Just What is the Relation between the Manifest and the Scientific Images?
Comments on Brandom

I. Introduction

The last half of the (long) first chapter of Brandom's *From Empiricism to Expressivism*

constitutes an extended argument against one half of Wilfrid Sellars's version of

scientific realism. I say 'half' of Sellarsian scientific realism because Brandom agrees

with Sellars's anti-instrumentalism. The half Brandom takes issue with is Sellars's claim

that the "scientific image" [SI] —an idealized, complete scientific framework for the

description and explanation of all natural events and objects—possesses such

ontological priority over the "manifest image" [MI]—itself an idealization of the

'commonsense' framework of persons and things in terms of which we currently

experience ourselves and the world—that it will come to *replace* the MI in all matters of

explanation and description. Brandom's argument against this Sellarsian idea is rather

roundabout. First, he traces Sellars's distinction between the MI and the SI back to the

Kantian distinction between phenomena and noumena. Then he argues against several

attempts to understand identity claims across disparate frameworks. Neither, claims

Brandom, will permit us to identify objects across the MI/SI divide. But if we cannot

identify the objects of concern across the frameworks, then a shift from the MI to the SI

is not a form of *replacement* of one framework by a better, but simply a *change of subject*

that poses no threat to the MI. The overall argument of the chapter is that, though what

Sellars made of the Kantian notion of a category is a very Good Idea, Sellars's

assimilation of scientific realism to a kind of transcendental realism in Kant's sense, is a

Bad Idea with a muddled basis and unworkable consequences. Brandom thus strikes a blow for left-wing Sellarsianism.

I am not going to argue that Brandom is wrong to defend left-wing Sellarsianism, nor am I going to argue that Brandom is wrong in seeing Sellars's MI/SI distinction as a latter-day version of Kant's phenomena/noumena distinction. I too am bothered by Sellars's belief that the scientific image will be able to replace the manifest image in some wholesale fashion. I have articulated my own concerns about this Sellarsian doctrine in several places. But I do think that Brandom has not yet sealed the deal: there is another construal of Sellars's distinction that could survive Brandom's arguments. It is not a construal that is obvious on the face of it nor can I claim that it is clearly the construal that Sellars had in mind. But it is a construal of Sellars's doctrine that is intrinsically interesting. And it is a construal that, given Brandom's endorsement of Sellars on categories, and given, further, Brandom's own distinctively Hegelian leanings, Brandom needs to face. I will begin by reviewing Brandom's argument in more detail; I will then articulate a different construal of the relation between the manifest and the scientific images and show that it can withstand Brandom's critique in part because it is more consonant with the construal of the categories that Brandom himself endorses.

II   Categories as a Good Idea

A. Categories - what

The Good Idea that Brandom sees running from Kant to Sellars to his own efforts is that

of a *theory of categories*. Of course, this is not at all an idea that originated with

Kant—Sellars traces it back to Plato's *Sophist*. But, according to Sellars, there is a newish

twist in Kant's conception of categories that distinguishes it from most earlier

conceptions. The traditional view is that categories are *summa genera*, highest kinds of

beings. Substance, quality, quantity, etc., are supposed to articulate the various kinds of

beings.

1. Kant - conceptual summa genera

In Sellars's view, echoed by Brandom, Kant rejected this ontologically naïve conception

of categories in favor of a view according to which categories are highest kinds of

concepts. Sellars doesn't think this idea is entirely novel with Kant—he attributes it to

Ockham as well—but it does significantly transform the role categories and the theory

of categories play in philosophical reflection.

2. From Kant to Sellars - From forms of judgment to metalinguistic expressions

expressing necessary features of the framework of discursive practices

essential to any language

Having made this move, it is incumbent on the theorist to say what counts as a *kind* of

concept, and, equally, what counts as a *highest* kind. Kant focused on the role of

concepts in judgment; for him categories are the most generic functional classifications of the elements of judgments. Put in slightly different terms, categories articulate necessary structural features of thought. Judgment, for Kant, is not essentially linguistic, but he systematically thinks of it via a relatively simple linguistic model: the Aristotelian categorical judgment, with its subject-predicate structure, supplemented by some basic sentential connectives. Sellars picks up this linguistic inspiration, adapted to the advances in modern logic, and makes it a central feature of his own theory of categorial structure.

Brandom emphasizes two "master ideas" that structure Sellars's development of this Kantian notion. First, Sellars's conception of categories is modeled on his conception of metalinguistic expressions that classify linguistic expressions functionally. Though the concepts of intentionality that we apply to thoughts are modeled on the semantic concepts we apply *strictu sensu* to linguistic expressions and episodes, Sellars claims not to be committed to the notion that all thought is linguistic in form.[1] Some of the things we do linguistically can also be done in other ways and forms.   Sellarsian categories are thus metalinguistic in a doubly loose sense: they are not 'meta' any *particular* language, and they need not be 'meta' specifically linguistic activity at all.

The second master idea is, not surprisingly, Sellars's semantic inferentialism—the doctrine that the content of any thought or expression is determined by its inferential proprieties, that is, its contribution to valid inferences. Semantic inferentialism is a clear

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[1]Passages in EPM, notably his characterization of his 'psychological nominalism,' seem to indicate otherwise. But compare them to SK, Lecture I, section VI, ¶¶32-38 and the opening few paragraphs of MEV.

rejection of the logical atomism espoused by most of the empiricist tradition. Sellars articulates this idea most famously in his talk of the "logical space of reasons," a space we orient ourselves in and maneuver about by recognizing and drawing inferences. Categories are those concepts that lay out the fundamental structure of the logical space of reasons within which a rational agent operates.

Interestingly, the move Sellars makes after introducing his "master ideas" is a distinction between 'formal' and 'material' categories (see, e.g., TTC ¶25). One way to try to understand the formal/material distinction here might be by contrasting metalinguistic classifications of *object language* expressions with metalinguistic classifications of metalinguistic expressions. That is, it is easy to think that the distinction between material and formal categories is the distinction between metalinguistic and metametalinguistic classifications of expressions. But that is not how Sellars draws the distinction. Instead, he associates form and matter/content with the distinction between determinables and determinates in the functional classification of conceptual items (see TTC ¶25; KTE ¶24)[2] This is, of course, a consequence of taking seriously the idea that categories are highest genera, for a genus is always a determinable in contrast to the determinates that are its species.

Like Kant, Sellars often focuses on empirical, descriptive vocabulary in his examples of sequences of determinates and their ever less-determinate determinables

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[2]"[I]f the 'form' of a judging is the structure by virtue of which it is possessed of certain *generic* logical or epistemic powers, surely the content must be the character by virtue of which the act has *specific* modes of these generic logical or epistemic powers" (KTE ¶24).

that lead us to those resting places he calls "categories." But Sellars is very aware of the fact that we do many things with language besides describing and explaining empirical objects and states of affairs. Besides describing the world (and ourselves), we prescribe, cajole, console, apologize, admonish, incite, acknowledge, etc.   Sellars rarely delves into many of these forms of language, but he does pay some significant attention to those forms of language whose

> meaningfulness may consist in the fact that they enable us to formulate truths about our thoughts about objects in the world. One must also carefully distinguish between the way in which logical connectives are meaningful, although they do not refer to or characterize objects in the world, from that in which such meta-conceptual terms as 'object', 'quality', and 'fact' are meaningful. (TTC ¶33)

This is the aspect of Sellars's treatment of language that has provided Brandom with much inspiration.

As a last remark on Sellars's treatment of categories, let me point out that he was cognizant of the fact that his treatment of categories as metaconceptual cries out for supplementation by a treatment of the relation between the conceptual and the non-conceptual.

> One might put this by saying that instead of being summa genera of entities which are objects 'in the world', a notion which, as we saw, would force us to construe qualities, relations, and so forth as empirical objects, categories are summa genera of conceptual items. But while this is, I believe, the correct move

to make, it raises the further question—what is the sense of 'in the world' which applies to 'empirical objects' but not to conceptual items? Indeed, in the world seems to be another category which, if we are to be consistent, must itself be construed as applying to conceptual items.   (TTC ¶24)

3. Brandom - Concepts or expressions *universally* LX (elaborated from and explicative of) some aspect of *every* language game one can play autonomously

I don't want to spend time on the exegesis of Brandom's further revision of the concept of a category. It is complex and would take us too far afield from the focus of this paper, namely, Brandom's criticism of full-blooded Sellarsian scientific realism. For Brandom, categories are terms in what he calls a "pragmatic metalanguage." They have the following properties:

1. They express what Brandom calls "pragmatically mediated semantic relations" between vocabularies.

2. They play the expressive role of making explicit essential features of the use of some other vocabulary.

3. The proper use of these terms can be systematically elaborated from the use of that other vocabulary.

4. The features of vocabulary(concept)-use they explicate are universal: they are features of any and every autonomous discursive practice.

While there may be concepts that are elaborable from and explicative of some specialized discourses, say, nautical talk, categories are those concepts that are

elaborable from and explicative of some aspect of *every* language game one can play autonomously. They enable us to talk and worry about what one must (be able to) do in order to be engaged in linguistic activity at all.

B. Why a Good Idea

1. Illuminating

On any of these latter-day conceptions of a category, having a theory of categories puts one in a position to better understand the essential structure of one's engagement with the world. This is not a form of empirical understanding to be won by careful experimentation or systematic observation, but a form of reflective (and usually dialectical) self-examination, the precise methodology and status of which is still a matter of dispute. This is in part because it is not a merely theoretical and descriptive enterprise itself: Worrying about the categories is also and necessarily worrying about the categories one should *use*. It is, thus, just as much a practical and prescriptive enterprise.

Because of its position at a fundamental juncture of theory and practice, where thought attempts to reach a broader perspective on its place in the order of things (to the extent things have an order at all), the theory of the categories rightfully claims a central role in philosophy, and is ignored to philosophy's detriment.

This is the Good Idea from Kant, according to Brandom, that Sellars breathes new life into. Let us turn now to considering the Bad Idea from Kant that, according to Brandom, Sellars unfortunately stuck with.

III.   The primacy of the SI

A. The MI/SI distinction

1. MI characterized

Sellars introduces the manifest image in existential terms, as "the framework in terms of which man came to be aware of himself as man-in-the-world" (PSIM ¶14; SPR: 6). Though he contrasts it with the scientific image, the manifest image is neither uncritical nor naïve nor unscientific. It has been refined over the millenia both categorially and empirically. In thinking about the nature of a conceptual framework, one of the fundamental questions to ask is "'of what sort are the basic objects of the framework?'" (PSIM ¶26; in SPR: 9). For the manifest image, in Sellars' analysis, the answer is *persons* and *things*. There is a fairly complex (and not altogether plausible) backstory attached to this claim, wherein we began with an 'original image' in which everything is accounted a way of being a *person.*   The notion of a *thing* develops as we come to realize that not everything exhibits the full range of capacities — particularly the flexible proprieties of response — that characterize persons.[3]

Thus, the manifest image includes what Sellars calls the "descriptive ontology of everyday life" (EPM §41). "Perennial philosophy," Sellars tells us "which is the 'ideal type' around which philosophies in what might be called, in a suitably broad sense, the Platonic tradition cluster, is simply the manifest image endorsed as real, and its outline

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[3]This backstory seems to conflict with Sellars' well-known "myth of Jones" in EPM insofar as according to the myth in EPM, we come to have a full conception of persons as entities with "inner lives" as a *further* development of a conceptual framework the already recognizes physical objects (things) as basic.

taken to be the large-scale map of reality to which science brings a needle-point of detail

and an elaborate technique of map-reading" (PSIM ¶21: in SPR: 8).

2. SI characterized

The differences between the SI and the MI are generated from a single, methodological

difference: We make the first move towards the scientific image when we begin to

postulate imperceptible entities to explain the behavior of perceptible things. Thus, the

scientific image presupposes the prior availability of the manifest image in terms of

which we perceive things in the first place, but it is crucial to Sellars's view that the

methodological priority of the manifest image does not imply its substantive or

ontological priority: what is first in the order of knowing need not be first in the order of

being.

The overall story Sellars tells is then fairly clear: in the process of postulating

imperceptible entities to explain the observable behavior of things, we do not simply

add more of the same kinds of things already believed in to our world-view, we add

new kinds of things and sometimes, correlatively, new kinds of concepts. Science

revises the categorial structure of our world-view. Sellars sees this, ultimately, as a

challenge to the manifest image. We cannot simply *add* new categories to our

framework; we must also prune the old. Sellars is radical here; he does not think we can

prune and replace in a piecemeal fashion:

> [T]he most fruitful way of approaching the problem of integrating theoretical
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> science with the framework of sophisticated common sense into one com-

prehensive synoptic vision is to view it not as a piecemeal task—e.g. first a fitting

together of the common sense conception of physical objects with that of

theoretical physics, and then, as a separate venture, a fitting together of the

common sense conception of man with that of theoretical psychology—but

rather as a matter of articulating two whole ways of seeing the sum of things,

two images of man-in-the-world and attempting to bring them together in a

"stereoscopic" view.   (PSIM, ¶52; in SPR: 19)

Notice that the assumed unity of science plays a significant role here. Sellars is

not totally naïve on that score. He certainly recognizes the methodological pluralism of

the sciences; he sees that "as sciences they have different procedures and connect their

theoretical entities via different instruments to intersubjectively accessible features of

the manifest world" (PSIM ¶58; in SPR: 21). "But" Sellars argues, "diversity of this kind

is compatible with intrinsic "identity" of the theoretical entities themselves, that is, with

saying that biochemical compounds are 'identical' with patterns of subatomic particles.

For to make this 'identification' is simply to say that the two theoretical structures, each

with its own connection to the perceptible world, could be replaced by one theoretical

framework connected at two levels of complexity via different instruments and

procedures to the world as perceived"(PSIM ¶58; in SPR: 21).   Identity claims will play

a significant role in the arguments to come.

Ultimately, Sellars famously claims, "in the dimension of describing and

explaining the world, science is the measure of all things, of what is that it is, and of

what is not that it is not" (EPM §41; in SPR: 173).   Sellars spells out more thoroughly

what this means in *Science and Metaphysics*:

> a consistent scientific realist must hold that the world of everyday experience is a
> phenomenal world in the Kantian sense, existing only as the contents of actual
> and obtainable conceptual representings, the obtainability of which is explained
> not, as for Kant, by things in themselves known only to God, but by scientific
> objects about which, barring catastrophe, we shall know more and more as the
> years go by.   (SM VI ¶61: 173)

Insofar as Sellarsian scientific realism goes beyond a rejection of scientific
instrumentalism (which Brandom also rejects), Brandom takes Sellars's position to be, in
the end, a reductive scientific naturalism, because science retains an absolute priority in
ontology.

a. Correct Brandom's errors

Brandom's criticism of Sellars's scientific realism is intended to be a rejection of
reductive scientific naturalism, and I have no intention of defending such a
reductionism. It isn't clear to me, however, that Sellars ever espoused such a position,
and some of Brandom's characterizations of the scientific image that support such an
interpretation seem clearly off the mark. So let me pause to correct some mistaken
assertions Brandom makes in his characterization of the scientific image.

My primary complaint is that according to Brandom the SI "consists exclusively
of descriptions and explanations" (Brandom 57), and "[n]ormative vocabulary
accordingly is not drawn upon in articulating the scientific image of things. It belongs

exclusively to the manifest image" (Brandom 58). In Brandom's view, the scientific

image is not only purely descriptive but also shorn of all prescriptive discourse. I admit

that Sellars heavily emphasizes the descriptive and explanatory dimension of science,

and that it is no accident that the *scientia mensura* begins with the condition "In the

dimension of describing and explaining the world . . . ." But if the SI consists of *nothing*

but descriptive/explanatory discourse, then that introductory condition in the *scientia*

mensura seems to be redundant. Further, Sellars claims that the scientific image

purports to be a *complete* image of man-in-the-world, but Sellars surely would not think

that any conceptual framework that contains only descriptive/explanatory discourse

could be complete.[4]   It would be deeply incoherent for Sellars, who is so very sensitive

to the rich multi-dimensionality of language and the conceptual frameworks that define

the structures of thought, to think that there could be a "complete" image of the world

that contains and employs only descriptive vocabulary. Sellars hints at this when he

points out that

> the conception of the scientific or postulational image is an idealization in the
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> sense that it is a conception of an integration of a manifold of images, each of
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> which is the application to man of a framework of concepts which have a certain
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> autonomy. For each scientific theory is, from the standpoint of methodology, a
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> structure which is built at a different "place" and by different procedures within
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> the intersubjectively accessible world of perceptible things.   (PSIM ¶55; in SPR:

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[4]"[I]t [the scientific image] purports to be a *complete* image, i.e. to define a
framework which could be the *whole truth* about that which belongs to the image"
(PSIM ¶56; in SPR: 20).

20)

Science(s) has (have) *methodologies* and *procedures*, and those are essentially normative: they tell us what we ought and ought not to do.

I have argued elsewhere that the kind of view of the scientific image Brandom is trying to sell us, however much it seems supported by Sellars's own words, cannot be right.[5] Sellars talks of the need to "join" the language of individual and community intentions, which provides, in his view, the basis for normative discourse, to the scientific image. Talk of 'joining' implies that the things joined have existence independently of each other, but in my view such talk is at best misleading. A scientific image of man-in-the-world can neither develop nor sustain itself independently of normative language and categories. So I have to reject Brandom's crass distinction between the two images, and especially his assertion that normative vocabulary "belongs exclusively to the manifest image."

b. It is the reductivist construal that Brandom (rightly) focuses on

There is, however, plenty of reductionist rhetoric in Sellars, and Brandom's attack on this thread in Sellars's thought is welcome as a counterbalance to that rhetoric. The larger question we need to face is whether that rhetoric expresses something deeply woven into the texture of Sellars's thought or is, instead, a more superficial aspect of Sellars's response to the philosophical problems he faced.

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[5]"Ontology and the Completeness of Sellars's Two Images," *Humana.Mente - Journal of Philosophical Studies* 21:1-18 (2012). Available at http://www.humanamente.eu/Issues/Issue21.html.

B. Brandom's two arguments

According to Brandom, Sellars drew inspiration for his MI/SI distinction from Kant's distinction between the phenomenal and the noumenal realms. "The question Sellars' neo-Kantian reappropriation of the phenomena/noumena distinction addresses is how to understand the relations between the descriptive vocabulary native to the manifest image and the descriptive vocabulary native to the scientific image" (Brandom 62). Brandom takes the *scientia mensura* to mean "that descriptive terms from the manifest image refer to things specifiable in descriptive terms from the scientific image, if they refer at all" (Ibid.). This reading leads to the first construal of Sellars's distinction, which Brandom calls the "sense-reference scientific naturalist rendering of the phenomena/noumena distinction."

1. The Sense/reference construal of MI/SI relations
a. It fits in well with current philosophical orthodoxy and the lingering influence of extensionalism
Given popular extensionalist assumptions, co-reference of terms is identity of objects, and we've already seen that Sellars is concerned about the identity of objects across scientific theories. If we so construe the MI/SI distinction that the relevant descriptive vocabularies constitute two different realms of senses picking out (if anything) a common set of referents, then scientific realism is the view that the vocabulary of science is ontologically primary. MI vocabulary successfully refers and the relevant

objects *exist* iff the referent is also the referent of (true) scientific assertions. This construal is very congenial to contemporary scientific naturalism.

b. The argument from the unavailability of strongly cross-sortal identities

Let me try to summarize Brandom's argument very briefly; it is not my purpose here to subject it, as an argument, to close scrutiny. In the standard or received view, identities can be cashed out via Leibniz' law, but with a significant codicil: only extensional predicates count. Extensional predicates are such that what they are true of in a given possible world depends only on what is true in that world. But, Brandom argues, "all descriptive properties are modally involved (so that we cannot require that identicals be indiscernible only with respect to modally insulated properties)" (Brandom 76). Furthermore, Brandom claims, "differences in criteria of identity and individuation entail differences in modal profile— that is, differences in the possession of properties whose applicability or possession entails nonmonotonic subjunctive conditionals" (Brandom 77). From these premises Brandom concludes "that no identity claims involving terms that fall under descriptive sortals exhibiting different criteria of identity and individuation (that is, no strongly cross-sortal identity claims) are true" (Brandom 76). Brandom recognizes that this is not a knock-out argument, because he has not excluded the possibility of constructing some partition of modally involved predicates on which the predicates in one class are referentially transparent and thus some strongly cross-sortal identities come out true. He does think he has made the likelihood of such a case extremely unlikely.

If Brandom's argument is correct, then "the identity version of the sense/reference construal of the scientific naturalist rendering of the phenomena/noumena distinction is untenable, and should be recognized to be so by Sellars' own lights" (Brandom 80). Is there a weaker position on the MI/SI relation that we might attribute to Sellars?

2. A weaker version: functional roles and their realizers

Yes, Brandom thinks one in particular stands out: take functional realization as the basic model of MI/SI relations. One way to do this is to construe the MI as a theory, Ramsify (by replacing each bit of descriptive vocabulary in it by a variable bound by a quantifier ranging over predicates or sortals), then look for the best replacements (realizers) as described in scientific language.

a. Fits Sellars's general reliance on functional roles

Given Sellars's functionalist treatment of the intentional[6] as well as his recognition of the extent to which Aristotle and his hylomorphic metaphysics is a powerful interpretation of the underlying logic of the manifest image,[7] this kind of view slides like a well-fitted glove onto much of what Sellars says. Notice that it also gives us what

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[6]For instance, "Notes on Intentionality," *The Journal of Philosophy* 61 (1964): 655-65; "Meaning as Functional Classification," *Synthese* 27 (1974): 417-37.

[7]For instance, "It should be clear that I regard Aristotle as the philosopher of the Manifest Image"("The Structure of Knowledge: (1) Perception; (2) Minds; (3) Epistemic Principles," in *Action, Knowledge and Reality: Studies in Honor of Wilfrid Sellars,* edited by Hector-Neri Castañeda (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1975): Lecture I, ¶29: 303).

many have thought to be a reasonable story to tell about the cross-theoretical identities we saw Sellars worrying about. The identification of genes with DNA sequences, for instance, is ubiquitous, and seems to make sense on this model.

b. But in tension with a 'phenomenalism'-style argument that is equally Sellarsian

But Brandom does not think that this interpretation of the MI/SI relation is available to Sellars, because it conflicts with another compelling Sellarsian argument, namely Sellars's argument against phenomenalism in the essay of that title. Again, I want to be brief in my treatment of Brandom's argument here, because its validity and soundness are not our primary concern. He tells us,

> Both the phenomenalist reductive project and this functionalist rendering of scientific naturalism seek to explain the use of some target vocabulary (object-directed, ordinary empirical description) in terms of the use of a privileged base vocabulary (phenomenal experience talk, scientific description). The phenomenalist looks directly to underwrite subjunctive conditionals whose consequents are expressed in the privileged vocabulary, while the functionalist naturalist looks to reproduce as far as possible the subjunctive conditionals that articulate the criteria of identity and individuation of sortals in the target vocabulary by means of conditionals couched in the privileged vocabulary.
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> (Brandom 83)

Brandom, following Sellars, poses a dilemma: either *all* of the target vocabulary is

eliminated or it is not.[8] Suppose we try to Ramsify the manifest image; if we cannot

ultimately get rid of it *all*, the supposed priority of the scientific vocabulary cannot

stand. Once one has Ramsified some theory, the general problem, of course, is that

there are too many potential realizers or models, e.g., mathematical models. This

problem, according to Brandom, is commonly dealt with by requiring that the *causal*

relations in the target vocabulary not be Ramsified, which is a reasonable constraint.

But then we're pushed onto the other horn of the dilemma: the subjunctive conditionals

that the functionalist naturalist seeks to reproduce inevitably include manifest-image

sortal vocabulary in their antecedents.

c. And incompatible with (currently ascendent) explanatory pluralism

Brandom concludes that the functional-realization of the MI/SI relation also fails to hold

up.

> The result is that the functionalist way of reading Sellars' scientific naturalist
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> rendering of Kant's phenomena/noumena distinction fares no better than the
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> sense/reference identity way of reading it. It just is not the case that everything
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> we talk about in the manifest image that exists at all . . . is something specifiable
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> in the language of an eventual natural science. The manifest image is not best
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> thought of as an appearance, of which the world as described by science is the

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[8]The general argument form is not uniquely Sellarsian by any means. It was, for instance, used earlier by Roderick Chisholm (though without the technicalities of Ramsification) to show the impossibility of replacing mentalistic vocabulary with purely behavioristic vocabulary.

reality.   (Brandom 87)

Brandom's general diagnosis is that Sellars was operating in an atmosphere in which two common assumptions still ruled: (1) a general belief in the unity of science, where that unity is interpreted as grounded in a reductive explanatory hierarchy organizing all the sciences; (2) a further belief that the manifest image or common sense framework somehow belongs in that hierarchy. Neither of these assumptions is common coin any longer, and we do not need to adopt them ourselves. I have strong doubts that Sellars falls into the second error – he was well aware that the manifest image is not just another scientific theory, however much it is, in its own way, scientific.

The rest of Brandom's chapter is an argument for his expressive pragmatic naturalism as the right development of Sellars's worthiest thoughts. That may, in fact, be the case; it is not something I am going to dispute here. But I now want to offer a different perspective on Sellars's story concerning the two images that I think puts it in a better light, and one that has some claim on Brandom's own credence.

IV.   Yet another construal of the MI/SI relation: From Kant to Hegel

I happily agree with Brandom that Kant's distinction between the noumenal and the phenomenal was a model for Sellars, who pretty much says this explicitly in several places. But I don't think it is the *only* relevant model, for two reasons. First, Kant's phenoma/noumena distinction is *absolute*, never to be overcome, even in principle; so things as they are in themselves remain forever and in principle beyond our ken, and Sellars explicitly rejects that view. Second, the relation between the manifest and

scientific images is *essentially historical* and *developmental*. The scientific image is

supposed to grow out of the manifest image; it has the manifest image as its necessary

condition, not just logically or epistemologically, but historically and methodologically,

and develops certain aspects of the manifest image in ways that ultimately turn around

to challenge that image. Looked at in this light, don't we have to say that in Sellars's

view the scientific image is the *Aufhebung* of the manifest image?

A. A Hegelian Construal of Sellars's MI/SI distinction

1. Historicity and the Malleability of 'Object'

So I propose to take seriously some Hegelian aspects of the MI/SI relation. Both Hegel

and Sellars reject the absoluteness of Kant's distinction; both think that knowledge of

things as they are in themselves is not in principle beyond our reach. Both think that

the reason they can reject the idea of the *Ding an sich* is that we need not start from a

dualistic assumptions, but from the belief that minds and their objects are parts or

aspects of a single reality. Both understand the history of humanity as a development

towards an ever more adequate set of categories in terms of which we can get at the

very being of things.

Notice that the interpretations of the MI/SI relation that Brandom examines are

themselves *static*. It is *consistent* with those interpretations that the two realms of senses

or the discovery of the underlying realizers of functionally characterized items are

historically and developmentally linked, but it is not *essential* to understanding either

the sense/reference or the function/realizer view. Any historical or developmental

relation between the MI and the SI seems merely contingent.

Furthermore, the relationships that Brandom has in view take seriously the idea that "everything we talk about in the manifest image that exists at all" needs to be specifiable in the language of ideal science. To someone *in* the MI, who assumes therefore that there is reason to preserve many of the objects and concepts of that framework, the MI has to appear as a "large-scale map of reality to which science brings a needle-point of detail and an elaborate technique of map-reading" (PSIM ¶21; in SPR: 8), a view Sellars explicitly rejects. Sellars' rejection of such a construal of the MI/SI relationship might seem to support Brandom's criticism, because reductionism cannot construe the MI/SI relation as a filling-in of detail. But we need not interpret Sellars as holding that either we can give a determinate reconstruction in the language of ideal science of manifest objects or those objects do not exist at all or are somehow illusory.

Science, in Sellars's view, will not be simply a filling-in of the details concerning the world we live in, nor will it be a simple re-definition of manifest objects in language of ideal science. It will challenge and almost certainly revise some of the fundamental architecture of the conceptual framework we use to cope with the world. Sellars gives us a glimpse of this when he suggests that the basic entities of future science will not be particulars but such things as absolute processes. The differences between the framework of ideal science and our MI will not be minor. We have, perhaps, only a taste of how different they may be in such manifestly odd conceptions as the wave/particle duality or a superposition of states.

Brandom's arguments turn on the difficulty of finding some relation between

sortal concepts of the MI and sortal concepts of the SI that preserves the modally rich

structure of manifest image concepts. The difficulty of doing so disrupts claims to a

simple *identity* between the objects of the MI and the SI. Despite his talk of such

identities in PSIM, however, it is surely Sellars' *considered* view that science will be

developing *successor* concepts to those of the MI. The kind of developmental change

Sellars has in mind cannot be a set of minor adjustments in a theory, leaving everything

else, including the fundamental conception of the theory's objects untouched. Just as

consciousness and self-consciousness in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* discover new

forms of objects as their experience unfolds, there is every reason to believe that the

conception of an object changes as science develops. In fact, if science proceeds as

Sellars thinks it will, moving towards a pure process view of the world, the notion of at

least the basic objects of our framework will change significantly, for absolute processes

apparently don't belong to <u>kinds</u>. I doubt I understand how radically different the

world looks from such a perspective.

2. Continuity (Sameness in Difference) Trumps Identity

The development of an adequately articulated SI will be a long and arduous

process, spanning numerous scientific revolutions, revolts, paradigm shifts or

intermediate frameworks. Sufficient structure from the old conceptual framework will

have to be preserved at each juncture so that the new concept or concepts are

reasonably seen as successors to some of the old concepts, but the successor relation

here requires only relevant similarity, not identity. Over generations of conceptual

change, therefore, it is thoroughly possible that the concepts to be found in a distant future science will as little resemble our current armory of sortal concepts as we resemble trilobites.

The argument Brandom models on Sellars's anti-phenomenalist argument clearly does point up the difficulty of so thoroughly replacing uses of MI concepts in the subjunctive conditionals that articulate the significant sortals we use in coping with the world that we no longer rely on the descriptive resources of the MI at all. That surely cannot happen all at once, nor could it proceed by a series of clear identifications of the objects across the developmentally related frameworks. At least, I see no reason to think it should or could so proceed. I tend to think that Brandom does put his finger on an important point when he remarks that Sellars assumed a pretty strong unity of science thesis. But if we extract that commitment from the picture, I do not think that we thereby render the MI unassailable. If anything, it becomes easier to envision how a variety of sciences, each tuned to particular issues, might replace various aspects of the MI piecemeal, rather than a grand unified science replacing it wholesale. Rather than a grand reduction of the objects of the MI to a new set of basic objects, we get localized and opportunistic explanations that we hope will be mutually consistent, but might have no deeper unity. Over generations of scientific development, is it unreasonable to think that the concepts in the clauses of the relevant subjunctive conditionals that articulate the sortal concepts we use will themselves also be replaced with scientifically honed and reconstructed concepts?

I am, however, aware that in suggesting that science may end up more of a patchwork of locally profitable schemes than Sellars would ever have countenanced, I

am also betraying my original Hegelian inspiration. Hegel was a grand unifier if ever there was one. Sorry, I can only say so much the worse, then, for both Sellars and Hegel. Color me some shade of post-modern, I guess.

B. Concreteness and Context

There is, however, another reason I claim Hegelian inspiration here. In my view, the Hegelian dialectic moves from the abstract towards ever increasing concreteness, which I take here to be an ever increasing comprehension of the context or whole within which alone the original abstraction is intelligible. It is no historical accident that the earliest developed sciences are highly abstract, and that progress in the sciences has often been achieved by beginning from a relatively simple abstract idealization and developing a theory of a larger context–a higher unity, one might say--within which the simpler abstraction becomes intelligible. It is in this context that I would see, e.g., Newton's unification of Galileo's laws of terrestrial motion with Kepler's laws of celestial motion. Darwin provides a context within which a wide range of previously understood but "smaller-scale" phenomena, from breeding patterns in plants and animals to the newly won understanding of geological time scales to the organized diversity of species, fit together into a systematic view of biological phenomena. It is just as much a Hegelian point that once the theory (or concept) of the larger context or higher unity is developed, the previous, partial, and abstract theories or concepts are not left as they were. Newton did not leave Kepler and Galileo untouched; Einstein did not leave Newton and Maxwell untouched; and Darwin left everyone in his field scrambling to re-think the phenomena they studied.

Objects cannot reveal themselves entirely in tightly constrained contexts in which they are abstracted from their normal situation. As we broaden the context against which we see them, new and often hitherto unidentified aspects, properties, or relations come to light. Our very conception of objecthood changes. Did Sellars think that the progress of the sciences towards some Peircean ideal promised us a sequence of ever more adequate conceptualizations of objecthood itself, eventually swamping the hoary old manifest image concept of an object and the relevant categorized sortals?

The stumbling block I see to the thoroughgoing supersession of MI concepts by SI concepts is, as I have argued elsewhere, the fact that any conceptual scheme we could use must be one *we* can *use*. We are finite beings with limited intelligence and built-in computational power, restricted to certain modes of sensory access to the world, however much we supplement them with instrumentation. We are necessarily located in space and time, we have certain natural needs and desires, and are always operating within a cultural context that determines both our further interests and our further cognitive powers. Perhaps most basic is the fact that we must always be able engage the world from the perspective of the singular human individual subject, who is also a singular human agent. In this sense, there is a privileged context, and it is not the "view from nowhere" context that, arguably, science strives for. There is no easy accommodation of this perspective in the sciences. This is why Sellars thought the language of individual and community intentions must be joined to (or rather, never abandoned by) the vocabulary of science. Thus, I am inclined to think that something like the subject naturalism that Brandom, following Price, endorses at the end of his

chapter is closer to the truth than object naturalism, but Brandom needs more argument

to get us there.[9]

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