and everyday discourse) are 'in this sense' categories.[47] These expressions become 'categories of entities' and they do not actually propose the existence of those entities. What Sellars is after here is the acceptance of the analytic$_2$ resources (rather than a framework), as he claims that without the analytic$_2$ resources "certain empirical statements cannot be made".[48]

To further elucidate the analytic$_1$ / analytic$_2$ distinction, we can see that statements of the analytic$_1$ variety are all tautological in nature. That is, a statement of the analytic$_1$ variety will assert not that 'all bachelors are unmarried men' but rather that 'all bachelors are bachelors'. We recall that we are considering a strong (i.e., narrow) and a weak (i.e., broad) meaning of analytic here: analytic$_1$ in the broader sense (as in 2+2=4 is analytic), and analytic$_2$ as interpreted in the narrower sense (a statement is analytic$_2$ if it is analytic$_1$ and "if the non-logical or descriptive terms it contains either occur vacuously or if they occur vacuously in the statement one gets by replacing definable terms by their definitions".[49] Thus, in the second sense of "analytic," "2+2=4" is analytic, but the fundamental theories of molecular theory are not.

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[46] Ibid., p.436
[47] Ibid., p.439
[48] Ibid., p.440
[49] Ibid., p.439
[21] Ibid., p. 440

This is because the language of molecule theory will always be justified by an appeal to observational backing, thus making all statements regarding molecular theory of the synthetic variety.

Sellars wants to point out the "categorical" sense of the narrow and broad distinction that our concepts of $analytic_1$ / $analytic_2$ seem to retain in ordinary usage. The most important thing here to note is that Sellars does not want this line of reason to lead us to the conclusion that we are somehow 'picking out' a new category of entities here, namely abstract entities. Rather, he wants to claim that "once it is recognized that an expression is a category by virtue of its status in a specific framework of discourse, there is nothing in this usage at which the empiricist need boggle".[50]

Sellars will go on to make the problematic assertion (for realists) that "the core of the Platonic tradition lies in a blurring of the distinction between empirical and ontological categories".[51] This notion, Sellars believes, was founded upon the false belief that meaning involves 'commerce' between persons and abstract entities. The rejection of this view is exactly the position that Sellars champions, that of "psychological nominalism", which we must carefully note, is not an outright rejection of the linguistic framework of abstract entities. Thus, for Sellars, "the ontological categories of language spring from $analytic_2$ sentence forms of the language", and this itself is paralleled by "syntactical categories of the metalanguage in which the syntax of the language is formulated".[52] But here we should mention Sellars' view that what this really entails is not the acceptance and justification of a framework or

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[51] Ibid., p.442
[52] Ibid., p.442

entities, but the justification of the analytic2 resources which are deployed in the nominal sense. To this end Sellars will claim that, "the acceptance of the resources is justified by pointing out that without them certain empirical statements cannot be made".[53]

Carnap points out that : ("it is raining is a proposition" in L) corresponds to ("it is raining" is a sentence of L). Carnap believes that the parallelism of ontological and syntactical categories illuminates the traditional 'problems' of universals: as "ontological categories are shadows, so to speak, of syntactical distinctions"[54]. This will invariably lead us into the problem of psychology and semantics, or put another way, the problem of characterizing two (related) classes of facts, a) mental facts and b) semantical facts.

It would seem that mentalistic discourse employs the framework of abstract entities, but Sellars asks, "does it follow that abstract entities must be evoked by psychological theory to account for mental phenomena?"[55]. At this point let us clearly iterate that psychological nominalism is a denial that 'aperception' or 'an awareness' of abstract entities "is the root mental ingredient of mental acts and dispositions"[56]. This forces open the floodgates to the surge of the elusive mind/body problem, which will prove to be most relevant to this discussion of Realism and Nominalism.

On the mind/body problem, Sellars will say that, distinguished from sensory consciousness as (A) 'analytic' or 'phenomenological' task of clarifying the logical grammar of ordinary talk about sensual qualia and ordinary talk of the body, (B) 'scientific' task of giving a theoretical account (of the process) is

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[53] Ibid., p.442
[54] Ibid., p.443
[55] Ibid., p.445
[56] Ibid., p.445

"essentially the problem of clarifying the relation between what can be said about a person by the use of mentalistic language and what can, in principle, be said about him without the use of this language"[57]. And Sellars will conclude that "the conceptual element in all the phenomena singled out by mentalistic expressions is a matter of the use of verbal symbols"[58].

Once again, the Realist will object and raise the question, "And what of the meaning relation?", and as Sellars aptly notes, the tendency that this question raises (namely what the introduced 'relation' does) is to bring us back to the problem of individual minds and their 'perceptions' of abstract entities. Here Sellars will elaborate upon two semantical distinctions. The first is that there is "the business of making explicit and systematizing the grammar and meaning of truth talk" This essentially involves distinguishing between various semantical concepts and showing some can be defined in terms of others. The second distinction is that of "the business of sizing up the point of meaning talk, of locating semantical discourse in the intellectual economy".[59] This leads us into the very crux of Sellars' analysis of Carnap, and the two distinctions that Sellars claims to be the bane of Carnap's theory, that is the distinction between descriptive and pure semantics.

Let us define descriptive semantics as the description and analysis of the semantical features either of some particular historical given language (i.e., French) or of all historically given languages in general. Thus, "descriptive semantics describes facts and is an empirical science".[60] Conversely, we may set up a system of semantical rules, whether in close connection with a

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[57] Ibid., p.447
[58] Ibid., p.448
[59] Ibid., p.450
[60] Ibid., p.450

historically given language, or freely invented; a semantical system, "the construction and analysis of which we call 'pure semantics'". Thus, definitions and their consequences are entirely analytic and without factual content. For Sellars, description is internally related to explaining, "in the sense of "explanation which comes to full flower in scientific explanation - in short, causal explanation."[61]

A descriptive term can be used (in its basic use) to replace one of the variables in the dialogue schema:

What brought it about that x is Φ ?

The fact that y is Ψ.

For Sellars, even though in syntactical statements about L, even if they are "not prescriptive statements, they involve prescriptive concepts"[62]. In an important passage Sellars argues that

> The fact that empirical evidence is relevant to the statements of descriptive semantics no more entails that characteristically semantical concepts are descriptive, than the fact that empirical evidence is relevant to the statements of descriptive syntax entails that characteristic syntactical concepts are descriptive or the fact that empirical evidence is relevant to the statements of comparative ethics entails that characteristically ethical concepts are descriptive.[63]

To simplify a bit further, we may wish to employ a crude analogy. If we take the game of chess, for instance, then essentially what we need to know, according to Sellars, is that for the game to *exist* is for there to be people in the world who

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[61] Ibid., p.451
[62] Ibid., p.453
[63] Ibid., p.453

know how to play it (the *esse* of chess is *ludi*).[64]

In Carnap's own analysis of the distinction between descriptive and pure syntax, he claims that descriptive syntax is an empirical investigation of the syntactical feature of given languages. Pure syntax deals with syntactical systems, and it contains the analytic sentences of the metalanguage which follows from these definitions. Sellars points out that,

> Carnap thus traces out the *ex vi terminorum* character of
> the sentences of a pure syntactical system to the fact that
> the syntactical predicates of the system are defined in
> terms of the sign designs of the object calculus.[65]

Here 'predicates' are taken to be word roles. There is a great danger in doing this, as Sellars points out, however. The danger is the inference that syntactical words in actual use ('sentence', 'predicate', etc.,) are definable in terms of sign designs, thus Sellars wishes to utterly proscribe this line of discourse of distinguishing between pure and descriptive syntax as outlined by Carnap. We are beginning to see the emergence of a stirring theory of metalinguistic nominalism, as though it were itself emerging from shadow. More work need yet be done, however, before Sellars' position is completely elucidated, and now would be a good time to get into the very essence of what Sellars is after here.

Here we will introduce the paradigmatic example, that Sellars will continue to use throughout his philosophical oeuvre: "What is the role played by the German word "rot" in the English language by the word "red""? The realist will immediately jump in and say that "isn't it just the role of *meaning* red?" or perhaps something to the tune of "it is standing in the meaning *relation*

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[64] Ibid., p.455
[65] Ibid., p.455

of red". Here Sellars will first observe that the role of "role of" is itself ambiguous! If used in "a context of interest" and expressions are predicates, then we must specify using categories of syntax and semantics. As such, semiotic questions will have semiotic answers, and prescriptive questions will have prescriptive answers. Thus, the semiotic question of the meaning of 'role of red' becomes 'means the same'. In another sense, to ask 'what is the role of ____" is "not to ask the role of an expression", but it is to ask of the *causes and effects* of a "certain empirically definable stimulus configurations".[66] Thus, Sellars will confidently assert of his theory that, "it is the thesis of psychological nominalism that the questions as to the role of "___" thus understood requires no use of semantical or syntactical terms in the answer"[67].

Sellars will also reject Carnap's comparison of descriptive semantics with physical geometry. Sellars denies this because the account "presupposes that semantical expressions in actual usage are definable in terms of sign designs and non-linguistic entities"[68] and there is nowhere to be found an independent defense for this claim. Sellars observes that

> He rather infers the logical status of semantical words in descriptive semantics from the logical status of semantical words in pure semantics together with the premise that the relation between them is one of interpretation.[69]

Sellars want to know "why should it be thought that semantics of the form '___' means *** asserts a relation between '___' and ***?"[70] Sentences posses a grammatical form which "puts one in mind of statements in which we 'are'

[66] Ibid., p.461
[67] Ibid., p.461
[68] Ibid., p.463
[69] Ibid., p.463
[70] Ibid., p.465

asserting that two items stand in a certain relation"[71]. Thus, for Sellars, the ultimate error of Platonic metaphysics is to equate the word "means" , with the word "names".

Section III: Behaviourism and Meaning

Sellars argues for a verbal behaviouristic theory of learning which involves the classical stimulus-response mechanism of learning. For Sellars, actions are "responses to volitions, as perceptual judgments are responses to sensory stimulation". He argues that while the ability to have representational episodes may be pre-linguistic or innate, the ability to represent these episodes with any accuracy presupposes a mastery of language. Sellars utilizes the nominal tools of distributive singular terms (DSTs) in order to explain subject predicate discourse and abstract reference without having to posit abstract entities (universals). To be a DST is essentially "to be involved in a system of behavioral propensities conforming to the logical rules of the language".

Sellars argues for a weak form of identity theory that holds that "the Mind-Body problem is, at bottom, the problem whether intentional concepts relating to minds can be reduced to nonintentional concepts, whether concepts of sense qualities, or physicalistic concepts, or both, and if so, in exactly what sense of "reduced"(p.49). The theory claims "raw feels or sense impressions are states of core persons, and according to which, therefore, the logical space of raw feels will reappear transposed but unreduced in a theoretical framework adequate for the job of explaining what core persons do".

In his groundbreaking paper, *Behaviourism, Language and Meaning,* Sellars furthers his unique theory of psychological nominalism. In this paper, once again we see a staunch rejection of the orthodox conceptions which have dominated thinking in philosophy since the time of Plato onwards. Sellars

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[71] Ibid., p.465

wants to abandon the classical Realist philosophical notion of abstract entities, and the claims therein will be our next topic of discussion.

Sellars begins *Behaviourism, Language and Meaning* by elaborating upon the various advances and goals of the Behaviourist project of cognitive psychology, of past decades. Namely, there has been a strong desire to maintain the methodological autonomy of psychology as a science, for the Behaviourists. Sellars explains that while Behaviourists did not deny the privileged access that each individual has to their various psychological states, independent from the observable features of bodily states, they still held that this " 'privileged access' is neither clear, distinct, adequate nor infallible"[72]. Introspection does not yield a clear understanding of reality (it does not get us to the *facts*), and is no more helpful to understanding 'what is really going on' than common sense concepts about physical object propositions of everyday experience, seemingly *given* in sense perception. When we consider various 'psychological facts' the theory becomes murkier still, for instance, how do children come to learn and acquire language?

Sellars describes a 'grist for the mill' in language acquisition in children; that when 'confronted with salient linguistic configurations of sound'[73] the child forms and modifies, accepts and rejects various subtle hypotheses. Yet while the child may display a "fully fledged rationality", and it may operate with concepts and logical forms of a high degree of sophistication[74], Sellars still rejects the idea that this is rationality proper. There are certain innate processes going on within this picture of human development that must be

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[72] Behaviourism, Language and Meaning, p.4
[73] Ibid. p. 5
[74] Ibid. p. 5

admitted by the behaviourist, namely, a genetic structure that inherently facilitates the learning of language in humans. As to the specific neurological underpinnings of this innate structure, they are yet to be fully discovered and discursively explained by science, thus, it unfortunately goes beyond the scope of our study. But what of animals? Do animals also acquire language? How do animals reason, or do they even reason at all?

So far as explanatory patterns of behaviour go, the Behaviourists settled on the stimulus-response-reinforcement theory. This theory seems to adequately account for some animal behaviour accurately (i.e., Thorndike's cat's learning how to escape their box-prisons), and it was hoped that this model could accurately account for simple human cases, as well as more complex human cases. Thus, it was thought that "language learning might be explained in terms of complex structures of S-R connections, each of which was stamped in by a reinforcing reward"[75]. The modern compulsion to add hypothetical constructs into Behaviouristics came as a result of blocking the return to Mentalistic concepts. That is, while the Behaviourist could admit that they needed concepts left indefinable by observation, they would still: a) go as far as they could without their use, and b) insist that "the above concession not be construed as opening the way to a free use of mentalistic concepts"[76]. Thus, there was a push to employ the analogical and suggestive power of Mentalistic concepts and principles, but only inasmuch as their use can "be *justified* in terms of their ability to explain observable behaviour phenomena"[77]. Let us now turn to the 'bigger picture' of how the Behaviouristic tradition factors in to the

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[75] Ibid. p. 6
[76] Ibid. p. 6
[77] Ibid. p. 6

problems of language and thought, and inevitably, how it accounts for the problem of universals.

Thinking is traditionally thought of as *perceiving* and *doing*, but for Sellars, it is a matter of *classification*. He does concede that there is an obvious *conceptual element* to perception, and that when we make perceptual judgments there is an explicit sense in which we perceive something *as* being of a certain kind. In addition to the conceptual element there is a *sensory element*, to which the perceptual judgment is a response. What this sensory element consists of, and how the two are related, is yet to be elucidated. For Sellars, actions are "responses to *volitions*, as *perceptual judgments* are responses to sensory stimulation"[78].

In the classical picture, there is an analogy between "certain properties of conceptual states and certain properties of the linguistic utterances which express them"[79]. Thus, in the classical theory of mental activity, the syntax and semantics of conceptual episodes are taken as primary and linguistic episodes as derivative. Sellars observes that

> The latter (linguistic episodes) have the grammar they do because this makes it possible for them to express thoughts having what might be called an intrinsic grammar, i.e., a grammar, the possession of which is not to be explained in terms of the grammar of anything else.[80]

The classical theory supposes an intersubjective domain (of which the ontological status is sketchy, claims Sellars) "of what might be called

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[78] Ibid. p. 7
[79] Ibid. p. 7
[80] Ibid. p. 7

thinkable"[81]. The classical theory, as Sellars writes, "construes the relation of utterances to thinkables as the logical product of a relation between utterances and thoughts on the one hand, and the above characterized relation between thoughts and thinkables on the other"[82]. Language has traditionally been defined as a tool, or an instrument, and most importantly, the orthodox view has held that linguistic activity essentially consists of actions. There is an important distinction here, namely that actions are actualities, but actualities, in general, are not actions. Sellars thinks it is paradoxical to think of volitions as actions (nor is inference properly subsumed under action). The point that we wish to draw here is that the classical view holds that thought is essentially non-linguistic, and that "the syntax and semantics of thought (its intentionality) is primary"[83]. Let us now turn to the Sellarsian objection to the classical picture, so that we might understand why Sellars thinks that the classical view is so misplaced in its assumptions regarding reality.

We recall that Sellars argues that thinking is *reducible to language*, and that all awareness is a linguistic affair, according to the tenets of metalinguistic nominalism. There is much work to be done yet in our exegesis, as to how Sellars establishes his position. In the next section of *Behaviourism, Language and Meaning*, we will examine more closely the system of dot quotation that Sellars establishes, in order to do away with the trappings of the classical view. Sellars describes the typically human ability to have propensities, and he equates these on a plane mentally with thinking-out-loud. That is, propensities to say that "I am hungry" or "I am tired", is essentially a thinking-out-loud, an

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[81] Ibid. p. 8
[82] Ibid. p. 8
[83] Ibid., p.8

internal linguistic expression of our mental states. Verbal behaviourism holds that we become in touch with our mental states and thoughts through this process of thinking-out-loud, of *saying something.* But now let us raise an important objection: what about *non-inferential* knowledge?

A good place to start our objection is to try and understand how the Sellarsian picture is to interpret a simple human emotion such as anger. Now, under the picture that Sellars prescribes, an individual comes to learn what anger is, and what it means, through a very sophisticated process of enculturation and socialization. A person is "tuned in" to becoming aware of what it is to be angry through the learning of a language, and through the typically behaviourist learning methods of stimulus-response-reinforcement theory. Also, we are "trained to be free"[84]. A child infers what anger is by watching its parents, or other influential adults' expressions of anger, "Oh, Johnny is angry!" the child is told at a young age, and associates the emotion of anger with those various conditioned responses that they heard from childhood. But what if the child had never learned what anger is? If at no time in little Johnny's past was he described the concept of anger, or better said the propensity to believe that you have been wronged in some way, then could he still *feel* angry? This is a big problem for metalinguistic nominalism, I believe, because if all thinking is reduced to *languaging,* how could we possibly think about something that we have not yet learned through the course of learning our language?

One can easily infer that someone else is angry. There are behavioural changes, perhaps grimacing, gritting teeth, heavier breathing, or perhaps

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[84] Ibid. p.13

getting the 'evil eye' from someone you have angered. There is an apparently

non-linguistic aspect to the emotion of anger. That is, even if you did not have

words for how angry you felt, you could still be in a state of rage. This line of

reasoning is rejected by Sellars. He claims that

> Notice the child is not acquiring the propensity to say "I
> am angry" when he notices his anger. That would put the
> cart before the horse. The noticing simply *is* the
> actualization of the acquired propensity to say 'I am
> angry' as a direct response to the anger itself. This
> strategy applies, *mutatis mutandis,* to the acquisition of
> the ability to notice one's propensities to think-out-
> loud.[85]

We shall return to the objection raised above shortly, but for now let us say a

few more words on the verbal behaviorist picture of language acquisition.

Sellars highlights the interesting similarities between:

> (a) The ability to respond to objects in ways which
> discriminate between different degrees and kinds of
> similarity and difference.

And

> (b) The ability to formulate hypotheses which involve
> generic concepts,
> and here (a) is more primitive than (b) and the latter
> would be impossible without it. [86]

A rat does not acquire the concept of a triangle when it has been trained to

jump through a door with a triangle painted on it, Sellars thinks. Language

acquisition involves so much more than this, and is intertwined with countless

neural networks and strings and patterns of behaviour. It is the patterns of

inference involved in language acquisition that interests Sellars greatly.

Humans are creatures of habit and spontaneity, and as a person learns a

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[85] Ibid., p.11
[86] Ibid., p.11

language there is an incredible 'dimensional' expansion that takes place. It is as though we were increasing the size of our house, by another floor or two, every time we make a new leap in liguistico-conceptual understanding.

Once we move beyond the conception that inner conceptual episodes are *merely* propensities to think-out-loud (i.e., that they serve an explanatory role as well) Sellars will claim that inner conceptual episodes,

> Belong to a theoretical framework which purports to explain the comings and goings of verbal propensities in terms of finer grained structures, as microphysical theory explains the powers and propensities of middle-sized objects. Nevertheless, the episodes postulated by the theory are, at least initially, taken to be analogous to verbal episodes.[87]

The ability to have representational episodes may be pre-linguistic or innate, Sellars concedes, but to actually *represent* these episodes with any degree of accuracy comes only after a mastery of a language. More importantly, though there may be a crude sort of *pre-linguistic* direct awareness it is not as such, pre-*symbolic*[88] (yet if pre-linguistic awareness were symbolic, would this not yield a form of *direct acquaintance*, hence, intentionality?) Sellars goes on to write that

> Thus a prelinguistic awareness of something as red is a primitive member of the "this is red" family of representations. If we signal that an item has a function in a representational system akin to that performed in our language by a certain sentence, by enclosing the latter in dot-quotes to form a predicate of functional classification which applies to items which perform a function which is relevantly similar, we can represent the occurrence of a direct awareness of something red *as* red as follows:

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87 Ibid., p.13
88 Ibid., p.16

$$t \text{ is a response to } \alpha \underline{\text{ as }} \text{red} \ \rightarrow \ [\quad \begin{array}{l} \text{WWWW} \leftarrow \text{a token, t, of } \cdot \underline{\text{this }} \text{is red } \cdot \\[1em] \text{X} \leftarrow \text{a red item, } \alpha \end{array}$$

> Although t is a response to α as red in the causal sense, this is a small part of what is true of t, for the ability to have a representation of the · *this* is red · kind essentially involves propensities which relate it to other elements of the representational system to which it belongs.[89]

The picture of verbal behaviourism that we have been working with roughly holds that conceptual events have a linguistic nature, and the above example speaks to the coherentist picture of meaning which will be at the forefront of Sellars' theory. Sellars' own philosophical nominalism echoes this one theme again and again, that there is no pre-linguistic awareness of universals, whatsoever. But there is a problem that arises when we attempt to define all semantical concepts in terms of behaviourism, in that it seems that linguistic episodes do have non-behaviouristic attributes "that are essential to them"[90]. Sellars thinks that this is merely a false dilemma, which he attempts to explain with respect to the semantical concept of meaning. Take for instance the statement:

E (in L) means …

And *standing for*, as represented by the context

E (in L) stands for...

Sellars wants to dispel the notion that these contexts are (ostensibly) relational (i.e., contexts of the form, xRy). The reason he makes this move is to avoid questions of whether or not the relation *is* definable in behaviouristic terms. We recall that within the purview of Sellars' nominalism, *thinking* is a process of

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[89] Behaviourism, Language and Meaning. p.17
[90] Ibid., p.17

classifying and referring, and is inextricably bound to the classificatory systems of language. Sellars needs to introduce the concept of *distributive singular terms* (DSTs)[91] to effectively circumvent the problem of instantiating philosophical universals. This is an essential tenet of metalinguistic nominalism, and will comprise the majority of the focus of the next section.

Let us borrow from Sellars' paradigmatic examples to highlight the features of this theory; to better elucidate the notion of distributive singular terms. Namely, let us take the statement:

The lion is tawny.

(as basically equivalent to)

Lions (typically)[92] are tawny.

The term 'Lion' does not 'name' an abstract-linguistic object, but functions as a distributive singular term, which applies to a vast array of objects that satisfy the various classificatory conditions to which the term refers. As we will see shortly, we want to think of this as though we are 'getting in touch' with *lionaeity* by "acquiring the ability"[93] to use ·lion· tokens. Another classical example which may be of use in elucidating these notions is the statement:

'Und' (in German) means *and*

Here, 'und' functions as a DST, generated from the sortal predicate "'and.'" We are even tempted to re-write the statement as

'Und' (in G) means 'and' (in E),

(and to paraphrase further)

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[91] Of DSTs Sellars writes that "the predications made of them distribute over the many objects which satisfy the predicates from which they are formed" Ibid, p.18
[92] Here, "the parenthetical comments remind us that it would be a mistake to regard the original statements as paraphrases of the unqualified." p.19
[93] Excerpt from a response to Quine, Ibid., p.23

'Und' (in G) means the same as 'and' (in E)

In a sense, this statement is explicitly *giving* the meaning that 'und' and 'and' mean the same thing, rather than merely *telling* us that they do. But recall that Sellars' main objective at this point is to eliminate the reference to the *meaning relation* here, by introducing his sophisticated dot-quote system. Thus, the original statement will have the 'deep structure' of

'Und's (in G) are ·and·s

What Sellars wants here is to establish that "the criteria for being an ·and· is to be an item which functions in some language or other in a way which is relevantly similar to the way in which 'and's function in our language"[94]. The meaning statement itself *gives the meaning* of 'und' (in German) by giving us an exemplar, and telling us that to understand the function of 'und's in German, we should "rehearse in imagination the cluster of functions characteristic of 'and'". Thus, to be an ·and· "is to be involved in a system of behavioural propensities conforming to the logical rules of the language"[95]. All thinking and awareness is bound up within the language game, within learning and acquiring the rules of the language game, and in discovering how to maneuver within the (inter-subjective) laws of the language game.

But we still have not explained away the nature of *relation* and we have not yet gotten to the bottom of why Sellars thinks that there is no such universal of *relation-hood* (or any universals at all for that matter). Yet, when we ask the question, "Is *stands for* a relation?", once again the verbal behaviourist project seems threatened by the lack of success in defining semantical concepts in behaviouristic terms, for this would imply that there are non-behaviouristic

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[94] Ibid., p. 20
[95] Ibid., p. 20

attributes that are essential to understanding linguistic episodes. Sellars uses the concept of triangularity to exemplify this problem. It seems as though it were a fact that there is strong equivalence between

'dreieckig' (in G) *means* triangular

And

'dreieckig' (in G) *stands for* triangularity

If we employ the strategy of dot-quotation now, we get

'dreieckig's (in G) are ·triangular·s

Sellars thinks that we would be "home free if we could construe triangularity as having the depth grammar of a DST. Roughly, Triangularity = the ·triangular·"[96] This, he thinks, would be a fundamental breakthrough in the ontology of attributes, and *par passu,* in the philosophy of mind as well.[97] Thus, we can summarize the argument in Sellars' own words:

> The gist of the matter is that "... triangularity merely *looks* (to the eye bewitched by a certain picture) to be a name. It merely *looks* as though it referred to something non-linguistic. Applying to expressions in *any* language which do a certain job, its inter-linguistic reference is confused with a non-linguistic reference. Again 'stands for' merely *seems* to stand for a relation. It is, as 'means' proved to be, a specialized form of the copula.[98]

In addition to this, we should note that the surface grammar of 'means' statements "is suited to the task of *giving meanings*, the surface grammar of 'stands for' statements is suited to connecting functional classifications of

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[96] Ibid., p.23
[97] Thus, if universals should prove to be merely linguistic roles, to be played out in the sophisticated language game, then without linguistic roles there simply are no universals.
[98] Ibid., p.23

linguistic expressions with predications of truth" [99].

In *The Identity Approach to the Mind-Body Problem*, Sellars elucidates the problems and potential solutions involved with the *identity theory* of consciousness. Roughly put, the classic version of the theory holds that "raw feels" are identical with "brain states"[100]. What this means is that not only are the characteristics and predicates used to describe these two distinct phenomena identical, but the states themselves are also identical with one another. The actual process involved in such a reduction will be discussed in further sections, but for now we ought to do some more exegesis on the preliminary elements of this theory so that we may later proceed to how the thesis really 'hangs together' in the broadest possible sense.

Put another way, which is relevant to our discussion, the classic version of the identity theory claims that: "raw feel" universals are identical to "brain state" universals. Universals, being 'a subset of abstract entities' are expressed in language by predicates, but most importantly for Sellars, predicates do not refer to universals (they are not 'referring expressions' at all, he claims)[101]. Any good theory of universals should thus account for the inter-subjective and inter-linguistic nature of universals, and explain the further distinction of describing the difference between 'known' universals, and those universals yet to be discovered. It is in the elusive character of these 'yet-to-be-discovered' universals that Sellars will place his *faith* in the identity theory, and later, through which we shall see the emergence of a form of *sciencism*.

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[99] Ibid., p.23
[100] Sellars, The Identity Approach to the Mind-Body Problem, p.190
[72] Ibid., p.191

Sellars articulates the Mind-Body problem elsewhere, in *Mind, Meaning and Behaviour*, by claiming that

> ... the Mind-Body problem is, at bottom, the problem whether intentional concepts relating to minds can be reduced to nonintentional concepts, whether concepts of sense qualities, or physicalistic concepts, or both, and if so, in exactly what sense of "reduced".[102]

Sellars will then go on to reject a logical reduction of raw feels to brain states, in place of a purely causal one, which is to say that while consciousness is causally reducible to a micro-physical process, it is not possible to create a logical reduction to such processes. Sellars himself must concede that consciousness is non-logically reducible. I argue that this gives human consciousness a special ontological status: one which is fundamentally primitive, and unanalysable.

We must not forget that Sellars, being a metalinguistic nominalist, aims to "connect "realistic" talk about universals with "nominalistic" talk about linguistic expressions"[103], ultimately concluding that we ought to do away with the notion of abstract entities altogether, even though they may have the graceful use of saving appearances. For Sellars they are simply not real in any way. Abstract entities thus play a kind of linguistic role for Sellars, in that they help us to characterize, refer and describe our sensory experience of the world. But what of those universals that have no corresponding linguistic predicates with which to describe them, these so-called undiscovered universals?

The problems involved with reducing our sense impressions or "raw feels" to corresponding neurological processes or "brain states" are problems

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[102] W. Sellars, *Mind, Meaning and Behaviour*, p.84
[103] Ibid., p.192

which require us to employ concepts and categories which have not yet been discovered by modern scientific inquiry and experimentation. "Raw feels" are taken as primitive by the identity theory, and thus are not a subset or complexes of micro-physical states, for

> ... these primitive predicates may end up as *primitive* predicates in the unified theory. In effect, the to-be-discovered sense-impression universals would be no more complex than the sense-impression universals expressed by current sense-impression predicates; they would have a different categorical framework, and be logically related to (but not *complexes* of) universals expressed by other primitive predicates in the to-be-achieved unified sense-impression, brain-state theory.[104]

Sellars wants to give raw-feel predicates a certain kind of *anybody*-ascriptive use, in that perceptual behaviour being primary, we can identify theoretical inner episodes with raw-feels given to self-awareness (association with a theoretical kind to a given kind) and possibly account for the behaviour of others, through the postulation of such inner episodes[105].

But what is really going on here is the deployment of a scientific account of reality that reduces the 'raw feels' of our (irreducible) consciousness to a correlative process which is both chemical and micro-physical. Because universals can be 'discovered' through the use of newly created predicates, equally so they can be abandoned when we can no longer find expression for them in language. Thus at time T, where some chemical predicate did not stand for a micro-physical universal, later on (after ideal science discovers it) at time T[1], there may be a newly discovered synonymy. Sellars will ultimately come to accept a weak form of the identity theory,

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[104] Ibid., p.205
[105] Ibid. p.204

> according to which raw feels or sense impressions are states of *core persons* [106], and according to which, therefore, the logical space of raw feels will reappear transposed but unreduced in a theoretical framework adequate for the job of explaining what core persons do.[107]

Consciousness is *causally* reducible to brain states, but it is not *logically* reducible to brain states. Raw feels must be understood not as things which yield knowledge of discriminative behaviour, but as things that give us explanation of perceptual propositional attitudes[108], and thus, this is why they are bound up within language that gives us predicates and expressions that refer to and characterize qualities and relations (again we see the linguistic character of universals). The most puzzling aspect of this position is the notion that our sensations are *transcribed but unreduced*. This alludes to the notion that while our consciousness is primary and not reducible logically, there is a causal reduction that occurs when we try to see 'what is really happening'. That is, consciousness is a physical process, but the articulation of what that physical process entails will always be bound within a language. Thus, we can only hope to transcribe our theories of mind linguistically, and Sellars will claim that only through ideal science might we come to a theoretical framework which can account for the extra-linguistic appearance of our consciousness.

One major problem with this acceptance of the weak form of the identity theory is that it places the burden of proof upon the shoulders of science to tell us the ultimate constituents of reality are. Not only is this kind of *sciencism* derivative of a faith-based constructivism, it also negates the special role of

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[106] For Sellars, a "core person" entails the human central nervous systems, (i.e., a brain and spinal column). (see Sellars', Mind, Meaning and Behaviour)
[107] Ibid., p.207
[108] Ibid., p.207

philosophy in giving meaning to our existence.

Now that we have more or less adequately outlined the theory of metalinguistic nominalism in its rough form, let us now focus our attack on nominalism by delving into the various problems and dilemmas that arise from Sellars' theory of metalinguistic nominalism, as it is best represented by psychological nominalism and verbal behaviourism.

Chapter 3

Section I: A Critical Analysis of Metalinguistic Nominalism

Loux argues that Sellars's DSTs (and his system of dot quotation) serve as a nominalistic resource for materials which allow expressions from different languages to possess a functional equivalence. I argue that what this really means is that Sellars is making a general claim that equates linguistic expressions to be understood as tokens. Loux argues that Sellars's system surreptitiously introduces a new set of universals. I argue that if DSTs are really functioning as types, then metalinguistic nominalism fails to adequately analyze abstract reference and the extra-linguistic states of affairs associated with it. Peirce's type/token distinction is used to demonstrate how DSTs are more likely to be types than tokens. If this is true then the types that DSTs pick out are actually all universals, and we have a fully functioning realistic metaphysics. If there is no pre-linguistic awareness, then there can be no intentional behaviour prior to the acquisition of language. Because there does seem to be the possibility of preliguistic intentional behaviour, this account seems backwards.

So far we have sketched an outline of Sellars' psychological nominalism and verbal behaviourism that gives us a general overview of the nominalistic thesis that Sellars promotes. Sellars' position is a radically controversial thesis for realists, as it holds that *all conceptual awareness is a linguistic affair*[109] (we should note how vague this concept still is to us at this point in the discussion). This means that there will be no possibility for the existence of universals (whatever they may be) and it includes, as well, the belief that intentionality does not emerge from thought, but rather, is a derivative of speech. It is at this point that we shall turn to some pertinent criticisms of Sellars' position, which as we shall now see, pose severe problems for the theory's truth and validity.

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[109] Taken from *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, sec.29

We recall that the project of most hard-nosed, savvy nominalists is to do away with the very economy of orthodox philosophical-ontological language (i.e., Platonic, or *Realist* talk about universals), and to mobilize nominalistic tools within the language with which they may make claims about reality without invoking universals. The main problem here is trying to understand how Sellars will mobilize his own nominalistic language-tools in order to do away with any type of reference to universals. In our task to better elucidate and evaluate the relevant elements of this complex philosophical theory, let us briefly turn again to the writing of Michael J. Loux, specifically from his work, Metaphysics: a Contemporary Introduction, to provide greater clarity on these matters.

Loux explains that what appear as universals in Sellars' account are really, "distributive singular terms enabling us to make general claims about individual utterances and inscriptions"[110] (note that these are all and only tokens, and not types). We recall how Sellars explains away the traditional translational dilemmas of the German word 'rot' to the English word 'red' as one of functional equivalence, which is made explicit by the use of dot quotes (facilitating immediate functional equivalence between two terms: i.e., 'rot' (in G) means ·red·). Thus, dot quotation serves as a resource for materials which allow metalinguistic discourse to "cut across languages", allowing expressions from different languages to possess a functional equivalence. Loux explains that,

> Sellars' central contention is that sentences incorporating abstract referring devices are simply disguised ways of making metalinguistic claims of the interlinguistic and functional kind at work in dot quotation, and he wants to claim that using his dot quoting convention we can provide rigorously nominalistic readings of such sentences.[111]

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[110] M.J. Loux, Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction, p.79
[111] Ibid., p.80

Thus, in the sentence ".Red·s are colour predicates", ·Red· is to be analyzed not as a statement which is naming some sort of linguistic type that "is embodied or realized in different languages", but rather functions as a distributive singular term (DST), which is simply a general claim that equates linguistic expressions to be understood as tokens. We shall soon discover that the very crux of our objection to metalinguistic nominalism lies in the troublesome nature of *nominalistic tokens* and their philosophical *types*.

Loux goes on to criticize Sellars' theory by claiming that even given its impressive technical machinery, Sellars' account "eliminates reference to nonlinguistic universals and universals understood as types only by surreptitiously introducing a new set of universals"[112]. What this means is that when we talk of a supposed universal, *F-ness*, Sellars thinks that what we are really talking about is linguistic expressions that are ·F·s. Loux gives Sellars the benefit of the doubt and allows the concession that these linguistic expressions actually are tokens, rather than types, individual utterances and inscriptions. The question still remains as to what makes those utterances and inscriptions all ·F·s? Sellars will claim that it is because they play a functionally equivalent linguistic role in their own language as played by '*F*'s in our language. At this point, Loux asks, "But then, is Sellars not committed to the existence of linguistic roles as understood as things that can be embodied or realized in the various tokens of historically different languages? And is this not, after all, just a commitment to universals?"[113]

Sellars' rebuttal is that his theory is merely a way of simplifying complex

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[112] Ibid., p.82
[113] Ibid., p.83

facts about linguistic rules. Thus, Loux's argues that Sellars will come to a position that roughly holds that

> ... talk about the roles or functions of linguistic expressions can be paraphrased in terms of talk about the linguistic rules that govern the behaviour of language users. And Sellars argues that in the final analysis, talk about linguistic rules can be formulated free even of commitment to the existence of linguistic expressions understood as tokens.[114]

Sellars does not want to *reify* or *entify* individual utterances and inscriptions, but rather, as Loux notes, the only entities to which his account is committed "are the individual human beings who speak and write". Thus, there really *are* no linguistic expressions at all, there are only the individual speakers and inscribers.[115]

For a more detailed critique of Sellars' position, we now turn to J.P. Moreland's work, <u>Universals</u>. Moreland describes Sellars' *extreme nominalism*, as the view in which "sentences with abstract referring devices are metalinguistic; that is, they do not refer to non-linguistic objects...Rather, they are covert ways of making claims about the words we use to talk about nominalistic objects"[116]. This is done through analyzing the differences between abstract singular terms (which realists hold to actually refer to a single abstract object), and a concrete general term (which extreme nominalists claim refers to the concrete particulars that satisfy them). Take for instance "wisdom" / "wise"; the metalinguistic approach is to take the abstract singular term as making claims only about the corresponding general term. Thus, for Sellars,

(1) Wisdom is a virtue.

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[114] Ibid., p.83
[115] Ibid., p.83
[116] Moreland, <u>Universals</u>, p.45

(is reduced to)

(1b) "Wise" is a virtue predicate.

Immediately, Moreland raises the objection that this position suffers from two obvious criticisms. The first objection is that it falls victim to the object and relation regresses. That is, the metalinguistic *analysans* (1b) offered for (1) "explicitly contains a word type ("wise") and implicitly entails that various objects (Moses, Aristotle) and predicate tokens of "wise" enter into *the* satisfaction relation (is true of relation, etc.)" and thus, it can be argued that two vicious regresses are generated.[117]

The second objection Moreland raises is that in this analysis of (1) we assert to actually make a claim about the English word (or tokens of the word) "wise". Moreland thinks that when a speaker from another language is making an equivalent utterance to (1b), they are not talking about the actual English word "wise". The corresponding foreign language utterances are all completely different from each other and (1b), but Moreland claims that "this won't do since they are all legitimate, equivalent translations of (1)".[118]

Sellars will in turn claim that his position does not fall victim to these two problems. Regarding the first problem of vicious regresses, Sellars says that abstract singular terms may indeed be replaced by their associated general terms ("wisdom" and "wise" respectively) but that, "the latter should be taken as equivalent to the expression "the word '___'" (i.e. "the word 'wise'")[119]. But we recall that really, all that these expressions are, for Sellars, is distributive singular terms (Moreland defines DSTs as "devices for signalling that a claim is

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[117] Ibid., p.45
[118] Ibid., p.46
[119] Ibid., p.46

being made about the various individual tokens of the relevant word"), thus, (1)

is neither a claim about wisdom, nor the word type "wise"; rather, it is a general

claim about all the relevant token utterances and inscriptions, the "wise"s. [120]

As to the second problem, Sellars will claim that instead of ending up

with a language bound analysis of abstract reference, he will in turn claim that

> ... a proper analysis requires recognizing linguistic
> expressions that are functionally equivalent across
> various languages; for example, terms such as "man",
> "homme", "Mensch" "hombre", that are subject to the
> same linguistic rules, express the same behavioural
> responses to perceptual situations, enter into the same
> inferential patterns, etc.[121]

Sellars utilizes the nominalistic resources of his special form of dot quotation in

order to capture the "cross linguistic commonalities" between functionally

equivalent words from different languages. Thus the statement:

(1b) ·Wise· is a virtue predicate.

(is represented more accurately as)

(1c) ·Wise·s (i.e., all tokens of ·wise·) are virtue predicates.

At this point we should begin to question Sellars' notion of abstract reference,

thinks Moreland. While sentence (1) is about really existing objects and the

features that they possess, (1c) is about "multiplicities of linguistic entities and

practices"[122] Thus Moreland argues that

> Sentence (1) would be true even if there were no language
> users but not so with (1c), and if possible predicates are
> employed to rebut this point, the realist will argue that
> (1) provides the ground for the appropriateness of the
> application of possible predicates, not vice versa.[123]

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[120] Ibid., p.46
[121] Ibid., p.46
[122] Ibid., p.47
[123] Ibid., p.47

Moreover, it is necessarily the case that (1) is true, but not so with (1c). Moreland observes that, "no specific set of functionally equivalent predicate tokens had to be about wisdom and, indeed, it is conceivable that language could have evolved with no predicates for wisdom whatever"[124]. For the realist, the sameness of linguistic patterns is grounded upon the sameness of the properties involved. This move is not available to extreme nominalists, like Sellars, as they deny that properties exist at all.

Moreland thinks that this is a significant problem that leads Sellars into another vicious regress. If Sellars' theory holds, then dot quoted terms are true of all tokens of the various functionally equivalent expressions in different languages. Moreland aptly observes that this would mean that

> ...dot quote terms and Sellars' notion of *the* expression "the word '____'" are types and, thus, they seem to generate an object regress. Moreover, the various linguistic tokens of a dot quoted term and its associated concrete particular stand as a pair in a certain type of relation, viz. the *true* or *satisfaction* relation, and, thus, a relation regress would seem to follow.[125]

Here, Sellars would most likely claim that the dot quoted terms (in the analysans) are not at all word types, but rather are DSTs that refer to the individual tokens of the associated words. But these tokens *must* be all and only ones with *the same* linguistic function, says Moreland. Thus, the attempt to reduce *"the same* linguistic function" to distributive expressions about various tokens of linguistic behaviours would face the same problems, for, as Moreland writes, "these token behaviours would count only if they were of the

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[124] Ibid., p.47
[125] Ibid., p.47

proper *kind*."[126]

Perhaps Moreland's most poignant criticism of Sellars' metalinguistic approach can be found in the difficulties interpreting statements of the form:

(3) Wisdom is a property.

(which causes very few problems for Sellars, until we use a sentence that employs a definite description to refer to properties (rather than an abstract singular term), namely:

(4) The attribute most frequently attributed to Aristotle is a property.

Moreland thinks that Sellars would try to re-phrase the statement as an adjectival indicator of the form:

(4a) ·The attribute most frequently attributed to Aristotle· s are adjectives.

While (4a) seems to parallel (1c), Moreland claims that (4a) is nonetheless false, as it is not adjectival at all (as it occupies the subject position of the statement (4a), thus making it a noun-phrase). Sellars may respond to this objection by claiming that ·the attribute most frequently attributed to ·Aristotle· turns out to be a proxy for ·wise· , which is another way of saying that the term ·wise· is most often ascribed to Aristotle, and that it is a DST for linguistic tokens functionally equivalent to the English word "wise", and that these are adjectives. Thus the correct *Sellarsian* reading of (4) reads as:

(4b) The general term most frequently ascribed to Aristotle, namely, ·wise· is an   adjective.

Clearly (4) and (4a) are not equivalent, as their truth conditions vary. Given a

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[126] Ibid., p.47

world in which people more frequently use definite descriptions, rather than abstract singular terms to refer to wisdom, we could have (4) being true, and (4b) false. Moreland thinks that Sellars would respond by claiming that whenever a definite description is used that is functionally equivalent to an abstract singular term, they are equivalent; but this just seems false, thinks Moreland. They are completely different objects, as utterances or inscriptions. Furthermore, Moreland argues that abstract singular terms are "rigid designators that name their respective objects and definite descriptions are nonrigid designators that refer to whatever satisfies them"[127]. Thus, there is no reason to think that (3) and (4b) are coextensive (much less identical in any or throughout all possible worlds), unless "one makes a covert appeal to sameness of referent, the property of being wise, say, throughout possible worlds to guarantee the result"[128]. Moreland concludes that Sellars' account fails to adequately analyze abstract reference and the extra-linguistic states of affairs associated with it.

Within the modern language of the theory of universals, the type-token distinction lies at the heart of the debate between realism and nominalism. According to Peirce, the type-token distinction is the contrast between a category and a member of that category. In the Collected Writings of C.S. Pierce, we find a fragment of a paper that was only published posthumously, which describes the intended usage of this distinction, that of a *linguistic convention* (the idea of *a law as a sign*). A.J. Ayer elaborates the distinction in the Origins of Pragmatism, by describing how "a token owes its significance either to its

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[127] Ibid., p.49
[128] Ibid., p.49

exemplifying one or more qualisigns or to its being an instance of a type"[129].

Ayer explains that

> So, in the sense in which each occurrence of the word 'the' on this page is an occurrence of the same conventional sign, all conventional signs are legisigns. The individual inscriptions of the word are sinsigns or tokens of the legisign or type. Peirce also refers to individual inscriptions or utterances of a word as replicas of it.[130]

Tokens are said to exemplify a type, and tokens possess *properties,* that characterize their type (just what exactly these so called *properties* consist of is truly of philosophical interest to us, and so far, to vague and ostensive to be of any help). Thus, a lion is a token of a type of animal, just as a tiger would be a token of a type of animal as well. Lions, however, are a type unto themselves, just as are tigers. A single lion would be a token of all types of lions, but a tiger is not a token of all lion types. The type-token distinction is important to us because through a careful exegesis of the ontological and semantical underpinnings of the distinction we will come to see how linguistic nominalism fails as a reasonable philosophical position, and consequently, why it becomes more reasonable to posit a realistic metaphysical ontology of universals.

I argue that the proper philosophical understanding of all *types* necessitates the deployment of a good theory of abstract entities. That is, *all types are themselves universals.* All tokens are particulars and they exemplify their types, which are universals. Thus, a single lion is a particular token that exemplifies the universal type of *lionaiety,* or of *being a lion.* Two lions together in a cage at the zoo are both individual tokens of the universal type of *being a lion,* and as tokens they are qualitatively, but not numerically, identical. One

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[129] Ayer, The Origins of Pragmatism, p.148
[130] Taken from Peirce, in Collected Works of C.S. Peirce, (II p.244-6)

might imagine many thousands of delicious red apples hanging from the branches of trees in an orchard somewhere, all of the ripe ones exemplifying *token redness*. They do so because they exemplify the *universal,* redness, as it is physically manifested by a type of colour, namely red.

There are several contentious points of interest for the realist, which occur in the outline of Sellars' metalinguistic nominalism provided thus far. These issues will provide the fodder for our next attack on nominalism, through which it shall be shown that to deny the existence of all universals outright is indeed an ill-conceived philosophical endeavor. While these issues are mired in a sophisticated and technical language that makes them difficult to penetrate, if we proceed cautiously we will come to see why one ought to abandon any such nominalistic positions in favour of a realist theses. Specifically, I refer to Sellars' confusing notions of awareness and language acquisition in animals, as it pertains to his behaviourist theses; that all cognitive awareness is *a linguistic affair.*

We might wish to recall several passages from the various Sellars works which we have just reviewed in which there lies a disturbing indication that Sellars does not seem to believe that animals, and even infants, think at all. In this sense of the word, thinking refers to the preferential Sellarsian motif of defining thinking as a kind of mental *languaging*, a classificatory and referential mode of awareness that directly associates a thought *about* something to the various semantico-linguistic tools ones has acquired (through the life-long process of enculturation) in order to be able to aptly characterize the thought. I take this kind of metalinguistic and nominalistic reasoning to mean that there can be no thinking of lions or bears, of helicopters or of submarines, unless one

has the linguistic concepts already in place. How one comes to acquire the concept of a lion or a submarine is through complex mental interactions (there is sensing but no thought, in the 'classical conception') within the intersubjective domain of society and the given spoken language of that society. Very much like Ludwig Wittgenstein's pseudo-nominalistic vision presented in his Philosophical Investigations, the meaning of a word is not what that term *names* (for it does not *refer* to any abstract mental objects or entities at all) but rather the meaning of a word is solely its role in a language game.[131] Wittgenstein was so convinced of his late metalinguistic project that he eventually claimed that all philosophy could ever hope for in its quest for knowledge of reality would be reduced to the analysis of language.

Whether or not Sellars is a true *Wittgensteinian* goes far beyond the scope of this paper, but it is nonetheless interesting to note the inherent similarities of their positions (a similarity which will be further elucidated in the last section). Sellars is very likely to agree with Wittgenstein's famous quip that "philosophical problems arise when language goes on vacation".[132] In both philosopher's images of the world, Sellars and (the latter) Wittgenstein see human beings as creatures bound by behaviouristic and naturalistic laws in which they play increasingly sophisticated 'language games' through which individuals come to gain a certain awareness of themselves and of their place in nature and society. Yet it is only through language games that we might come to these awarenesses, for there is no pre-linguistic awareness whatsoever. But what exactly is *meant* by pre-linguistic awareness? This dilemma becomes

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[131] This translation rubric is "non-relational", in that it does not identify or pick out any *abstract individuals*, nor any *concreta*.

[132] Wittgenstein, Philosphical Investigations, p.16 (sec.38)

especially manifest when we look closely into the behaviouristic patterns of other animals.

We recall that for Sellars, an awareness of something *as*, is more than just a visual recognitional capacity to identify something in our sense perception. We can be 'sensing blue-ly' or 'blue-ishly', but unless we have the concept of "the colour blue" pre-existing in our linguistico-semantic resources, truly we are not truly *aware* of blue '*as* the colour blue'. This is because awareness is a linguistic affair, and without the linguistic tool, let us call it "the blue concept", we somehow cannot be aware of blueness. There are some kinds of 'prelinguistic awarenesses' in nature, yet this notion of awareness is vastly different for Sellars, than it would be for most. For instance, if one places a green magnet over a clump of iron filings, the iron filings are not aware of the magnet *as* green, but they act accordingly by moving around within the created magnetic field. The filings are not literally *aware* of the magnet, but there is a special *causal sense*[133] of the word which Sellars intends to use here. Here the awareness is a 'response to *as*', in which the fillings respond to the magnet *as* a magnet, and Sellars claims that this exemplifies the problem of distinguishing between natural signs and semantical signs within a naturalistic framework.[134] Sellars goes on to claim that,

> As a minimum we can say that to be an awareness, a response must be a manifestation of a system of dispositions and propensities by virtue of which the subject constructs a map of itself in its environment and locates itself and its behaviour on the map.[135]

Sellars is willing to allow such 'cognitive cartography' as being potentially

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[133] This sense of causal refers to *differential behaviour.*
[134] Behaviourism, Language and Meaning, p.14
[135] Ibid., p.14

innate, as in the language of bees, or even as it is endowed in human beings, as an evolutionary device facilitating learning and concept acquisition at a young age. Hence, in a very special sense, there is some pre-linguistic awareness, but it is certainly not enough for Sellars to allow for the adequate articulation and expression of an individual's thoughts and feelings and volitions. This would require a vastly more sophisticated apparatus, which will invariably be *language*. But what relevance is the language of bees and other animals? Have we really said enough about the *seeming* non-verbal language that animals use to 'express themselves', in order to dismiss it altogether as not *awareness proper*?

The prairie dog is said to alert other prairie dogs in the wild by emitting a panicked squealing sound when predators are near by. Zoologists infer that this is a alarming-call because when it is uttered by one prairie dog, all other dogs in the surrounding area of ear-shot, seem to scurry off into their holes. How would we account for this action in verbal behaviourism? One approach could be to claim that, much like iron filings respond to a magnet, the animal in distress responds to the threat by uttering distress cries and then by running away accordingly. It is simply a causal process in which there is a stimulus and a consequent response. The verbal behaviourist will claim that there is actually no 'thinking' going on in the brain of the animal, at least in the same sense that a person would 'think' about their loved ones, or 'think' about what they are going to eat for lunch. But then is this to say that when I think about a ham sandwich for lunch I am literally saying-out-loud in my head, "I want a ham sandwich for lunch"? Can there be any *thought* of the sandwich unless I actually verbalize in my mind's eye "sandwich, sandwich, sandwich"; unless I

actually utter the words themselves in my mind?

The trouble with verbal behaviourism is that unless one actually somehow *internally* utters the linguistic role for a concept, through a conscious act of perception or cognition, that concept is not being thought of at all. The notion of utterance itself is troublesome. How is an utterance mental, for instance? What is the role of sub-conscious thoughts and feelings and how are they *uttered linguistically*? Clearly here, Sellars intends that the thought, as a verbal utterance, is wholly mental, and we are literally talking or saying-out-loud in our heads somehow, when we think of anything. To *think of* something is to *say it* literally, thus, I cannot think about eating a ham sandwich unless I am somehow saying to myself that "I want to eat a ham sandwich". But can we not have thoughts in our minds that are non-linguistic? If there is even the possibility of a single thought (that one could think) which is wholly non-linguistic in nature, it would seem that the project of verbal behaviourism would collapse. What we are trying to deny here is that not all conceptual episodes are analogous to verbal episodes. It is exactly these sorts of thoughts that we are aiming to discover here, and in doing so, we shall forward a realist thesis that proposes the existence of certain types of universals, and subsequently deny that all awareness is a linguistic affair.

So what kinds of thoughts might classify as non-verbal or non-linguistic? Aside from the earlier exploration of animal behaviour, and the idea that animal 'noises' comprise some kind of animal 'language', bound with meaning and intentionality (i.e., a lion's roar expresses his internal prowess, or a whale's echo-locative clicks and squeaks indicate its contentedness to be swimming with its calf at its side) what sort of distinctively human thoughts might be

called non-linguistic? To make our task even more challenging, let us gaze at this problem from the myopic perspective of verbal behaviourism and analyze the universal animal emotion of fear. The verbal behaviourist will claim that when someone is afraid, the first thing that happens when one thinks of fear (after the stimulus invoking it occurs) is the response or propensity to say something like, "I am afraid" (or to be more clear and precise, what they are really saying is that "there is a fear emotion occurring here and now"). We must be careful with the way we express these notions, because the verbal behaviourist is not saying that there is no impulse to run away, or to stay and fight (which seems genetically hardwired into the behaviour of most mammals) but it is to say that in order to actually *think* of fear, we must *say* it to ourselves, that "I am afraid". This seems a backwards analysis at best, and fails to adequately account for the emotion and the feeling which is one actually *has*.

Chapter IV

Section I: Wittgenstein's Quietism

Ludwig Wittgenstein argues that because the function of a word is the role it plays in a language game, names do not refer to universals at all. He also thinks that whatever we cannot logically establish as true should be passed over in silence. While neither realist nor nominalist, Wittgenstein provides a useful mechanism with which to demonstrate the relation between two objects without the need of appeal to universals and abstract entities by placing the referring expressions in a counterpart relation. Sellars argues that this means that predicate expressions are ancillary expressions. He thinks that this methodology applies more appropriately to nominalism, rather than to realism, because there is no need to posit more entities (abstract entities, universals) than is required (where all that is required and posited by nominalists, is particulars). Realists are accused of having an excessively bloated ontology.

The problems surrounding universals are well enmeshed in the bold denial of the realist ontology forwarded by nominalism. Nominalism's principle claim against most forms of realism is that the ontology that one is left with, after having accepted the existence and status of abstract entities, is a bloated one. Nominalists claim that all talk of universals and abstract entities is at best a way of *saving appearances*, and ultimately, is merely a *facon de parler*. No more, perhaps, so do we find the prevalence of this sentiment than in the highly aphoristic *pseudo-nominalism* of Ludwig Wittgenstein, who famously asserts in the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus that

> 6.54   My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as *nonsense (i.e., senseless)*, when he has used them – as steps – to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.) He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright.

7   What we cannot speak about we must pass over in
         silence.[136]

Here we should read the term *nonsensical* very carefully, as its meaning is two-fold. In one sense, Wittgenstein thinks that all propositions are nonsensical because they can never get you to 'truth', a purely ideal and transcendent notion, which lies outside of our ability to reason (which is a purely linguistic act). Anything that can be said at all must then be something that "can be said clearly"[137], thus all things metaphysical, things that cannot be substantiated completely by logic and science, should be passed over in silence.

But there is a secondary use of this term here, which is that of *senseless*. The idea that our metaphysical postulates are senseless refers to Wittgenstein's belief that propositions, unless being some sort of descriptive observational statement (i.e., there is a page in front of me), are void of any logical truth-value. To make a claim about the universal of virtue becomes senseless when we attempt to logically reduce the meaning of the statement to a truth value. In the case of the page in front of us, there is some empirically verifiable methodology to assure the truth of the proposition, namely our sense perception. In the case of the universal of virtue, all propositions made about such *abstracta* will be nonsensical, and thus Wittgenstein holds that we should say nothing at all about them. This quietism becomes even more pronounced in the later writings of Wittgenstein.

We should note that in Wittgenstein's Famous work, *Philosophical Investigations*, he carefully distances himself from Nominalism. He claims that

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[136] Wittgenstein, L. Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, p.89
[137] Ibid., p.3

he is not analyzing phenomena at all (i.e., *thought*) but rather concepts (i.e., *that of thought*) and thus it is words themselves that are being analyzed. He goes on to claim that "Nominalists make the mistake of interpreting all words as *names*, and so of not really describing their use, but only, so to speak, giving a paper draft on such a description".[138] It is the fixation with the particular, and the utter denial of the abstract, that demarcates the nominalist. But Wittgenstein also notes the very source of the clash between Idealists, Solipsists and Realists alike is that

> The one party attacks the normal form of the expression as if they were attacking a statement; the others defend it, as if they were stating facts recognized by every reasonable human being.[139]

We recall that at the beginning of our analysis that the stakes were set very high for both nominalism and realism. Realism claims that the metaphysical and ontological resources which it establishes are better suited for dealing with the complexities of attribute agreement and abstract reference. Nominalism in turn becomes a denial of realist metaphysics, and a denial of metaphysics altogether, in its claim that only that which is particular exists. Returning to Sellars now, we see how Wittgenstein's insights can be exchanged in both the economies of realism and nominalism.

Sellars thinks that we can do away with abstract entities by making the problem of universals one of semantic predication. What Wittgenstein did was to show that we can demonstrate the relation between two objects without the need of appeal to universals and abstract entities by placing the referring expressions in a counterpart relation. Thus,

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[138] Wittgenstein, <u>Philosophical Investigations</u>, sec.383
[139] Ibid., sec.402

(1) a is larger than b

or

(2) a_b

is another form of

(3)   R*[·a·, ·b·] (notice Sellars' use of dot quotes here)

Sellars claims that what this form represents is a common noun that can effectively relate the terms in our subject-predicate language, "by concatenating these names with a predicate"[140]. The metalinguistic nominalist is now able to display the relation of the two objects in a non-subject-predicate language "by placing them in a configuration which involves no use of an additional sign design", and Sellars thinks that Wittgenstein's conclusion on this matter is that "predicate expressions are ancillary expressions, and are dispensable in a way in which referring expressions are not". [141] The case is not won by nominalism yet, for this way of thinking simply proposes another philosophical system that may explain *how* objects are, by "inscribing or uttering the corresponding referring expressions in a certain manner"[142]. Whether or not the only things that exist are all particular is not at all resolved by this system.

The fact remains that the basic referring expressions of a language still seem to refer to two types of objects: universals and particulars. Realists can still grant Wittgenstein's general point and claim that (in PMese dialect)

Triangular a

is a statement in which both expressions refer to objects proper standing in the exemplification *nexus* by, "being a concatenation of these two referring

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[140] Sellars, *The Conceptual and the Real*, p.109
[141] Ibid., p.109
[142] Ibid., p.109

expressions without the use of an auxiliary expression, thus saying
perspicuously what would be said unperspicuously"[143] by

> Triangularity is exemplified by *a*

Sellars, of course, rejects this sophisticated form of realism, accusing realists of
misapplying Wittgenstein's theory in this case by "applying it at the level of
distributive linguistic objects rather than at the level of objects proper".[144] But
Sellars goes on to admit that if one is convinced that the extra-linguistic order
includes both particulars and universals standing in the exemplification nexus
then the move to assert the existence of abstract entities is a natural outcome
of this line of reasoning. Sellars precludes this reasoning though, and will place
exemplification in "the same box as truth", for Sellars argues that is it

> ...a matter of semantical correctness of a certain performance –
> roughly the de-quoting of a quoted expression, then instead of
> being, as is often claimed, irrelevant to the problem of abstract
> entities, Wittgenstein's insight provides the keystone which can
> keep philosophical semantics from collapsing ever anew into a
> rubble of fruitless discussion.[145]

But the problem of exemplification extends far beyond the realm of realism
proper. In the next section I shall demonstrate how the exemplification regress
plagues nominalism, perhaps more so than realism, and why it is the Realist's
ontology which is preferable in the end.

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[143] Ibid., p.110
[144] Ibid., p.110
[145] Ibid., p.110

Section II:

The Problem of Exemplification

In this section it is demonstrated how paradoxical regresses affecting realism affect nominalism as well. What is needed to avoid a strong objection to realism (in the form of the exemplification regress) is to take exemplification as primary and irreducible. With 'Nexus' in place, exemplification is taken to be the primary connective of ontology. G. Bergmann elaborates upon the specificities of nexus and argues that a realistic ontology is favorable, taking the exemplification (nexus) to be primary.

We should note that the regress that affects the realist's notion of subject-predicate truth is applicable to the nominalist as well. For each sentence of the form 'a is F', the nominalist will identify some condition, C, and will claim that the sentence is only true if that condition, C, is met. But then, there will be a new subject-predicate sentence ('a is such that C is fulfilled'), and now the original sentence can be true only if the second sentence is true. Thus the nominalist theory can be described as equally as regressive as the realist's, but in neither case is the regress a vicious one and of this, Loux concludes that "no restriction on the range of applicability of the realist's theory of predication is required".[146]

We can infer through the analysis of these various regresses that what the realist inevitably allows for is a series of infinite and distinct universals. Immediately nominalists can accuse realists of creating an over-complicated ontology by allowing for an infinity of universals, which, in turn creates an unnecessary and unreasonable amount of entities to posit. If realists are

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[146] Loux, <u>Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction</u>, 39

concerned with a 'bloated ontology' then they are free to deny that the regresses are even real. One method to this end is to "challenge the idea that when we say that objects, agreeing in being F all jointly exemplify the universal F-ness, we have thereby identified a second case of attribute agreement", and then claim that by applying the Platonic schema (to identify the ontological ground of a given case of attribute agreement) we are giving a fully articulated and metaphysically "more perspicuous characterization" of the case, rather than introducing a new case.[147] Another technique that Loux explains is that in a statement such as (4), 'a exemplifies F-ness', the sentence is really only syntactically or grammatically distinct from 'F', and "semantically they can claim the two predicates are equivalent and so do not rest on distinct ontological foundations".[148]

There is a third problem for realists, a vastly more strict restriction of the theory that should be addressed at this point. According to realists, for a particular a, to be F, we require more than simply to say that both a and F exist. We also require that a exemplify F-ness, exists, and that this be a relational fact about the two entities, a relation of exemplification, and that this relation itself, is a universal. Thus, to say that a exemplifies F-ness is to introduce the relation of exemplification as a universal relation between a and F. But now, we need a further relation of (exemplification which is shared by a, F, and exemplification. The result of this regress seems to be that, the only way to achieve the desired result in claiming that, a is F, is to claim that

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[147] Ibid., p.39
[148] Ibid., p.39

exemplification is a notion that does not apply to the realist's theory.[149]

This is a version of the famous argument set up by F.H. Bradley (1930), aimed at eliminating the notion of relations altogether. Applied to the above regresses, this notion amounts to the claim that a thing's "having a property, belonging to a kind, or entering into a relation cannot apply to itself".[150] The problem with this regress for many realists is that it seems to confuse the very thing that realists set out to prove in the onset of our investigation, that a is F. Loux suggests that this could be because of the belief that

> ...unless realists can point to some connecting mechanism whose connecting role is secured without dependence on some further, higher-level connecting mechanism, they have not succeeded in explaining why the particular, a is F.[151]

Whether this is a valid threat to our realist project, or not, is debatable. Perhaps it is enough for the realist to claim that a is F because both a and *F-ness* enter into the relation of exemplification and that the failure to explain any further regress by appealing to further relations of (*exemplification* $_n$) does not prevent us from making our original claim that, a is F.

This brings us to the crux of my thesis. I argue that exemplification is to be considered primary and irreducible. Thus, exemplification is not a 'relation' in the classical sense at all. This is because what we really want to claim is that "while relations can bind objects together only by the mediating link of exemplification, exemplification links objects into relational facts without the

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[149] Ibid., p.40
[150] Bradley, quoted from Loux, p.40
[151] Ibid., p.41

mediation of any further links"[152]. This is also referred to as the concept of *nexus*. It the idea that exemplification acts as a 'tie' or nexus, upon which our entire theory of universals rests; the idea that exemplification is the nexus: the very thing that ties particulars to the universals which they exemplify.

Gustav Bergmann offers a polemical exegesis of the notion of nexus in his works, <u>Realism</u> and <u>Logic and Reality</u>. Bergmann proposes a two-world ontological view. In the first world, let us call it A-ontology, we are presented with a homogeneous world, in which there are bare particulars, universals and facts (we recall Bergmann's claim that "a world is nominalistic if and only if its fundamental *nexus* is homogeneous")[153]. In the world of B-ontology, we are given a vastly different picture, a non-homogeneous (heterogeneous) world with qualities and facts; a world in which we are "tempted to assay ordinary things not as facts but as things"[154]. Thus, in the B-ontology the fact-category is simply ignored. For Bergmann this is too much of an oversimplification, for categorical entities are "all of the same kind"[155] (this is the view held by *extreme reism*). Bergmann believes that "most ontologists hold more or less explicitly that ordinary things are "things" rather than facts and yet at the same time "complexes" of other "things"[156]. The other things might either be: all universals, all perfect particulars or universals and bare particulars. This latter ontological view, of bare particulars and universals, is the one Bergmann favours for "it is the only one who has the benefit of a very strong structural counter-

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[152] Ibid., p.41
[153] G. Bergmann, <u>Realism</u>, p.43
[154] Ibid., p.28
[155] Ibid., p.28
[156] Ibid. p.29

suggestion"[157]. Bergmann claims that "facts are independent in a sense in which things are not"[158], and this is the essence of the *Principle of Exemplification.* He also claims that there are such things as *bare particulars* and that "the recognition of the ontological status of all connections entail each other"[159]. Thus, bare particulars and *reism* clash, and are in opposition to one another. Bergmann thinks that "a world with bare entities not completely disjoined from everything else must contain at least one connection that is wholly external"[160], and that a particular, though bare, is still a thing, and so is the universal that it 'happens' to exemplify.

The nominalist has the strong inclination to say that "every existent is localized", for they deny universals any existence, and thus they too must employ the concept of *nexus* (as they cannot posit relations either, for these are also universals). Bergmann cleverly points out that "*nexus,* supposing it makes sense to speak of a nexus as either localized or not localized, are of course not localized. That is why we shall not expect to come in a nominalistic world upon any connector, either relation or nexus, whose ontological status is recognized"[161]. Thus, Bergmann will claim that "a structurally consistent nominalist must also be a reist". A realist, however, "may have connections which exist, nexus and perhaps even relations"[162].

As to the problem of universals, the ontological grounding is understood as single thing which is "in" both spots (recalling the claim that "a universal

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[157] Ibid., p.29
[158] Ibid., p.43
[159] Ibid., p.47
[160] Ibid., p.47
[161] Ibid., p.49
[162] Ibid., p.49

need not be separable"[163]. This is contrary, of course, to the notion of perfect particular in which the ground is two things, one in each spot. Thus, the realist will posit bare particulars and universals, but no perfect particulars, and the (articulate) nominalist will posit perfect particulars, but no bare particulars, nor universals. Bergmann wants to show the structural connection between the doctrine of internal connections and nominalism. He will claim that "the existence of at least one internal connection is the structural premise; nominalism the structural conclusion"[164]. Bergmann goes on to claim that "provided one rejects the Platonic alternative (separable universals), one cannot make an articulate case for perfect particulars without introducing on alleged internal relation of equality, or, as it is also called, exact similarity"[165].

Some further elucidation on the notion of *nexus* and exemplification can be found in <u>Logic and Reality</u>. Bergmann asserts that "the connection between a mind and what it intends is not a relation but a fundamental tie between P and the-thought-that-P"[166]. A fundamental tie, "can tie a mere possibility, thing or fact, to a thing or fact", thus, for instance, disjunction is not a relation but a fundamental tie (and facts are defined as complexes)[167]. Bergmann also claims that "an individual substance (not bare) is a 'dynamic' nature and has a definitional nature"[168], and the former creates, supports and produces the latter. The tie which makes them a complex is "inherence" (the attribute *inheres* in the substance)[169]. Thus Bergmann asserts that "I am an A-ontologist; I am a

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[163] Ibid., p.88
[164] Ibid., p.87
[165] Ibid., p.88
[166] G. Bergmann, <u>Logic and Reality</u>, p.95
[167] Ibid., p.96
[168] Ibid., p.166
[169] Ibid., p.166

realist; I am not an objectivist. I believe we are dialectically forced to give existence some ontological status but that this status is neither that of a property among properties nor higher".[170]

Some Concluding Remarks

I have argued that metaphysical realism, by positing a system of abstract and extra-linguistic (mind-independent) entities called universals, is able to more reasonably account for the phenomena of subject predicate discourse and abstract reference, than its antithesis, nominalism. Only by taking exemplification as primary, however, are we able to give an adequate account of the problematic regresses that occur during the critical analysis of realism. Thus, the ontological system forwarded by this form of realism is favorable to that of nominalism, and especially to that of the metalinguistic nominalism forwarded by Wilfrid Sellars (this is because if we accept my argument, that the use of DSTs actually refers to linguistic types and not linguistic tokens, then all types are abstract entities, and thus DSTs are essentially a new form of universals).

The position that I have come to hold resembles a resoundingly realistic ontological framework, one which posits abstract and extra-linguistic entities to exist mind-independently. The exemplification *nexus* (which I take to be primary and non-reducible), ties particulars (which are tokens) to their abstract and metaphysical counterparts (which are types), at the spatio-temporal point where both the particular and the repeatable (abstract entity) exist. Types can

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[170] Ibid., p.177

never be particular, and tokens can never be abstract. Types are the extra-linguistic entities that are referred to by the tokens which exemplify them. Thus, with the acceptance of types *as* abstract entities, we are given a philosophical system that allows us to make meaningful statements about reality. To reduce types to a form of 'linguistic universal' or 'linguistic entity' is to fail to see the abstract and extra-linguistic nature of types. We should thus embrace a realist ontology, which can adequately account for the phenomena which we have been discussing at length, over the course of this analysis. By taking exemplification as primary, we preserve the importance of *abstracta* in our intellectual economy. I also argue that the problem of intentionality is not solved by the reduction of all meanings to a fundamentally and overt linguistic process. A consequence of embracing this realist ontological framework could be that intentionality itself turns out to be something which is utterly unreducible, and *is not* something which emerges from the language game.

The debate between Nominalists and Realists is ongoing, and the full force of the arguments presented by both sides goes far beyond the scope of this paper. We can, however, surmise that realism is still alive and well, manifesting itself in new forms, as represented by the theory of exemplification, which I have forwarded. To take the *nexus* as our philosophical primitive is to establish a realist ontology that *is* capable of explaining the various extra-linguistic phenomena that one encounters when doing philosophy. This account of *neo-realism* also gives us a better (i.e., more reasonable) philosophical ontological system for accounting for attribute agreement and subject-predicate truth than does its counter-theory, nominalism.

We must, however, acknowledge the profundity of the Sellarsian system,

even as neo-realists, clinging to our *pseudo-orthodox* ontologies. In his visionary ambition, Sellars attempts to reduce the mysteries of the phenomenal world to a purely linguistic picture of reality. All that can be known by philosophy is diffused through the language game, and thus, philosophy feasibly becomes a *therapeutic tool* which can be discarded at anytime in the face of newly discovered *truths of reason*, as postulated by a hypothetical and *ideal science*. Perhaps not since Immanuel Kant envisioned that the *ding-an-sich*, the thing-in-itself, is unknowable, has a philosopher seen so clearly what others before him have missed: the notion that while 'truth' and 'reality' are among the most important things that human beings can desire a greater knowledge of, they still remain hidden under the veil of our manifest human ignorance.

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