<u>The</u> <u>Father,</u> <u>The</u> <u>Son</u> <u>and</u> <u>the</u> <u>Daughter</u>: <u>Sellars,</u> <u>Brandom</u> <u>and</u> <u>Millikan</u>

Brandom and I were both Sellars students, yet large differences have arisen between us. How have two siblings, both admirers of the father, come to stand so far apart? Which of us has abandoned the faith? Or was there a crack in Sellars' own position into which we have but driven a wedge?

It was with the latter in mind that I first approached this essay. I thought that a crack might lie in the bridge that Sellars attempted to build between Wittgenstein's <u>Trachtatus</u> <u>Logico</u> <u>Philosophicus</u> and his <u>Philosophical</u> <u>Investigations</u>, both of which works Sellars admired greatly and which he claimed were not incompatible in basic measure. Certainly there are <u>Trachtarian</u> themes in Sellars that only I have pursued and themes from <u>The</u> <u>Investigations</u> that only Brandom has pursued. I have pursued the picturing themes from the <u>Trachtatus</u> that were carried through in Sellars' discussions of that causal-order relation between language and the world that he called "representing" (for example, SP&R, N&O Chapter 5[1]). Also in his unique interpretation of Kant, according to which the phenomenal world is abstractly isomorphic to the world in itself. Brandom has followed Sellars' interest in the language games metaphor from <u>Philosophical</u> <u>Investigations</u>, expressed in Sellars as a form of inferential role semantics and in the thesis that one learns to think only as one learns to abide by the rules of a language. But on inspection there is, at least, no obvious crack in the bridge Sellars built between the <u>Trachtatus</u> and the <u>Investigations</u>.

Indeed, Sellars went to great pains to explain exactly how inferential role semantics was consistent with Tractarian picturing. The idea was, roughly, that in an individual's or a community's following the rules of a language, the language being largely internalized as thought, a very abstract map of the world was in the process of construction.

> A language, in its primary mode of being, simply <u>is</u> the pattern of beliefs, inferences and intentions..."(N&O p.129)
>
> …
>
> ...in my account, the *manner* in which the names 'occur' in the 'picture' is not a conventional symbol for the *manner* in which the objects occur in the world, limited only by the abstract condition that the picture of an *n*-adic fact be itself an *n*-adic fact. Rather, as I see it, the manner in which the names occur in the picture is a projection, in accordance with a fantastically complex system of rules of projection, of the manner in which the objects occur in the world. (SP&R p. 215; N&O p. 139)

These fantastic complexities are introduced mainly by the inference rules, formal and, more importantly, material, that govern "statement-statement" (hence judgment-judgment) transitions. Just as

> ...the generalizations in question do not, so to speak, <u>separately</u> relate 'red' to red things and 'man' to men [but] relate <u>sentential</u> expressions containing 'red' to red things and <u>sentential</u> expressions containing 'man' to

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[1] See list of abbreviations at end.

men" (N&O p. 70)

so

[T]he representational features of an empirical language require the
presence in the language of a [whole] schematic world story" (N&O p.
128).

The map of the world produced by a language is not found sentence by sentence but
only in the whole of the living <u>language</u> <u>cum</u> <u>thought</u> running isomorphic to the whole
world in sketch. If there is a crack in the Sellarsian foundation, this is not where it lies, or
anyway not precisely.

Where there may be a crack, however, is in Sellars' treatment of the nature of
linguistic rules and the relation of these to conceptual roles and thus to intentionality.
Conceptual roles, for Sellars (as for Quine) were internalized patterns of linguistic
response, responses to the world with words, responses to words with more words, and
responses to words with overt actions. These patterns were not merely patterns in fact,
however, patterns actually engaged in by thinkers, speakers and hearers. Sellars took
linguistic rules to be normative rather than merely descriptive of regularities. Moreover,
they were normative in a very strong prescriptive or evaluative sense. He was fond of
saying that these rules were "fraught with ought." They prescribed regularities rather
than merely describing them. He also compared these rules to the rules of a game (such
as chess) in which conventionally allowable moves are made, the outcomes of which get
counted, in accordance with further conventions, as having certain results. (Moving your
rook to make that kind of configuration counts as putting my king in check.) His
understanding of linguistic rules thus made contact with theories of speech acts that take
these to be wholly conventional in the sense that acts of this sort could not be performed
at all were there no conventions for performing them. The relevant norms are essentially
social in origin and function.

On these various points about linguistic rules, I think that Brandom pretty much
agrees. True, he prefers to speak of "practices" rather than "conventions," but that is
because others have analyzed the notion "convention" as though all conventions rested
on complexes of prior beliefs, reasons and intentions and Brandom, like Sellars, holds
that beliefs, reasons and intentions are themselves made possible only as a result of the
relevant practices (MIE p, 232-233).

An obvious question concerns the relation of normative rules governing language
and thought to actual regularities (hence to the actual picturing) found in language and
thought. Sellars held that the linguistic rules were inculcated in children by socialization,
which he took to be achieved by conditioning. Conditioning at first produces merely
"pattern governed behavior," but ultimately, through the introduction of metalinguistic
patterns, also "rule obeying behavior."

To learn pattern governed behavior is to become conditioned to arrange
perceptible elements into patterns and to form these, in turn, into more
complex patterns and sequences of patterns. Presumably, such learning is
capable of explanation in S-R reinforcement terms, the organism coming to
respond to patterns as wholes through being (among other things)

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rewarded when it completes gappy instances of these patterns. Pattern governed behavior of the kind we should call 'linguistic' involves 'positions' and 'moves' of the sort that <u>would</u> <u>be</u> specified by 'formation' and 'transformation' rules in its metagame if it <u>were</u> rule obeying behavior...(SP&R, p. 327)

It is not in the first instance rule obeying behavior, however, because the young child does not yet conceptualize the rules that it follows. Conceptualizing the rules is achieved by coming to use metalinguistic normative forms:

what we need is a distinction between "pattern governed" and "rule obeying" behavior, the latter being a more complex phenomenon which involves, but is not to be identified with, the former. Rule obeying behavior contains, in some sense, both a game and a metagame, the latter being the game in which belong the rules obeyed in playing the former game as a piece of rule obeying behavior."(SP&R p. 327)

Learning the use of normative expressions involves...acquiring the tendency to make the transition from 'I ought now to do A' to the doing of A...it could not be true of a word that 'it means <u>ought</u>' unless this word had motivating force in the language to which it belongs." (SP&R p. 350)

Thus normative rules, for Sellars, are not translatable into nonnormative terms. Accepting a normative rule is not believing a fact but tending to be motivated in a certain way. Similarly, the work that the thought "now fetch some water!" does within one's psychology is not the work of a belief but the work of tending to cause one to fetch some water.

On the other hand, although to accept a norm is not just to know a fact, on Sellars' view the presence of normative rules in the natural world appears in the end as just one more level of fact in that world. From the scientific realist's standpoint, you can understand the nature of the normative practices of a community without participating in them. Similarly, although Sellars insists that the use of semantic and logical terms engages one in certain community practices, in semantic assessment and so forth, it is also possible to understand what the functions of semantic and logical terms and statements are apart from being oneself engaged. You can understand these statements without participating in the practice of semantic assessment. It is one thing to <u>use</u> semantic language, for example, to say and mean or to understand "'rot' means red." But you can also <u>describe</u> the use of semantic language without using it. You can <u>describe</u> what patterns of response in a language community, along with the origins of these responses in a history of language training, and training of the language trainers, and so forth, constitutes that 'rot' means <u>red</u> in that community. You can understand what the "means" rubric does without indulging in it. You can understand specific forms of semantic assessment without participating in the particular practices being examined. There are <u>truth</u> <u>conditions</u> for "'rot' means red" of a perfectly ordinary, if very complicated sort. It's just that it's not the job of the sentence "'rot' means <u>red</u>" to impart the information that these truth conditions hold. Rather, its job is to get one to use 'rot' as one already knows to use "red."

Putting things bluntly, it seems that Sellars understands accepting semantic norms as merely displaying certain dispositions, dispositions to make certain moves in language and thought and dispositions to sanction these moves in others. Brandom claims that this sort of analysis will not do.

> There clearly are socially instituted norms of this sort. Whatever the Kwakiutl treat as an appropriate greeting gesture for their tribe, or as a correctly constructed ceremonial hut, is one; it makes no sense to suppose that they could be collectively wrong about this sort of thing. The question is whether <u>conceptual</u> norms ought to be understood as of this type. (MIE p. 53)

In the case of conceptual norms,

> ..assessing, sanctioning, is itself something that can be done correctly of incorrectly. (MIE p. 36)
> Defining normative attitudes in terms of dispositions to apply sanctions does not by itself reduce the normative to the nonnormative--it just trades off one sort of norm for another. (MIE p. 42)
> ...contents conferred on sentences by the score keeping practices I describe are not equivalent to the contents of any claims about what *anyone takes* to be true... their truth does not reduce to what I , or anyone else, or even <u>everyone</u> is or would be disposed to claim..." (Replies, p 202)
> ...a cardinal criterion of adequacy of any account of the <u>conceptual</u> norms implicit in discursive practice is that it make intelligible their objectivity. (MIE p. 63)

On a dispositional account of semantic norms we could not make sense of the fact, for example, that "it could be true that the sun will collapse whether or not everyone always thinks that it won't."

Brandom concludes that there must be "disposition transcendent conceptual norms" and takes on as his central project to explain how this can be so. The alternative he sees to reducing the normative to dispositional terms is to posit that it's "norms all the way down." In setting out this position he remains committed to the Sellarsian view that the rules of language and norms of thought are instituted in public "practice."

> ...only communities, not individuals, can be interpreted as having original intentionality. ...the practices that institute the sort of normative status characteristic of intentional states must be <u>social</u> practices. (MIE p. 61)

Now I agree with Brandom that conceptual norms must be disposition transcendent, hence with his rejection of Sellars' view of norms as derived from meta-dispositions to sanction. One wonders, however, whether the game metaphor with talk of "score keeping" is really worth preserving after this insight, why it will not just prove misleading. Surely if everyone counts a certain move in chess as producing check mate, or a certain move in basketball as scoring two points, "it makes no sense to suppose that they could be collectively wrong" about these matters. There must be a deep divide between language and ordinary games that we should try not to obscure with a metaphor but instead to keep in full view.

Indeed, there is a competing theme in Sellars's discussion of linguistic rules that seems both to introduce these rules as disposition transcendent and to compete with the idea that these rules are at all like the rules of a game. He characterizes his position in part as follows

> ...when you describe the process whereby we come to adopt the language of which [some inferential] move is a part, you give an <u>anthropological</u>, a (very schematic) <u>causal</u> account of how language came to be used....in which you stress evolutionary analogies and cite the language of the beehive. (SP&R p.353).

In the case of bees

> (a) The pattern (dance) is first exemplified by particular bees in a way which is <u>not</u> appropriately described by saying that the successive acts by which the pattern is realized occur <u>because</u> <u>of</u> <u>the</u> <u>pattern</u>.
> (b) Having a 'wiring diagram' which expresses itself in this pattern has survival value.
> (c) Through the mechanisms of heredity and natural selection it comes about that all bees have this 'wiring diagram.' (SP&R p. 326)

In the case of humans

> ... the phenomena of learning present interesting analogies to the evolution of species ... with new behavioral tendencies playing the role of mutations, and the 'law of effect' the role of natural selection (SP&R p. 327)

The analogy with bee dances retains the theme that conforming to the rules of a language is an intrinsically social activity. A bee dance is of use only if sister bees watch it and follow its direction. But the implication is clear that coming to follow the patterns prescribed by the rules of one's language community is not <u>just</u> a game but has some broader utility for the child or for its community. It has a value beyond that of displaying certain social graces (say, as in playing a decent game of chess or bridge in some social circles). Moreover, it is hard to believe that Sellars has overlooked that a bee dance is a tiny map of the location of some nectar. The bee dance not only has utility for the bees, but the fact that it maps the location of nectar by a certain rule of projection helps to explain <u>why</u> or <u>how</u> it can have this utility. It helps to explain the mechanism involved.

It is this second and, I believe, opposing metaphor of Sellars' that I have adopted in my work. The norms for language are uses that have had "survival value," as Sellars put it. As such these norms are indeed disposition transcendent, but they are not fraught with ought. They are not prescriptive or evaluative norms. Their status has nothing to do with anyone's assessments. A norm is merely a measure from which actual facts can depart; it need not be an evaluative measure. A mere average, after all, is also a kind of norm. Behavioral forms that have had past survival value are a measure from which actual behavioral dispositions, both past and present, can depart, but such departures are in no sense proscribed. Indeed, departures sometimes prove advantageous. What a biological or psychological or social form has been selected for doing, through natural selection, through learning, or through selection for social transmission, is a norm against which the form's actual performances can be measured. It is the "natural purpose" of the

form to fulfill this function, purposes, like norms, being _essentially_ things that are not always fulfilled.

> Contingencies may block the road of inquiry, yet truth (adequacy of representation [mapping]) abides as the _would_ _be_ of linguistic representation. (Sellars, N&O p. 130).

The possibility of departure is built into the very notion of a _would_ _be_ or purpose. But to say that a natural purpose has not been fulfilled is to proffer an ostensible fact, not an assessment.

Looking carefully for the natural purposes of language and thought, however, reveals that these purposes cannot be all on one level. Both Sellars and Brandom see language and thought as a seamless whole. For Sellars, thought is just as inseparable from its expression in language as language is from the thought it expresses; the functional roles of language and thought each extend to include the other. For Brandom, the objectivity of conceptual norms derives from public linguistic practice. The original impulse for this idea comes from _Philosophical_ _Investigations_, in the claim that the criterion for having followed a rule can only be public agreement. And surely something analogous to public agreement is required to keep the bees dancing. But if we ask whether the survival value of the concepts we acquire from learning a language are at root benefits gained only through the community by means of social cooperation, the answer seems to be no. Clearly there are benefits to the isolated individual as well. Conforming to the semantic rules embodied in a language is not just a social activity, of use only within a society. If learning a language is learning to think, having learned a language will also come in handy on Robinson Crusoe's island, with or without assistance from Man Friday. Playing a conceptual game of solitaire must also have its advantages. But then there must exist standards of conceptual clarity accessible within individuals apart from the language community, standards by which merely wrestling with nature determines when a useful conceptual pattern has been formed. Whether one's thought is well formed has a criterion that also applies when one is alone in one's workshop. The bee that dances correctly can follow its own dance to nectar.

It need not follow that the functions of language derive from functions that thought intends for language. We need not follow Stalnaker in "dividing up the fundamental orientations of various approaches to intentionality, accordingly as rational agency or linguistic capacity is taken as primary" (MIE p.149). If language and thought do not form a seamless whole, that doesn't have to mean that either Grice is right and the intentionality of language derives from that of thought, or that Wittgenstein is right and the intentionality of thought derives from that of language. Selection takes place on various levels. Most obviously there is selection of genes, selection of behaviors by conditioning and by trial and error learning, and selection of traits and behaviors for social transmission. Each of these levels produces its own yield of natural purposes. The selection of language forms takes place on the social level. Language survives when it serves cooperative functions often enough, functions that reward at once both speakers and hearers (though they may often be rewarded at the end in different ways). Language forms proliferate when aiding speaker and hearer cooperation on common projects,

typically, the sharing of information speaker and hearer have a mutual interest in sharing or the coordinating of projects and activities they have a mutual interest in advancing. Languaging is something that it takes a pair of people to do; both must be purposefully involved. Completed speech acts of a kind that have survival value are not the work of a speaker alone, but of a hearer purposefully cooperating with a speaker. Purposeful doings need not be confused with doings guided by intentions, however. There is purpose in what the kidneys do and purpose in the exhibition of behaviors resulting from conditioning. That producing beliefs or desires in a hearer is often part of the natural purpose of language use, both a purpose of the speaker's speaking and a purpose of the hearer's reaction in understanding, does not require that either speaker or hearer have intentions concerning beliefs or desires or, indeed, so much as concepts of beliefs and desires (LTOBC chapter 3; VOM chapter 9). Surely Sellars was right that speaking comes before thought about thought (EPM).

To say that the use of language results in acts of a special kind that it would be impossible in principle to perform outside of the conventions or the practice of language use is misleading however. In its cooperative way, language accomplishes perfectly natural things. For example, doing something that produces a certain belief or intention in another is a perfectly ordinary thing to do. That it can be done cooperatively through the use of language does not change this matter. Conventions, on this view, are merely ways of doing things that are proliferated by being reproduced, and that exhibit a certain arbitrariness of form. They are reproduced patterns that proliferate due partly to weight of precedent, rather than due, for example, to intrinsic superiority (LCMS). The conventions of language do not create any new kinds of action effects. Language conventions are best thought of merely as lineages of behavioral patterns involving a speaker's utterance and a hearer's response. They do not correspond to rules, and certainly not to prescriptive rules. It is true that many conventions are ways of doing things to which one ought to conform, given that there are such conventions. For example, conventions about which side to drive on and whether to stop at the red or the green are conventions with which one ought to conform. Moreover, in traditional cultures, doing things in unconventional ways is often proscribed quite generally. But this evaluative kind of normativity is something added to mere conventionality. Decorating for Christmas with red and green is conventional, but surely in no way required. Conforming to the conventions, engaging in the linguistic practices of the community in which one lives is, in the main, merely a practical matter. Mainly it concerns how to accomplish certain practical tasks in a given environment (LCMS).

But as Brandom has said, "a cardinal criterion of adequacy of any account of the conceptual norms ... must make intelligible their objectivity." How do we do that without appealing to linguistic practice? By what objective criterion can one be following a rule of thought privately, following in a way that no one else will assess or, indeed, even notice or care about? What objective criterion determines that one is using a dog thought only in response to dogs or that one's dog thoughts always correspond even to the same kind of

thing?[2]

I adopt Sellars' suggestion that adequate intentional representing is a kind of picturing or mapping. And I adopt his suggestion that this picturing or mapping may have immediate practical uses, as when one bee makes a dance-map that guides another toward nectar. The suggestion is then that the functions of both bees might be realized within the same brainwork, one part of the network making maps of the world that will guide the other in directing behaviors for navigating that world. This first and simplest model for cognition gives us perception directly for action, perception-action cycles, roughly as conceived by Gibsonians. Representations or "icons" that directly mediate between perception and action I call "pushmi-pullyu" representations. Like the bee dance, they tell at the same time what the case is with some part of the world and direct what to do about it. Behaviors of the very simplest animals are governed by pushmi-pullyus of this kind, as are myriad automatic responses of humans to the most immediate environmental contingencies facing them such as being off balance or needing to navigate rough or smooth ground or needing guidance by perception in performing routine motions, for example, in grasping and manipulating objects.

Already at this simple level a stringent criterion of correctness for rule following is in effect. The perceptual systems must manage systematically to deliver representations of the world that accord with a rule of correspondence to which the action systems are also adjusted. On the Wittgensteinian picture, one language user trains another, the evidence that each is conforming to a rule being that their results match. Similarly, that both the perceptual systems and the action systems are conforming to rules is evidenced by the fact that the results of their cooperative activities on varying occasions are constant. The bees get to nectar, the body remains upright, the path on the ground is negotiated and the coffee cup safely transported to the mouth. Moreover, consistent conformity to rules at this level is a very considerable achievement. The perceptual systems must locate the layout of distal circumstances through a wide variety of mediating conditions such as frequently changing lighting conditions, visual static, occluding objects, changes in position of the body and eyes and so forth. They must recognize the same individual or the same kind or the same stuff again, so as to represent it consistently, from numerous angles, perhaps as in numerous postures, manifesting itself in a variety of ways through different sensory modalities (OCCI, VOM part IV). To make perceptual maps for action that map consistently, recognizing relevant

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[2] The sketch given below is developed in LTOBC, WQP and VOM, coupled with

the epistemology of theoretical concepts developed (most fully) in OCCI.

perceptual constancies, showing forms and objects by rule in a consistent way, is a task of enormous complexity.

Beyond perception for action, humans, at least, make cognitive maps that are not dedicated in advance to the guidance of particular behaviors. We collect great quantities of information with no immediate uses in view, storing it away perhaps for later contingencies. Having separated the descriptive from the directive aspects of representation, these have to be joined together again through practical inference. But representations of fact that are not immediately tested in action and that are then used to form more representations and then still more through inference, need to be screened for accuracy and consistency in some way. Rules or patterns of belief formation need to be strictly regimented as they are developed, well in advance of practical uses for the resulting beliefs. Wittgenstein proposed that this screening is accomplished by the criterion of agreement in judgments with others. I have proposed that it is done in primary instances by the criterion of agreement with one's self in judgments. Agreeing judgments need not be made by different persons. Judgments can be made by the same person in different ways, from different perspectives, under changing conditions, using different sensory modalities, employing different inferential patterns (LTOBC chapters 18-19, OCCI chapter 7, VOM chapter 19). Agreement with oneself in judgment attests to the fact that one is managing to map again the very same objective structures in the world through different methods of projection. Indeed, agreement with others is discovered only as a form of agreement with oneself. Agreeing with others is not speaking in unison. If you and I say in unison, "That cookie is mine" we are disagreeing. To recognize agreement with another in judgment, you have to advance for yourself rules of translation by which another's speech carries information to you, these rules being entirely parallel to the patterns or rules in accordance with which you translate sensory information arriving through a great variety of other media into beliefs (OCCI chapter 6, VOM chapter 9).

This being said, none the less there remains something very special about agreement with others in judgments. We acquire the vast majority of our concepts through the medium of public language, just as we acquire the vast majority of our practical and social skills from others. But far more important, the larger proportion of our concepts could not in principle have been developed solo because the multiple perspectives and sources of information required to test their objectivity are made possible only through cooperation with others who have independent access to the same objective affairs through other temporal and spatial perspectives. To take just one instance, concepts of dated occurrences, indeed, all concepts involving historical time, would seem to be possible only with the help of others informed of these occurrences independently from other perspectives (VOM chapter 19).

That is quite enough said about discord between the son and the daughter. Let me end by noting a very deep theme that is common to Brandom's work and mine, binding us together and setting us apart from others currently writing about language and thought.

Brandom and I are both committed to explaining the meanings of linguistic

expressions in terms of their use (though there are, of course, differences in how we understand "use"). Brandom puts this by saying that "semantics must answer to pragmatics" (MIE p. 83), arguing against "representationalism," the view that representation comes first, then inference, then use. A representation is something that purports to represent, and purporting to represent is purporting to represent to some interpreter, some user who is, "taking, treating, or using a representation as a representing..."(MIE p. 75). MacDowell puts the position this way: "We cannot work up from the semantics of words to the semantics of sentences, and only then move up to consider the structure of the language game" (BRI p. 158).

I have taken exactly the same position, though the terminology is different. In the case of language, what Brandom calls the study of "pragmatics" corresponds roughly to what I call the study of "function." "Meaning," in the most basic sense, simply *is* function; it is what I have called "proper" or "stabilizing" function (LTOBC chapters 1-6, VOM chapters 2 and 11) or, very roughly, what Sellars called "survival value." The functions of complete linguistic forms are to perform complete speech acts, these being cooperative acts accomplished by speaker and hearer together. The performance of cooperative acts is what keeps speakers using these forms in consistent ways and keeps hearers responding to them in consistent ways hence keeps them in circulation. I have tended to reserve the term "pragmatics" for the study only of how nonconventional speech acts are performed, acts which do not express conventional functions because not directly derived from precedent, but this is a mere terminological difference. The "semantic" dimension of representation, if we understand by this the involvement of truth or satisfaction conditions, is owed to a certain way of performing a function, a certain kind of mechanism that is employed. Satisfaction conditions are related to function as a method or manner is to a performance.

In the case of thought, I have argued, there is no intentionality prior to the emergence of complete representations having truth or satisfaction conditions, and representations cannot have satisfaction conditions unless they have uses. Briefly put, there is no such thing as intentionality without attitude. Participating in inference processes by which new descriptive and directive representations are formed is a central way in which human intentional attitudes are employed, so the intentionality of these attitudes and their content is a function, in part, of inferential patterns. That these patterns have to match their content and that their content depends in part on these patterns are two sides of a coin. On the other hand, I have claimed, there is also plenty of intentionality prior to that of the intentional attitudes, both in the perceptions of animals and humans and in simpler messenger systems that abound in the body.

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