

## CHAPTER FIVE -- INTERPRETATION AND INQUIRY

Hamlet: Denmark's a prison.

Rosencrantz: Then is the world one. (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*)

### Essence and Existence

At this point, it should be clear that, while the notion of the productive imagination is problematic, it could play the role of bridging the gap between non-epistemic and epistemic activities. Moreover, both Kant and Sellars suggested that the productive imagination should play that role. Peirce's phenomenology has given us the means to use Kant's notion of the productive imagination to conceive of meaning differently than previously done, while retaining familiar features of traditional accounts. The result will be an analysis of meaning into the elements of intentionality, extensionality, and intensionality. To justify that peculiar-appearing combination, a final look will be made at the concept of intentionality and the issue of objectivity.

A disagreement with the traditional emphasis on objectivity motivates my modification of Sellars' stereoscopic vision. I will show that the changes to Sellars' system required by my considerations are minimal. That is, it is a simple matter to replace the frameworks of intentionality and of scientific objects that Sellars ends up with before their synthesis in his stereoscopic vision, with the frameworks of object-directedness and objects, respectively. That substitution paves the way for treatment of intentionality and purposefulness from the point of view that persons are incomplete beings due to their insecure conceptions. Those themes will be brought together to show that given that we are the beings we are, the problem of meaning must be conceived along the lines presented below.

### **Intensional and extensional interpretations of representations**

While an account of the intentionality of experience need not appeal to relations between a person, a thing, and a quality (see Sellars, 1963, 142), the only available kinds of accounts of meaning -- intensional and extensional -- appeal to the notion of representation, where representation is such a triadic relation. That seems appropriate in light of the notion that inasmuch as perceptual judgments and linguistic interpretation mirror each other in involving a purported relation in space-time between a *person* and a *thing* in *some respect*, meaning will be found in the mediation of "essence" and "existence".

On intensional interpretations of meaning, existence is exemplified by the token-signs given in sound, on paper, etc., while essence is exemplified by linguistic roles or some such abstract objects standing for the meaning of terms. On extensional interpretations, existence is exemplified by the referents of terms of a sentence, while essence might be said to be the truth-conditions for that sentence (though, one might hold that the notion of essence cannot be captured). Whether the notion of representation be that kind of representation involved in intensional interpretations, where intensional representations are of mentalistic roles, or that involved in extensional interpretations, where extensional representations are of purportedly real objects, a representational triangle is involved.

It would be useful, having discussed Peirce's conception of meaning in the introduction to this thesis, using his 1903 formulation of the maxim of pragmatism, to discuss Sellars' intensional notion of meaning in contrast. Unfortunately, that would make for a very complicated discussion involving his reflections on language games and issues of a broad nature. I can afford to discuss only in a very abstract way his notion of a linguistic role and what it means to talk of the meanings of linguistic expressions. Though I will not attempt an analysis of the Sellarsian concept of linguistic roles, I do mean to point out, in general terms, a difficulty in that approach and show how it is related to the general structure of Sellars' stereoscopic vision and of the context in which my argument has been presented. In doing so, I will be bringing the discussion back to the subject with which the previous chapter began: the issue of how to formulate the descriptive content of both non-epistemic and epistemic activities.

### **Linguistic roles and meant entities**

Taking the meaning of an expression as a type for which the use of that expression implies the existence of a token which is an instance of the type provides a very plausible way of treating meaning in language. However, beyond that plausibility, it is not clear what it is for something to play a linguistic role. For example, consider the following: The notion that "*P* is meaningful in a definite way *m*" is an instance of meaning if it involves the playing of the role, *m*, by the linguistic entity, *P*. What exactly does this mean? Sellars might talk of moves within a conceptual framework. However, by saying that a linguistic role is like a position on a linguistic game-board, we gain greater depth to the current social and spatial dimensions of our metaphor, but little else. In fact, what happens is that, upon reflection on the meaning of experiences, we conceptualize a unified structure generated by our productive imagination as an object (a linguistic role, of course) (I realize it is presumptuous to expect my reader to accept this, but the basis for this claim will be given following a return to the issues of objectivity and intentionality.). We would point to the object if we could, as if to say, "it is this thing here that I want you to think about when I talk about 'instances of meaning' or 'linguistic roles'". We do not imagine that there are actually such things, of course. We do feel, however, as if there is, in some sense of "is", *something* which is that meaning (Frege, for example, saw meaning as abstract entities each of which he called "*Sinn*"). That something is what is known when we think of the meaning of a certain word or sentence.

In feeling that way, we exemplify a condition Quine tried to diagnose (and cure by bleeding). That is, we experience "[a] felt need for meant entities" (1961, 22). Quine, in arguing that entities belong to the realm of reference and that meaningfulness belongs to the realm of meaning (which he thought was confused), thought one should not be so inclined. He believed that to think that there are meaning entities was a consequence of "a failure to appreciate that meaning and reference are distinct" (1961, 22). Of course, Quine wanted to separate meaning and reference so he could take advantage of the benefits of extensional languages (e.g., those of axiomatic set theory) and dismiss the theory of meaning. It is likely that Quine did not appreciate the value of that other side of things, i.e., meaning. His attempt to relegate epistemic activities such as interpretation to the realm of non-epistemic activities such as sensing indicates a disregard for the sovereignty of concepts, as we have seen.

Nevertheless, we should recognize the importance of Quine's observations regarding the "felt need for meaning entities".

Philosophers do seem to hypostatize the meanings of expressions to a greater degree than does the layman. For the ordinary man-in-the-street, meaning is but a way of getting something wanted. That is, the meaning of a word is what I or you want to convey to another. Philosophers might take this to mean that there is something conveyed, whether or not they really mean to commit themselves to the existence of what is conveyed. The difference is that for most people living lives removed, for the most part, from these issues, "meaning" is not something typically thought *of*. It is, hence, not something thought of *into something* and, it follows, not something thought of into something which we cannot account for.

### **The felt success of extensional referrals**

The extensionalists are in roughly the same situation, however. Consider the following: "X refers to *j*" is an instance of reference if it involves a connection between a linguistic entity, *X*, and a real entity, *j*. It is not clear what the alleged connection is: In virtue of what are there referential relations? An explanatory account of reference must explain in virtue of what those relations between words and objects are determined and locate that referential function. One might locate that which determines their unspecified referential connection either outside or inside location language. Neither outlook, however, solves the difficulty of where the referential connections actually originate or how they connect mental or linguistic representations with the world. What it might mean for something within language to determine referential relations between terms and objects external to those terms is not clear and would not seem to be possible. On the other hand, if the referential function is taken to be external to the semantic plane, it is not of language and thus, need not be explained by a theory of language.

An explanation of "in virtue of what are there referential relations" minimally requires characterizing the "aboutness" of referential relations. As we have seen, aboutness in the epistemic sense is what intentionality is. As Sellars put it, "[i]t is the pragmatic concept of verification which constructs the

meeting of language and world in a cognitive situation. . . [P]ragmatics, from which, after all, semantics is an abstraction, is concerned with the contact of a linguistic structure with the world, and this contact essentially involves linguistic tokens or sign-events" (1949). That contact, as we have seen, involves a cognitive situation. However, writers who desire a framework in which standard conceptions of truth work relatively well have objected to focusing on intentionality and propositional attitudes because of difficulties in determining the truth values of those kinds of propositions which explicitly involve intentionality and propositional attitudes.

One part of the problem extensionalists see is that the objects of propositional attitudes need not exist for such attitudes to be expressed in a sentence. Extensionalists see that as a problem because they adopt the convention of assuming that sentences have existential import. That is, those terms which are in a certain position of a proposition stipulated by convention are construed as referring to something. Unfortunately, it is an unsolved problem how it is exactly that the referential relation holds.

We must conclude that it is not a merely linguistic matter as extensional semantic approaches portray it. Rather, it would seem to involve the practice of purposeful agents, as well.

Both perspectives, that of intension and that of extension, have notions that are not especially perspicuous. For the intensional perspective, it is the notion of linguistic roles. For the extensional perspective, it is the notion of referential relations. Those problems clutch at the heart of the strategy of explaining "meaning" characteristic of each of the two perspectives. To that extent, both perspectives are involved in problems of roughly the same magnitude. The significance of those problems, of the lack of explanation for, with regard to intensional accounts, claims of meant entities and, with regard for extensional accounts, for referential relations, warrant a new look at our conception of the problem of meaning.

Even if the problems of both perspectives were to be solved, though, another of a more general nature would remain. Both perspectives imply that there really are things which are the same for all persons or, at least, persons of the same linguistic community. By committing ourselves to the existence of such purported entities as physical objects and linguistic roles, we construct the metaphysical notion of

an external world, our ontology. That is, we imply existence of an external world, which is constituted of those purported entities to whose existence we are willing to commit ourselves based upon our ordinary experiences. However, neither resolution of the problems faced by each of the perspectives, nor the notions of meaning or reference themselves can justify, without appeal to other notions, the position that the entities involved -- the "objects" of reference and/or the "roles" of intension -- have existence independently of some mind. Obviously, the sole notion that such purported entities exist cannot justify a belief in the existence of an external world independent of particular minds.

### A Framework of the External World

Of course, we do want a public world. As a result, we might say that all our ways of knowing, our sense-modalities in conjunction with our object-directed thought (i.e., the intentionality of perceptions), converge on things. If we also say that the sense-modalities of the members of the linguistic community are approximately the same, then the fact that we do converge on approximately the same things implies that those things *are* public. For that reason, we might say that there are physical objects which are real, at least real for us. Likewise, by starting "in the middle", we can, as Sellars did not, take the phenomenological image of "man-in-the-world" produced through conceptualization, *via* language, as the real world. We might also, as Sellars did, believe that we have thoughts, that our words have meanings, and that these meanings are part of the real world. However, reliance on perception, with respect to physical objects, and/or linguistic behavior, with respect to intensions and linguistic roles, alone does not justify a belief in the independent existence of "the" external world.

As we saw in the third chapter, our experience is a product of conceptualization, of conceiving of ourselves within our world and of objects within this world. One direction one might take given that fact is that all objects, scientific and manifest alike, are products of conceptualization. That is, one might keep in mind the process persons follow whether they do so as part of their ordinary lives or as part of a scientific activity. That is to substitute for a focus on the depersonalization of objects which eventually results in the scientific image, rather, a recognition that part of what it means to be a person

is to be directed toward, and to make, objects. The means to make that substitution is to talk of a framework of objects and another framework which involves object-directedness and inquiry. The justification for that approach involves the productive imagination and an implication regarding the language of theories which stems from a view of intentionality different from his. Before I deliver on that promissory note, I must show the capacity which that different view of intentionality has to affect things.

In following Sellars' account, in wondering whether there really are two frameworks of objects and what they consist of, it is important that the irreducible remainder of the manifest image he finds seems to be fundamentally different from objects like earthworms, rivers, stones, sensations, apples, chairs, ice cubes, cabbages, etc. One might even say that the irreducible core of the manifest image is something "moral" in the older, broader, sense of the word. One of the two images of Sellars' penultimate vision, which are to be unified in the ultimate, stereoscopic picture, is the scientific, while the other is the moral image, where the latter is not the manifest image in all its glory. On this view, the scientific framework is that repository of things, properties, relations, processes, etc., with corresponding principles of behavior and other such theory, while the moral framework is that framework for intentions, purposive circumstances, beliefs, purposive actions, value, etc.

Both the manifest and scientific frameworks are profoundly characteristic of what it is to be a person, as Sellars meant them to be. We would hardly consider something a person if it never had and never could have purposes (except, perhaps, on the basis of its resembling purposeful creatures as a kind). Also, we would hardly wish to conceive of ourselves as persons without there being a framework of objects which is the world in which we are persons. Likewise, we would hardly wish to have a world of objects which behave thus-and-so without being able to offer explanations for the objects of that world. Such inquiry would seem to be just as much what persons are about as is the environment which we conceive ourselves to be in.

The change to Sellars' framework that I suggest be made, though only have space to suggest, is to construe his framework of objects as a framework of the things which our intentions are about, whether existent or imaginary, whether explanatory or purposeful. The basic difference between this

conception and Sellars' is to be found in my not treating purposes as somehow complete or finished, but as reachings-out. That is, with respect to the conception I endorse, the self-directedness of purposeful agents is characterized not as the agency of a complete being, but as the inclination of incomplete beings toward experiential wholes. Aboutness, in this sense, is no less propositional or cognitive than was Sellars' notion of intentionality.

Taking the end-point of intentionality as a process, rather than as an object of the framework of persons (i.e., as its irreducible core), allows for intentionality to be seen as both a reaching-out, i.e., as the constructing of wholes, and as an epistemic aboutness, i.e., as a directedness toward the wholes constructed (e.g., the form of "that something is thus-and-so"). For philosophers, the construction of wholes might include considering how all aspects of experience hang together, while for scientists it might include the construction of a whole which explains some phenomenon. The result is that intentionality becomes coordinate with inquiry; "coordinate" with respect to cognition, though not with respect to the construction of experiential wholes.<sup>1</sup>

### A Framework of the Inner World

#### **Incompleteness**

Sellars has argued that one cannot have one belief without having others. That is, any single belief must be able to be placed in a position in relation to other beliefs such that the latter offer reasons for holding the former belief. Thus, beliefs rest on a shifting framework of other beliefs. To the extent that some being lacks the capacity to hold beliefs and the capacity for inquiry, to that extent its experience will not be conceptual. The shifting framework of beliefs of persons makes coherent the world of such conceptual beings, which are different, for that reason, from those just mentioned. One might argue, then, that to the extent that one's experience is not conceptual, to that extent one does not have a

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<sup>1</sup> A paradox does arise, with respect to my picture, as a result of asking a question with respect to my proposal, whether inquiry is an object or not. However, it can be resolved by recognizing that many paradoxes which have to do with predicating something of something else, confuse process, as a metaphysical and epistemological category, with predication, which is sometimes used as a metaphysical concept extended from linguistic contexts.

world. Without a logical space of reasons containing beliefs, there would be nothing to make the fleeting impressions of one's experience cohere.

This is not to say that, absent a logical space of reasons and absent the beliefs which that space can contain, there could be no collecting together of impressions (Such a collecting together has already been discussed above as the productive imagination.). It is merely to say that those impressions could not enter any logical space of reason and "become" beliefs. They would remain at the behavioristic level of stable or unstable dispositions to differences in their environment. It is in this way that we might explain the ability of canines, for example, to find a place in their social structures without our speculating that they have a conception of a self or any world in which they conceive of themselves.

Nevertheless, we would not go so far as to suggest that dogs and other sentient, social beings do not have experiences. We simply would not want to take an affirmative position on whether they can reach conclusions about the experiences they have, as opposed to responding differentially to their sensory environment. Thus, the position we might reach is that they have, at the most, a fleeting notion of the self. That would mean that, to the extent that they experience an "otherness", to that extent they can conceive of themselves in a world. However, that is not to say that canines, for example, conceive of themselves as ongoing individuals. On the view being presented, they are like infants who have learned to take seriously some particular activity or another, but who have not learned to take responsibility for their actions; for, presumably, they do not have the concept of responsibility.

We might consider ourselves and the members of our communities in contrast. We have concepts and a stable conception of the self. Yet, the notion of the self is not without problems. While our conceptions of ourselves are generally stable, we are often fraught with insecurities, doubt, and moments of helplessness. Who does not have occasional suspicions that they are not everything that they have led themselves to think they are? Alternatively, who has not thought that they might have been more than they are had things been different in their lives? Answers to both questions would be something like, "A god or a beast, perhaps".

To demur with Shakespeare's Hamlet, persons seem to be in between gods and beasts. One whose self was complete, who never suffered any feelings of doubt, whose belief in itself was ever constant, would be a divine being. One whose experience never came together into a coherent set of beliefs and never could do so, who never needed to doubt and never could doubt because there were no concepts to be doubted, would not be a conceptual being, and would be more a beast than anything else. Persons are those who *can* be incomplete because they have concepts and *are* incomplete because their conception of their self, while stable, is insecure.

### **Intentionality**

Above, in passing, I implied that there might be a collecting together of impressions, even without a logical space of reasons and even without the beliefs which that space can contain. That was, of course, to recall the discussion of the productive imagination above. There, I showed that Sellars allowed for a pre-conceptual capacity, what he called "an innate conceptual framework", which is responsible for organizing the non-conceptual, sensory experience into unified structures. I argued, though not in Sellars' voice since I am not sure whether he would aver, that the role of the productive imagination was both causal and cognitive, though not conceptual. Inasmuch as there is room for argument for the notion of a capacity which is not of the nature of factual knowledge, but, on the other hand, neither is it merely of the nature of causal mediation, to that extent there is room for argument for a notion of a cognitive, non-conceptual form of intentionality.

Corresponding to the three kinds of conception of self -- the fleeting, the incomplete, and the perfect -- are three grades of intentionality. The most primitive is as much intentional as the fleeting notion of a self is a notion of self; which is to say, it is not intentionality proper. The second grade of intentionality is that form of intentionality which persons possess, that of epistemic aboutness. Finally, assuming there could be beings with perfectly secure and stable conceptions of the self, the third grade of intentionality would be characteristic of these beings. Such beings would be like those which Kant had in mind when he mentioned beings whose intuitions are supplied by their intellect, rather than by a faculty of sensibility (see B138-9 and B145-6). A being with such powers would not have experience merely of the kind corresponding to a "proto-theory", as Sellars calls it, "of spatio-temporal physical

objects capable of interacting with each other. . . [of] objects -- this is the crux of the matter -- which are capable of generating [visual] inputs which vary in systematic ways with their relation to the body of a perceiver" (1978, §32). However, following Kant, we can have no conception of what the kind of knowledge characteristic of such beings might be, should they exist (B139).

The most primitive form of "intentionality", mentioned above, might be called proto-intentionality since it is not intentionality proper. It would be *about* things, without being *of* things merely in that sense that the causal mediation of sensings is about things. Thus, there must be yet another sense of "of" besides the epistemic and the non-epistemic senses of aboutness: the "of-ness" of the unified structures produced by acts of the productive imagination.

When, on phenomenological reflection, we talk about what the unified structures produced by particular acts of the productive imagination are *of*, we do not mean that they would be of certain physical objects were certain subjects in certain environmental conditions which normally bring about knowledge of certain physical objects. The kind of "of-ness" just excluded from that of proto-intentionality is characteristic of intentional awareness (i.e., sapience), rather than non-intentional awareness (i.e., sentience). If non-intentional, the "of" used would not have the form of "that something is thus-and-so" (i.e., would not be propositional), but would be merely derivative of such talk. Inasmuch as it has that propositional form, it is intentional. Inasmuch as it is merely derivative, it is non-intentional.

The "of-ness" of acts of the productive imagination is not of the objects of perception, nor is it of anything in a merely derivative sense. Rather, it is an "of-ness" which has the sense of a preparedness to find objects of perception. It is an "of-ness" pertaining to the unified structures produced by the imagination. Inasmuch as those structures are not what are conceived of, the "of-ness" of proto-intentionality is a reaching-out toward an object not yet produced by conceptualizing. It is an "of-ness" which need not be *of* anything that exists and, sometimes (e.g., in the case of lower mammals), it an of-ness which is of nothing that can exist (i.e., objects of experience).

The notion of the productive imagination, in conjunction with the incompleteness and the epistemic aboutness characteristic of persons, can play a major role in articulating the form of a pragmatic conception of "meaning". To repeat once more, both the manifest and scientific frameworks are profoundly characteristic of what it is to be a person. Both the conceiving of ourselves as persons within a framework of objects which is the world in which we are persons and the inquiry into that world of objects which behave thus-and-so constitute what persons are. Both conception and inquiry involve conceptualizing, but they also involve the unified structures the conceptualizing of which produces objects of epistemic activities.

Following Sellars (1978), while the unified structures, which when conceptualized yield objects of experience, are not, and cannot be, objects of experience, they are the organized experiential unities in virtue of which experience can be conceptualized and objects of experience thereby produced. Thus, the unified structures are merely means to an end. The end for which they are mere means is an object, or objects, of experience. It is the reaching-out (toward objects) represented in the unified structures generated by acts of the productive imagination which characterizes the "of-ness" of the individual, pre-conceptual capacity of persons (i.e., proto-intentionality). I suggest that proto-intentionality is shared by non-persons like canines, as well. When the unified structures produced in virtue of our individual capacities are conceptualized, however, the result is knowledge which has a propositional, epistemic aboutness characteristic of the logical space of reasons so important to the life-world of persons.

## Meaning

It is in the conceptualizing of unified structures, in the finding of objects of epistemic activities that persons realize meaning. What we do when we understand something is we generate an object that has certain properties. In effect, we are aware of there being something meant. To be aware in the sense of being aware that something is thus-and-so is to conceptualize. Since I take conceptualizing as the construction of objects (in a very loose sense of "objects"), to conceptualize is to think of something meant as something that *is*, in some sense of "is".

However, such objects as we take meanings to be cannot be simply extensional. That is, since meanings represent meaningfulness "itself", they cannot simply exist as some "other" without their having certain qualities which are their meaningfulness. Hence, to conceptualize with respect to an expression or perceptual experience is to conceive of some object and its properties.

Using Peircean terminology, we might rephrase this in the following way: to conceptualize with respect to an expression or perceptual experience is to mediate between the quality and the hecceity of a phenomenon. Any instance of meaning, with respect to its character of being an intentional representation, can be analyzed in this kind of Peircean phenomenological analysis. That is, meaning consists of a meaning quality, a meaning object, and the intentional mediation of the two.

Since the quality, i.e., the meaningfulness of some conceptualized meaning entity, is but a property of a meaning, it is but a mere may-be quality. It, therefore, corresponds to Peirce's first universal category. Likewise, the hecceity, i.e., the otherness, which is just the meaning-encountered, is purely extensional, i.e., not itself qualitative. It, therefore, corresponds to Peirce's second universal category. Finally, the fact of there being a meaningful meaning is but the mediation of the qualities of that meaning encountered in experience and, therefore, it corresponds to Peirce's third universal category. It is a conceptualization of something as something.

The preceding does not go toward saying that we experience meaning entities when we find meaning in perceptual judgments and linguistic expressions. While articulating or understanding an expression or

when making a perceptual judgment, one does not become aware of meaning entities. One does so only upon reflection. In ordinary experience, one experiences meaning, but not meaning entities, by conceptualizing the unified structures produced by acts of one's productive imagination as experiential wholes. No effort is required for experiencing meaning. It is a part, and a necessary one, of experience in general. Upon phenomenological reflection on the meaning of some expression or perceptual judgment, one finds a whole constituted by the conceptualizing of unified structures. That whole is not the meaning entity, but it is, in a sense, the meaning of that expression or perceptual judgment. To find the meaning entities often referred to requires a Peircean phenomenological analysis of the wholes found in experience.

To recall that discussion above, Peircean phenomena consist of three parts: something of the nature of Peirce's third category, which is the mediation of some "other" and some possible quality; the hecceity, i.e., or pure extensional other, which is of Peirce's second phenomenological category; and the embodied quality, which is of Peirce's first phenomenological category. The meaning entities are the unified structures produced by acts of the productive imagination, which correspond to Peirce's second category in that they have no sensible qualities in and of themselves. That is, they are encountered, but not experienced (just as we might say that newborn babies encounter the traditional breath-giving slap of the doctor, but do not experience it, if the genetic approach taken in this project is correct). When one makes a perceptual judgment, or articulates or understands a linguistic expression, i.e., when one conceptualizes unified imaginative structures, one mediates the unified structure and the properties associated with it.

With respect to perceptual experience, Sellars has said that the construction of the unified structures which are generated by the productive imagination "is a unified process guided by a combination of sensory input on the one hand and background beliefs, memories, and expectations on the other" (1978, §26). The result of that guided process cannot be concepts or factual knowledge since the result of that process is simply the meaning entities and not meaning itself. Even though sets of conceptual matter (i.e., the beliefs, memories, and expectations) are guiding the construction of unified structures, the result itself cannot be conceptual until the unified structures are conceptualized.

It is in conceptualization that the mere may-bes of meaning, i.e., the qualities of experience, appear. Those occur, when they are embodied in a meaning entity (i.e., a unified structure), as holding positions within a conceptual framework. When we reflect on the meaning of expressions or perceptual judgments, we find those qualities that exemplify such meaningfulness. Such qualities consist of the conceptual response to the background beliefs, memories, and expectations which are involved in the construction of the unified structures generated by the productive imagination.

The notion of meaning entities invoked in response to Quinean-style challenges is the result of confusing *meaningfulness* with the unified structures to which belong the qualities responsible for that meaningfulness. Such responses attempt to justify the claim that meanings exist without realizing that the existence they are claiming cannot be that of properties, unless those properties are themselves made into entities with properties. Since entities themselves are not their properties -- that is, they have pure extensionality, but not the intensionality of properties -- the result would be an endless regress. Moreover, meaning entities offer no explanation of the meaningfulness of experience. The meaningfulness is of the qualities embodied in the meaning entities. Since we can never experience meaning entities, it is not clear that a search for meaning entities, which are believed incorrectly to be useful in explaining meaningfulness, has any potential value at all.

The implications of the preceding is that to find a meaning entity or something which is the same for different experiences, in virtue of which meaning or synonymy will be explained, is misguided. Being aware that there is something meant involves conceptualization. The meaningfulness that particular experiences have is but a possibility when considered in isolation of whole phenomena and, therefore, cannot be found by such methods. Likewise, the meaning entity that can be "found" upon reflection has no meaningfulness itself. Rather, meaning is only found in the mediation of the unified structures of the productive imagination and the qualities which only become actualities in that mediation. That mediation is, of course, a conceptualizing of the unified structures of the productive imagination. The result of conceptualizing is to find oneself somewhere in the logical space of reasons, for example, as the result of a perceptual judgment or of experiencing a linguistic expression.

The character of possible theories of meaning suggested from the discussion above would involve the

mediation of intensional and extensional aspects by intentionality. The intensional aspects, formerly taken to be linguistic roles, are not reconstrued in my account except for becoming part of a more comprehensive account. Thus, intension is still construed to be a matter of positions in a conceptual framework, but such positions are now seen to be but mere may-bes as long as one excludes from one's picture the unified structures which are generated by the productive imagination and required for conceptualizing by the incomplete beings which persons are. The extensional aspects, formerly confused with meaningfulness, are construed as the unified structures generated by acts of the productive imagination. The intentionality responsible for making meaning possible changes only in that we can see that purposive agents are not themselves complete, but are involved in reachings-out toward objects of experience. Being conscious, for incomplete beings such as we are, is to experience meaning.

### Mediation of the Inner and Outer Worlds

#### **Doubt and belief**

The self-directedness of persons as purposeful agents has been characterized, not as the agency of a complete being, but as the inclination of incomplete beings toward experiential wholes. Conceptualizing has been portrayed as the means by which objects of experience are made from the proto-intentional, unified structures. Sellars' argument regarding the necessity of there being a community for our having concepts at all, combined with those points about the agency and intentionality of incomplete beings (which presuppose a Kantian notion of shared forms of intuition), implies that persons share a conceptual space which is the essence of our world. Yet, that conceptual space is not itself complete.

The final element of the framework which is to be combined with a framework of the external world to show what support there is for the notion that all objects, of both scientific and manifest kinds, are products of conceptualization involves the pragmatist theory of inquiry. A rough account of that theory of inquiry is that knowledge is gained by a process involving doubt of some belief or set of

beliefs which we hold. Just as one's losing one's balance is a very unsettling feeling (emotionally, as well as physiologically), the creeping of doubt into one's conceptions is also very unsettling. When one does lose one's balance, one struggles to regain it. Likewise, when one begins to doubt what one thought one knew, one struggles to recover that equilibrium which formerly existed. The result of that struggle is either that no equilibrium is ever reached, that one reconfirms the original beliefs and the old habit of thought reasserts itself, or that one finds new beliefs to replace the old and a new equilibrium settles in.

Peirce put the matter so: "Doubt is an uneasy and dissatisfied state from which we struggle to free ourselves and pass into the state of belief; while the latter is a calm and satisfactory state which we do not wish to avoid, or to change to a belief in anything else" (CP 5.372, 1877). Thus, we reconsider our present and former set of beliefs and try to find a new order for them. Peirce called this struggle to reach a new state of belief, inquiry (CP 5.374, 1877), and wrote that doubt was "the only immediate motive" for inquiry (CP 5.375, 1877). In this Peircean theory of inquiry, doubt is what drives inquiry and only belief stops it. That is, upon the occurrence of some doubt, one is directed toward a state of belief which stabilizes the conceptual framework: "With the doubt, therefore, the struggle begins, and with the cessation of doubt it ends. Hence, the sole object of inquiry is the settlement of opinion" (CP 5.375, 1877).

The conjunction of the incompleteness of persons and the cognitive, but non-conceptual, capacity of persons results in a state-of-affairs in which persons are inclined to construct explanations for the objects of the world in which they are persons. That is, just as there is a reaching out toward objects not yet experienced, there is a reaching out for a whole not yet conceptualized, where that whole is an answer, or part of an answer, to the question of why there is a world of objects which behave thus-and-so. That state-of-affairs, i.e., that persons are inclined to engage in inquiry, would seem to be just as constitutive of persons as is the conception of the environment in which they conceive of themselves.

Beings which cannot be incomplete or complete because they do not have concepts would not have conceived of a world in which such a reaching-out could have began. They, therefore, cannot engage

in inquiry. Beings which are complete would not require a capacity like the productive imagination because their intellectual forms of intuition apprehend things *as they are* directly. That is, not having sensible forms of intuition (e.g., space and time), according to Kant, they "would not require, for the unity of consciousness, a special act of synthesis of the manifold" (B138-9). In other words, they would not require any bridge between sensibility and the intellect like that which the productive imagination provides for them to have a conception of a self in the world. Moreover, their unity of consciousness would come from directly apprehending things as they are. Such beings, therefore, would not engage in inquiry either since to be conscious would be, for them, to be already at the end of inquiry.

The state-of-affairs mentioned, that persons are inclined to engage in inquiry, relies on the presence of doubt. Where there is no doubt, there would be no genuine inquiry. On the other hand, those most likely to hold tenaciously to their beliefs no matter what are generally not beyond self-doubt. As long as one is incomplete, either in the sense of having a stable, but nonetheless, insecure conception of the self or in the sense of not having one's intuitions supplied by one's intellect, but having only sensible forms of intuition, doubt will be part of one's life. To the extent that doubt is part of one's life, to that extent one will be inclined to be directed toward objects not yet experienced, but which will make complete either the picture of the moment (e.g., that complete picture resulting from words of assurance) or a picture extended further across time (e.g., a scientific theory). Whenever doubt arises, persons, as incomplete beings, will attempt to construct explanations for the objects of their world in an effort to attain equilibrium, to make sense of the world in which they are persons. Objects that might cause such doubt might be anything: taunting by other children, ships slipping over the horizon of the once-thought-to-be-flat earth, a bad review at the office, fossils discovered to be much older than the estimated age of the earth, a meeting with an old schoolmate much more successful than oneself, discovery of perturbations in the orbit of Neptune prior to the discovery of Pluto, a death in the family, etc.

### **Inquiry**

Inquiry on the grander scale, that of not just making sense of the moment, but of trying to establish

connections across large regions of one's conceptual framework generally encounters commitment to an external world. We encountered that tendency in considering what might be meant by "linguistic role" and "referent". As noted then, our commitment to physical objects and intensional objects entails commitment to an external world and a belief in its reality.

The notion of reality does not necessarily involve notions of intentionality nor objects of thought. Nevertheless, the idea that it is possible for us to access, within limits determined by our fallibility, that which is independent of some (or even all) minds (e.g., some gnostic version of realism) does seem to involve the notion that we are, metaphorically speaking, at some distance from a point which represents "reality" and that we are moving toward that point. The end of the process, according to that view, will result in the reconciliation of our thought to what there is really. Hence, on that view, it makes sense to say that the end of that process will not be reached until there is such a reconciliation. Any continuation of that process, any change, would indicate that the end had not been reached.

The judgment that certain objects of conceptualization are parts of reality, since reality is merely another product of conceptualization, is itself a judgment resulting from the incompleteness of persons and our reliance on the productive imagination. That is, what is real, in a phenomenal sense, is only encountered upon reflection on experiential meaning. Our conception of reality is the object generated by that reflection. Moreover, inasmuch as reality is seen as some ultimate nature, rather than what is presented here and now, our conception of reality is the result of reflection regarding the experiential wholes which are the phenomenal "reals".

If one neglects to see that even the notion of reality is an object of conceptualization, one might see some judgment that something is real as a judgment which can be placed within a conceptual framework which has been made complete by reaching the end of inquiry. This cannot be, though, according to the account of the constitution of persons given in this thesis. As has been discussed, our knowledge rests on (1) non-epistemic activities for the causal mediation of the purported external world and our inner world, (2) proto-intentionality for the (a) causal mediation of non-epistemic activities and epistemic activities as well as for the (b) generation of unified wholes which can be

conceptualized, and (3) epistemic activities which produce experience as we know it. The fact that we have a logical space of reasons makes it possible for us to have knowledge. The fact that we must rely on sensible forms of intuition and a productive imagination for that knowledge means that we have only incomplete, fallible knowledge. One who misses the significance of those conclusions might see the situation in the following way: Perhaps our conceptions of our selves will be incomplete, as will be our conception of the world, only until that final moment when doubt is impossible because truth is at hand. At that point, we would know completely not only who we are, but we would also know completely the world which we inhabit. Of course, if Kant is right about our capacities, that end of inquiry will never be reached.

The conclusion, at this point, must be not that scientific objects are real (though, of course, I did not demonstrate that they are not real), but that all the objects of conceptualization, perceptible or theoretical, manifest or explanatory, are products of reachings-out, among other things. Whether perceived or postulated by means of an inquiry, objects are the result of our community and individual capacities. Because of the limitations of those capacities, we cannot see beyond the current moment of inquiry to its objective end. Moreover, we cannot even say whether the end-point of inquiry is not itself a conceptualized object, since it is not itself experienced. Reality itself must retain the status of a hypostatized thing.

Nevertheless, inasmuch as a person, as a purposive agent, can conceive of her own ends, she can construct her own account of how things across wide expanses of her conceptual framework hang together. Each person, in using concepts and language in her transactions with her environment, does conceive of possibilities and purposes. Since our conception of objects of experience necessarily depends on the conceptualizing of the unified structures generated by acts of that productive imagination, the conceptual space shared by members of a conceptual community, though public, may have variations of arrangement from individual to individual. The result is a variety of interpretative schemes. Those schemes constitute the unique notions of reality that individual persons have. They also account for the differences in approaches to reaching toward the end of inquiry.

## Conclusion

### **Summary**

My purpose was to determine the precise character and form of the problem of meaning. My arguments should not have been taken, collectively or otherwise, as offering a definition of "meaning", but only to show how a number of problematic areas are related and that they should be connected in an adequate conception of the problem of meaning. The search for criteria for the definition of most words generally involves determining the ordinary way a familiar word is used, i.e., it generally involves "saving the appearances". However, I began by following Quine's lead: there is no way to determine the familiar use of an old notion (i.e., the notion of meaning) -- in this case because there was no familiar, clear, or perspicuous approach to meaning. What I discussed instead was a collection of closely related notions which, together and probably only together, could bring out the salient features of the notion of meaning. Among those notions were those of intentionality, representation, intensionality, extensionality, the productive imagination, incompleteness, and inquiry.

I argued that any conception of the problem of meaning should appeal to the notion of intentional representations and I gave a general account of what an intentional representation is. Preliminary to that argument was one for delimiting meaning as intentional, which relied heavily on Sellars' anti-foundationalist attack on the myth of the given. Following Sellars, I argued that no account of meaning can be purely behavioristic if that is to exclude meaning from the conceptual realm. To leave out concepts is to leave out any basis for explanation of behavior as motivated by purposes. Movement within the conceptual framework of a purposive agent was found to be essential to understanding the content of both perceptual judgments and experiencings of linguistic meaning.

Next, I offered a proposal for the form to which any meaning content must conform. While an account of the intentionality of experience need not appeal to relations between a person, a thing, and a quality (see Sellars, 1963, 142), the only available kinds of accounts of meaning -- intensional and extensional - - appeal to the notion of representation, where representation is such a triadic relation. However, neither intensional and extensional interpretations were able to account for the nature each attributed to

representation: objectivity.

The trouble with intensionality was that it is not clear in what sense linguistic roles are the same for members of a linguistic community. The trouble with extensionality was that, where holding some empirical statement to be true amounts to a commitment to the reality of the logical subject of that empirical statement, there is no way to account for how any such statement picks out the real object represented by the subject of that statement. Hence, the final part of my project involved arguing that the connection between meaning and conceptual frameworks is overgrown by ontological issues as a result of a concern with objectivity. At the least, the problems of intensional and extensional interpretations of meaning, respectively, involve the existence of abstract, linguistic roles, on the one hand, and connections between symbols and objective, extra-linguistic objects, on the other hand.

The first step in treating those problems -- and, hence, of reaching a suitable notion of representation -- was to demonstrate that the notion of purposeful agents implicit in the notion of intentionality was inadequate. It was considered inadequate because it entails that purposeful agents are complete. The notion of incompleteness used as a corrective construed purposeful agents as being inclined *both* toward experiential wholes which contain meaning and toward establishing and unifying beliefs which resolve pangs of doubt, whether such doubt is of a moral or scientific sort. The former inclination, i.e., toward experiential wholes, held the answer to what form the problem of meaning should take, whatever particular theory may be developed at a later time. It was argued that formulation of the problem of meaning should involve that necessary element, intentionality, in the mediation of the intensional and extensional elements.

The productive imagination was found to be a crucial part of that structure of conceptions of "meaning" in providing the substance of my account of the notion of representation. The productive imagination furnishes the unified structures which, rather than public, physical objects, are the purely extensional elements of meanings. Note that this is not to say that one could find public objects without a language. Rather, it is merely to say that if one's forms of intuition are sensible and if one requires concepts "organize" sense impressions such that some object is known, one will need those

non-conceptual, but more-than-merely-sensible unified structures, those spatio-temporal othernesses. Further, the intensional element was found to inhere in the conceptual framework, becoming more than a mere may-be only when embodied in the proto-intentional, unified structures. Finally, intentionality itself was found to be a product of persons' incomplete conception of self, reaching-out toward objects not yet conceptualized, and inclination to engage in inquiry. Thus, those three elements of extensionality, intensionality, and intentionality, give the structure of any particular cognitive and conceptual representation. Of course, they do not, together or separately, constitute the content of representations.

One finds meaning in one's conception of one's own existence, though, just as one finds momentary completeness in the experiential wholes of the moment. That "meaning in one's conception of one's own existence", which is constituted by our actions and imagining, forms the broader, overall representation within which fit the particular representations of the moment. Neither do those actions and imaginings occur in isolation. Rather, they occur in front of the backdrop of a conception of external reality. External reality, in this picture, is simply the backdrop in front of which any particular belief, action, or purpose occurs.

I did not intend such an account to be a proof of the existence of certain objects of the external world, of course. Rather, part of my message is that individuals as individuals hardly need such a proof considering that the world conceived of as the external world offers an explanation for one's inner world. One's own experience is as much constituted by interpretation across the stories in which we live our lives, which yields the inner and external worlds of persons, as it is by that interpretation which occurs upon immediate confrontation (with the unified structures involved in either "perceiving of" or "perceiving as") and which yields the momentary experiential wholes. That is, schemes of external reality are used to make sense of one's self-conception. Hence, a proof of the existence of the external world is not needed for a conception of the external world to be operative in our daily lives.

On the other hand, the grander reaching-out for such a proof is characteristic of persons. With respect to individuals as members of a community, the inclination to engage in inquiry partially defines persons

as persons. Hence, that sense of wonder which is correlative with inquiry and the reaching-out quality of our incompleteness should be part of any conception of the problem of meaning when "meaning" is construed broadly. While it may turn out that realism is correct and transcendental idealism wrong, we would be wholly different beings were we to be made complete either through arriving at a secure and stable conception of ourselves or by arriving at a secure and stable conception of external reality. Meaning, for those beings who do have secure and stable conceptions of their inner and external worlds, if there are any such beings (is it possible for us to become such beings?), would certainly not have the form of intentional representations, as I have argued that meaning has for us. Since we cannot say what the experiential wholes of such beings would be like, we cannot say what meaning might consist in for such beings. The kind of being we are is constitutive of the notion of meaning we use. Hence, another account of meaning would have to be given when, and it would have to wait until, we reach that end of inquiry, should such a complete whole be possible.

### **Language of meaning**

Talk of the descriptive content of experience no longer need involve talk of physical objects. The terms of a Peircean phenomenological analysis of representation, the productive imagination, and objects of perception can be substituted for terms the use of which commit us to the existence of physical or imperceptible explanatory objects. While the use of such objects was made part and parcel of an account of experience, we can now talk about experience in terms which are the proper analysands of intentional representations. For example, instead of talking of red triangles which are physical objects, we can now talk of meanings having a certain intensional quality, a certain extensional otherness, and an intentionality which mediates between the former two elements. Since conceptualizing can now be construed as the mediation of proto-intentional, unified structures and intensional qualities, the of-ness of conceptualizing is no longer unanalyzable. It is no more reducible to extensional elements than before, where such reduction would result in simple extensionality, as opposed to attributes. At the same time, it is no longer derivative of the objects which are sometimes represented in overt speech episodes.

If we accept the picture of there being a framework of reaching-out and a framework of complete

objects, we gain the ability to distinguish between varieties of "of-ness" on the one hand, and varieties of objects, on the other. In doing so, we would be able then to talk *of* a particular variety of "of-ness", which would be the result of a felt need for such "of-ness" entities. However, no resulting problem emerges in the picture presented. We are free to make such "of-nesses" into objects (I do just that in talking "about" the proto-intentionality of unified structures.). Of-ness entities, however, are really objects of the framework of objects. Since the framework itself recognizes the state-of-affairs of persons' being directed toward objects, if we portray processes of reachings-out as objects, we do not violate the picture, but validate it. The result is our receiving a license to talk about the descriptive content of experience in terms of processes, which, though we objectify them, are still reflected in the picture as a whole.

It is now possible to see the problem of meaning differently. Our talk of public objects, whether they be physical things or linguistic roles, must be tempered by recognition that our incompleteness makes us dependent on the productive imagination for unified structures in virtue of which we conceive of objects of experience. That is because justification of the position that we have access to public objects other than through acts of the productive imagination is, of course, problematic.

Nevertheless, the intensional qualities, which, in conceivings, are embodied in the proto-intentional, unified structures, might be cashed-out in terms of physical objects. That is because notions of physical objects are part of our conceptual framework and intensions are expressed in terms of positions in our conceptual framework. However, since variations can arise in interpretation due to the mediation between the inner and outer worlds by the productive imagination, we cannot expect either others' perceptual judgments or their understanding of linguistic expressions to be exactly the same as ours. While that does not mean that it is meaningless to talk of meanings, wide variations may arise. To the extent that an individual person has individual capacities, which include that proto-intentionality of the unified structures generated by the productive imagination, those unified structures which are constructed and eventually conceptualized will be unique. Of course, the conceptual framework used to interpret those unified structures will be approximately the same for the members of the community. However, variations in interpretation can arise due to each individual's having a unique productive

imagination which constructs unified structures to be conceptualized as something according to roughly approximate background beliefs. Nevertheless, such indeterminacy is given limits in practice by our sharing the characteristics of identical forms of intuitions, incomplete conceptions of ourselves, predispositions for reaching-out toward objects not yet conceptualized, and our inclinations to engage in inquiry.

It is in virtue of our sharing those characteristics that the three issues not addressed in Quine's account are addressed in my account. That is, those characteristics account for the possibility of our sharing the knowledge of others' personal experience. Also, observation sentences correspond to observation in virtue of the productive imagination, which generates unified structures to which we respond to with conceptions by conceptualizing the unified structures as objects. Similarly, the account of intentional representations allows for an analysis of the meaningful resolution of patterns.

### **The three pragmatists**

The conclusion reached seems to favor Sellars and Peirce to the exclusion of Quine. To the extent that that appearance is true, it is a result of the fact that Peirce and Sellars thought that experience involves non-extensional elements. In a way, though, that appearance is incorrect. The account given has of course taken up the theme of intentionality and has fused that notion to itself, which would have been rejected by Quine. To that extent, claims that Quine is a pragmatist are incorrect. Of course, he argued for pragmatic considerations in constructing scientific theories, but pragmatic considerations are certainly not necessarily pragmatistic considerations. By rejecting intentionality, Quine rejected such considerations as the purposes and conceptions which persons use in adjusting to, and in adjusting, their environment. In doing so, Quine rejected a large part of what pragmatism is.

Nevertheless, the conception of the problem of meaning reached in the end bears some resemblance to Quine's notion of empirical meaning. That notion was that there is something shared by observation sentences and observation: empirical meaning. Nevertheless, there is a significant difference between my account of empirical meaning and what hints Quine gave on the subject: where Quine saw the error being made by philosophers of language in trying to locate a meaning entity to be the result of an

object-directedness of language, I have claimed that it is the object-directedness of incomplete consciousness (though, since the determination that our consciousness is incomplete is dependent on language, my point is less of a correction than an addition). Hence, my account could be said to be a pragmatically enlightened version of Quine's.

Of course, with respect to the three issues raised in the first chapter, with regard to the pairings of the three pragmatists, I have sided with Peirce on all counts: whether there are non-extensional elements of experience; whether the content of experience can be considered to be real, such that it is not reducible, ultimately, to scientific entities and their behavior (e.g., not reducible into physiological or behavioral terms); and whether an account of experiences in general is to be given ideally within a single framework like Peirce's logic of experience. Peirce would have given an affirmative response to each of those questions and so have I done. One might wonder, as a result, why I did not give more attention to Peirce. That question has already been answered: an account of Peirce's realism, which is necessary to an adequate account of his philosophy, drags with it an extensive metaphysics, which could not be treated sufficiently here. The compromise was to discuss his analysis of phenomena with respect to Kant's productive imagination.

Finally, despite the fact that the conclusions reached here are very different from those reached by Sellars, it turned out that he had the greatest influence on this project. Not only was he a foil for many of my arguments, but his careful analysis of the ground I tried to march across was the map I used in covering the territory. Nevertheless, I felt that there were possibilities not explored in "Empiricism" which should be considered in any adequate account of meaning. Were I to have had the luxury to discuss some of his other work in that related area, I might have found his opinion in that later work (1967) to be more favorable to my explorations and findings.

### **Future inquiry**

For practical reasons, this project was limited to consideration of a few pragmatists. Future research might take the form of comparing the results reached here with other perspectives that might have influenced this project in reaching some other result. Also, applications of my results might take the

form of finding whether pragmatist conceptions actually can conform to the criterion given here. Most importantly, future inquiry might take the form of formulating a definition of "meaning" which conforms to the conception of the problem of meaning delineated in this thesis.

In excluding other pragmatists, the especially significant work of one philosopher, which this project parallels, was left out of account altogether, that of Robert Brandom's *Making It Explicit*. In that work, Brandom takes on the challenge of providing "an account of the practices that ultimately confer explicitly *propositional* content on the states, attitudes, and performances that play appropriate roles in those practices" and an account "of what it is to make explicit in the form of something that can be *said* or *thought* what is otherwise merely implicit in what is *done*" (1994, 76-7). Unfortunately, I was too far into this project before I discovered Brandom's book.

Any application or further development of the project of this thesis should first take into account and evaluate the merits of Brandom's work since it covers what was intended here. As he wrote, "it is a further criterion of adequacy of this [i.e., his] explanatory enterprise that it have something to say about the lower grades of intentionality" (1994, 7). That would involve, Brandom wrote, asking the questions of "How can linguistic abilities arise out of nonlinguistic ones?" and "What would sentient creatures have to be able to do in order to count as sapient as well?" (Brandom, 1994, 7). Sketches of answers to those question are found in my project, but Brandom's fuller account would be useful in developing my own and in uncovering any errors in my account that might be avoided in Brandom's.