This is a paper defending myself that has been prepared for blind review, so I refer to myself strangely in the third-person throughout. The final version of the essay will be written in the first-person.

Nominalism as Conceptual Phenomenalism:
A Clarification and Defense of a Reading of Sellars

Ryan Simonelli

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1 Introduction

One of the most striking and puzzling features of Wilfrid Sellars's metaphysical vision is his austere ontological nominalism, according to which the world, as it is in itself, is a world of particulars, containing no general entities such as properties, relations, or kinds. According to Sellars, universals can be said to "exist," but they exist only "as represented" in thought and language, and thus cannot be said to *really* exist. In the reception of Sellars's philosophy, this is perhaps the one aspect that has gotten the least traction among sympathizers of Sellars. Indeed, commentators on opposite sides of dividing lines in Sellars exegesis—so-called "left-Sellarsians," like Brandom and McDowell, and "right-Sellarsians" like Dennett and Millikan—seem united in rejecting this aspect of Sellars's philosophy. In recent years there has been a renewed interest among Sellars scholars in developing a sympathetic interpretation of this radical aspect of Sellars's philosophy. In a number of papers, Simonelli (2021, 2025, forthcoming) develops what Brandom (M.S.) calls "conceptual phenomenalist" reading of Sellars's nominalism, according to which properties and relations are to be categorized as belonging to the "phenomenal world" of conceptual contents, but not the "noumenal world" of concrete material happenings. In his recent paper, "Nominalism about Universals and Idealism about Phenomena (共相唯名论与现象唯心论)," Chen Liang (梁辰) criticizes this conceptual phenomenalist interpretation, arguing that this way of articulating Sellars's nominalism fundamentally misunderstands crucial aspects of Sellars's philosophy, running together distinctions that are meant to be kept apart.[1] In this paper, I clarify the conceptual phenomenalist interpretation of Sellars's nominalism and defend it against Liang's criticisms.

[1] All translations of this paper from Chinese to English are my own, though I have consulted with Liang on some of them (including the title).

2 Sellars, Brandom, Simonelli, and Liang on Saying and Doing

Liang's paper has three parts: (1) a reconstruction of the uncontroversial features of Sellars's nominalism, (2) a discussion of Brandom's (2015) criticism of Sellars and a criticism of Simonelli's defense of Sellars against that criticism, and, (3) criticism of the broader metaphysical picture in which Simonelli places Sellars nominalism, which Brandom characterizes as "conceptual phenomenalism." This paper will primarily focus on (3), as it is of the most interest and it is where the deepest potential disagreement between Simonelli and Liang lies. In this section, I will briefly discuss (1) and (2) to situate the reader in the dialectic before turning to (3).

Let us start with Sellars's basic strategy for making nominalism possible, first explicated most explicitly in "Abstract Entities" (1). The basic strategy is to show that our apparent talk of abstract entities, which seems to commit us to their existence, can be understood in terms of covert expressions of rules governing the use of functionally-characterized linguistic expressions. Talk of universals, in particular, is re-articulated as covert expressions of the rules governing the use of (functionally-characterized) predicates. For instance, consider the sentence "Squareness necessitates quadrilaterality" which seems to state that a connection of necessity obtains between two universals. This is understood, on Sellars's account, as an expression of the norms governing the use of "square" and "quadrilateral," or, indeed, any expressions that play, in their language, the role that "square" and "quadrilateral" play in English. To talk about classes tokens of linguistic expressions that play the role, in their language, that tokens of "square" play in English, Sellars introduces the convention of dot-quoting. The term •square• is a kind term that applies to English "square"s, Chinese "正方形"s, spanish "cuadrado"s, and any other token that plays the same functional role in its language as these token expressions play in theirs. With this terminological convention, Sellars is able to analyze "Squareness necessitates quadrilaterality" as a covert expression of the norms governing the use of •square•s and •quadrilaterals•, namely, that the former commits one to the latter. Likewise, the sentence "Squareness is a property" is understood as a covert way of expressing a syntactic classification, namely, that •square•s are adjectival predicates. In this way, Sellars is able to make sense of our talk of properties without appealing to anything but functionally-characterized linguistic items, the use of which is regimented by property-talk.

Now, for Sellars, this this metalinguistic expressivist analysis of property-talk is

but one ingredient in an austere ontological nominalist metaphysical picture, one according to which the world, as it is in itself, really contains no such thing as properties. However, Brandom (2015) influentially objects endorses this analysis of property-talk is while maintaining realism about properties, and, indeed, going as far as to say that Sellars's ontological nominalism is ultimately incoherent. According to Brandom, Sellars's metalinguistic analysis of the function of property talk is a good account of what we're *doing* when we talk of properties, but it fails to give an account of what we're *saying*. Brandom maintains that, when we say "Squareness necessitates quadrilaterality," although what we are *doing* is expressing a semantic norm, what we are *saying* is something about the properties of squareness and quadralarity, namely, that they stand in a relation of necessitation. Brandom goes further to suggest that we need to appeal to properties in order to make sense of what are saying even when we make ordinary predicative statements like "The canvas is a square." If there is no such thing as the property of being a square, what could we be saying about it when we say of it that it's a square? It seems like the only answer to this question could be "nothing," but that, of course, is absurd. Brandom thus maintains that even if we accept Sellars's metalinguistic analysis of the pragmatic function of property-talk, we should nevertheless still endorse the traditional metaphysical picture according to which predicates express properties and relations, and these things really exist in the world in the only sense of "really exist in the world" there is.

In response to Brandom's criticism, Simonelli (2021) argues that while Brandom is right that Sellars's metalinguistic expressivist analysis of property talk does not *entail* ontological nominalism, Sellars has all of the resources available to him needed to coherently maintain this austere ontological view, and, indeed, these are the very resources developed by Brandom. The crucial Sellarsian idea needed to respond to the challenge above, spelled out in *Naturalism and Ontology* (1979), is to distinguish between "nothing" and "no thing." Simonelli argues on behalf of Sellars that, indeed, when we say of something that it's a "square," there is, indeed, no *thing* we are saying about it, not ultimately at least. After all, there ultimately *are no* properties on Sellars's account. But this doesn't mean there is *nothing* one says about it. What one says about it is *that it's square*. The crucial thought is that the semantic significance of "that it's square" is not to be analyzed in terms of some *thing* that this expression *picks out* (a property that can be predicated of things), but in terms of

what uttering this expression *does*, normatively speaking, in a language in which it is used, committing one to some other utterances, precluding one from being entitled to others, and so on. This is precisely the sort of semantic theory that Brandom provides in his other work drawing on Sellars and it is precisely what is needed to respond to his own criticism of Sellars.

This brings us to Liang's intervention in the debate in the second part of his paper. Liang objects to Simonelli's on the ground that, by prioritizing pragmatic function over semantic content, "doing" over "saying," Simonelli loses the sense in which language use is "conceptual activity (概念活动)" rather than mere "social behavior (社交行为)." On Liang's reading, the problematic conception of language use shared by both Brandom and Simonelli involves *distinguishing* saying and doing in the context of linguistic activity, when, in fact, they should be understood as fundamentally *unified*. As he puts it, "At the most basic level of language, 'saying' and 'doing' are one and the same, (167).[2] This is certainly true for Sellars. However, this is precisely the point of Simonelli aims to be making in response to Brandom (though he doesn't put it as clearly as Liang does here). On Sellars's inferentialist conception of conceptual content, most explicitly articulated in "Inference and Meaning" (1953), to say that p is to make a move in conceptual space, one that can be articulated in terms of the inferential relations that it bears to other such moves. To articulate such an account is to articulate what one *says*, in saying that p, in terms of what one *does*, for instance, committing oneself to q, precluding oneself to from being entitled to r, and so on. The making of such a conceptual move is done in language, and thus, is a social move. However, is not conceived of here as the sort of mere "social behavior" that might be of concern to the behavioral psychologist, for it is understood in irreducibly normative terms.

So, as I understand the debate, there is no real disagreement between Liang and Simonelli concerning Sellars's position on saying and doing. There is, however, still a deep disagreement between Liang and Simonelli concerning the basic metaphysical picture in which Sellars's nominalism is to be placed. That is the topic to which I now turn.

[2]在语言的最基础层面，"说"和"做"只是一事。

3 The Conceptual Phenomenalist Reading of Sellars

In *Naturalism and Ontology*, Sellars states his position on the existence of properties as follows:

> [A]lthough there are attributes, there *really* are no attributes. It will be remembered that the qualification 'really' indicates that a philosophical point is being made, for in the ordinary sense of 'really,' of course, there really are attributes, (1979, 41).

So, although properties exist, they do not *really* exist. In "Sellars's Ontological Nominalism" Simonelli (2021) interprets this claim as indicating a (capital-P) "Platonic" metaphysical picture. This terminology is perhaps a bit confusing, since Sellars, of course, is not a metaphysical platonist—he does not think that universals really exist. Simonelli's thought, however, is that Sellars's basic metaphysical picture may nevertheless be regarded as *structurally like Plato's* in that there is a fundamental distinction between the "world of appearances" and the real world that causally explains the existence and structure of the world of appearances. Though this likening of Sellars to Plato might seem strange given that their first-order positions are so different, it is largely motivated Sellars's deployment of a metaphor made famous in metaphysics by Plato: shadows. The metaphor of shadow is deployed by Sellars repeatedly in his writing on universals. His most direct statement of his view on universals with the use of this metaphor perhaps comes in "Language, Rules, and Behavior." There, he agrees with the "rationalist" that "a universal is an item characterized by its place in a structure of universals and, indeed, that this structure is a system of real connections" (1949, 130), but he then goes on to say, of these real connections, "They are the shadows of [linguistic] rules" (132). The Platonic interpretation, then, is to say that, when Sellars says that universals exist but do not really exist, what he means is that they exist in the world of appearances, of shadows cast by linguistic norms, but they do not exist in the real world in which the material linguistic practices themselves, which are casting the shadows, belong.

Simonelli further spells out this interpretation in "Sellars's Two Worlds," there drawing more on Sellars's own articulation of his basic metaphysical picture in the terms set out by Kant. Kant's metaphysical system fundamentally involves a distinction between *phenomena* or *appearances*, on the one hand, and the *noumena* or *things in themselves*, on the other. Now, there is a debate in Kant scholarship as

to whether this distinction is to be understood as two distinct *aspects* of a single domain of objects (how they appear to us and how they are in themselves) or two distinct *domains* of objects (appearances being the kind of object belonging to the first domain and things in themselves being the kind of object belonging to the second). Simonelli claims that Sellars's version of Kantianism is a "two-worlds" Kantianism, and the objects that constitute the world of appearances, on Sellars's view, are *conceptual contents*: the sort of things which constitute the basic ontology of Sellars's two most prominent successors at Pittsburgh, Robert Brandom and John McDowell. For Brandom and McDowell, the world just is a world of conceptual conceptual contents: things of the sort that one can think. Crucially, the world of conceptual contents includes the *general* contents of predicative and propositional thoughts: properties and propositions. On Simonelli's "two-worlds" interpretation, Sellars agrees with Brandom and McDowell that there is *a* world of conceptual contents, but this world is, in the Kantian sense, *phenomenal*, contrasted with the *noumenal* world which consists in nothing but *particulars*, including the particular "languagings" that account for the existence of the phenomenal world of conceptual contents. This interpretation is motivated by an attempt to situation the basic metaphysical distinction that Sellars draws between, on the one hand, what he calls "the *conceptual* order," and, on the other hand, what he calls "the *real* order," (Sellars 1960; 1968; 1979). The most striking statement of his stark disagreement with Brandom and McDowell who maintain, with early Wittgenstein, that the world consists of a totality of facts comes in Naturalism and Ontology.

> [P]ace Wittgenstein, the extra-linguistic domain consists of objects, not facts. To put it bluntly, propositional form belongs only in linguistic and conceptual orders (1979, 61-62).

The idea that, for Sellars, this distinction between the conceptual, on the one hand, and the real, on the other, fundamentally aligns with the Kantian distinction with the phenomenal and the noumenal. Brandom (M.S.) calls this Kantian position attributed to Sellars by Simonelli "conceptual phenomenalism," distinguishing it from his own Hegelian "conceptual realism" (Brandom 2019).[3] This is a good coinage,

[3]Brandom's interpretation of Sellars as having this "conceptual phenomenalist" view is a recent development in his reading of Sellars (for instance, there is no indication that Brandom takes Sellars to have a view of this sort in his 2015 book on Sellars). This recent development in Brandom's interpretation of Sellars is largely owed to his interactions with Simonelli in the years since Simonelli was a visitor at Pittsburgh in 2019 (personal correspondence). Brandom's most sustained discussion

and I will henceforth use it to refer to the conception of Sellars's metaphysical view defended by Simonelli. Having stated the view, let us now turn to Liang's criticism of it.

4 Addressing Liang's Criticism of Conceptual Phenomenalism

The core of Liang's criticism concerns the status of the following three Sellarsian distinctions:

1. The conceptual and the real.
2. The phenomenal and the noumenal.
3. The manifest image and the scientific image.

I discussed the first two distinctions above in articulating the conceptual phenomenalist reading. However, it is the third distinction, laid out in Sellars's manifesto "Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man," that is the most famous one from Sellars, and so it is worth considering to what extent these three distinction do or do not align in Sellars's thinking. It is, indeed, the essence of the conceptual phenomenalist view to align (1) and (2). However, Liang reads Simonelli as thereby aligning (1) and (2), on the one hand, with (3), on the other:

> Simonelli interprets Sellars' nominalism as the idea that the "world as it appears" is a world of facts with propositional structure, while the "world as it is" in itself is a world of pure particulars. In this way, nominalism is false in the "manifest image" but true in the "scientific image."[4]

Many discussion of Sellars's Kantianism, for instance, that of O'Shea (2018), explicitly align (2) and (3). Thus, if one aligns (1) and (2), as Simonelli does, it is natural to infer that one also aligns (2) and (3), and thus aligns (1) and (3). Liang rightly points, however, that one should *not* align (1) and (3): the question of realism vs. nominalism, as Sellars understands it, is orthogonal to the distinction between the

of this interpretation is in his course notes for Week 11 of his 2023 course "Sellars as Metaphysician" for which he acknowledges that he is using Simonelli's "Sellars's Two Worlds" as a guide.

[4]西门内里就将塞拉斯的唯名论解读为这样的想法: "如其显现"的世界是一个由具有命题结构的事实的世界，而"如其所是"的世界自身则是纯粹殊相的世界。如此，则唯名论在"显白的图景"为假，而在"科学的图景"为真。

manifest and the scientific image, and thus, any interpretation that aligns the answer to the former question with the latter distinction, is wrong.

Liang makes two important points here. First, Sellars often frames his arguments for ontological nominalism within the context of the ontology of the manifest image, using examples of such things as lions and colors, which are not fundamental constituents of the scientific image (168). This clearly suggests that Sellars takes it that ultimately, nominalism is the correct ontology even for objects of the manifest image. Indeed, even if manifest objects (understood as colored spatio-temporal entities) don't really exist as Sellars wants to claim, this is independent of their being categorized in accordance with an ontology of objects, properties, and relations. On the other hand, it also seems clear that Sellars has no objection to the use vocabulary of universals even in the context of the scientific image.[5] One can surely say such things as "One of the properties of electrons is that they have negative charge." In the context of scientific practice, such a statement is perfectly in order, and, indeed, Sellars would not necessarily object to saying, as Liang does, that "the task of theoretical science is to discover the 'real' universals—that is, the set of universals instantiated by our world," (169).[6] So, the distinction between the conceptual and the real, on the one hand, and the manifest image and scientific image, on the other, ought to be understood as orthogonal distinctions, cutting across each other. Liang nicely sums up this orthogonality as follows:

> If Sellars' scientific realism is correct, then the universals of the scientific image are real, while those of the manifest image are not. But if nominalism about universals is correct, then no universals in any image are real. These two claims are not contradictory, because the two uses of the term "real" operate on different levels: The first concerns whether a set of predicates correctly describes the world. The second concerns whether predicates, as such, refer to entities, (169).[7]

This is wonderfully put, but it only constitutes an argument against the conceptual phenomenalist reading of Sellars insofar as the conceptual phenomenalist aligns the conceptual/real distinction with the manifest image/scientific image distinction. At

[5] See especially Sellars (1963b) on this point.

[6] 理论科学的任务就在于发现"真实" 的共相，即为我们这个世界所例示的那一组共相。

[7] 如果塞拉斯的科学实在论是正确的，那么科学图景中的共相实在而显白图景中的共相不实在；而若共相唯名论是正确的，那么在一切世界图景中，共相则都不实在。两个说法并不矛盾，因为两个"实在" 不是在一个层次上说的：前者说的是某一套谓词是否正确地描述世界；后者说的是一般而言谓词是否指称实体。

least as I have stated it so far, conceptual phenomenalism is in principle comaptible with rejecting the alignment of this distinction. That is to say, the conceptual phenomenalist can maintain that, even in the context of scientific inquiry, we can distinguish between the *world of conceptual contents* conferred by the scientific vocabulary, which contains theoretical universals expressed by theoretical predicates, and the *world of non-conceptual entities* that is correctly described the the use of those predicates on particular occasions, which contains only particulars. Thus, even *within* the "scientific image," we can draw a distinction between the phenomenal/conceptual, on the one hand, and the noumenal/real on the other.[8]

So, conceptual phenomnalism is not, as such, incompatible with Liang's central point. Still, does Simonelli's specific articulation of conceptual phenomenalism run foul of it? Simonelli doesn't centrally deploy the vocabulary of the "manifest image" and "scientific image" in his articulation of Sellars's view.[9] However, where he does use this vocabulary in his earlier paper, "Sellars's Ontological Nominalism," he unfortunately does seem to align the manifest image with the conceptual and the scientific image with the real, claiming that it is part of the ontology of the manifest image that it include properties and relations (2021,1047). However, in "Sellars's Two Worlds," he is careful not to align these two distinctions, articulating them as orthogonal in a way similar to Liang's point above, writing:

> [T]here's an important distinction to be drawn between the scientific *image*, which, as Sellars says, is to be understood as something like a conceptual scheme and so whose constituents are essentially thinkable, and the actual noumenal world, whose structure is uncovered through scientific theorizing but which, as I'll explain below, can only be pictured and not thought, (2025, 247 n. 22).

Here, Simonelli is essentially agreeing with Liang's core point. The scientific image, understood as something like a conceptual scheme, contains universals, and these universals can be said to be the "real" ones in that the predicates that ascribe them correctly describe the world. Yet they are not "real" in that the world, as it is in itself,

[8]Note that "real," in this sentence, signifies Liang's *second* disambiguation of "real".

[9]This follows Sellars's own usage. Though he makes the terms famous in his essay "Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man," he almost never uses them in his other writings. One possible explanation for this fact has to do with the fact, already pointed out, that PSIM is, in an important sense, a *manifesto*. In this context, it is plausible that Sellars might have sacrificed a bit of precision for vividness, and thus, the terms "manifest image" and "scientific image," though suggestive, are not ultimately the best set of terms for carefully articulating Sellars's metaphysical view.

contains no universals but only particulars.

Now, in order to make sense of how it is that, in attempting to articulate the world as it is in itself, we can *still* speak of predicates as correctly describing the world even if we do not think of them as really expressing properties, Simonelli here emphasizes an important distinction in Sellars that Liang does not discuss: that between *signifying* and *picturing* (Sellars 196). Though the above quoted passage from Liang is surely correct, it's worth being clear that, from the perspective of Sellars's nominalism, the sense in "a set of predicates correctly describes the world" is in the sense that concrete uses of those predicates on particular occasions they correctly *picture* the elements in it. Picturing is a relation that obtains between elements of the real order, particular languagings (utterances of simple sentences) on the one hand, and extra-linguistic objects, on the other. Such languagings are said to picture these objects insofar as the pattens they stand to other languagings correspond holistically "in accordance with a fantastically complex system of rules of projection, [to] the manner in which the objects occur in the world," (TC 47). Showing how Sellars has the resources to spell out these different "manner"s in which "objects occur in the world" in a way that is nominalistically acceptable is one of the main tasks undertaken by Simonelli (2021), which Liang also takes issue with, and to which I now turn.

5 The Ultimate Ontology of the Real

One remaining puzzle for any attempt to make sense of Sellars's austere ontological nominalism is how we could make sense of scientific vocabulary as accurately describing things in the world as it is in itself, if these things *don't have any features!* The idea of correctly describing a featureless reality can seem well nigh incoherent. Simonelli (2021) argues that it is Sellars's process ontology, not explicitly endorsed until late in his career, that is the key aspect of his philosophical vision enabling him to coherently sustain his austere ontological nominalism. In this final section, I'll clarify and defend this aspect of Simoneli's reading from Liang's criticisms. Though this claim about the process ontology is not part of conceptual phenomenalism as such, it is an essential ingredient in Simonelli's attempt to show that Sellars's conceptual phenomenalist version of nomianlism is indeed intelligible.

Of course, as Liang points out, nominalism is not Sellars's own principle rea-

son for adopting the process ontology he did late in his career. His most explicit reason has to do with the supposed "homogeneity" of sensory experience, which Sellars thought only a process ontology could accommodate (Sellars 1981a, 1981b). Simonelli acknowledges this, but it is beside the point. The point of Simonelli's invocation of Sellars's process ontology in defending Sellars's nominalism is not to make the exegetical claim that this is the reason Sellars endorses a process ontology, but, rather, to argue Sellars's final philosophical picture, which is that of a world of particular material happenings, is coherent (regardless of what Sellars's avowed reasons for arriving there actually are). Simonelli's suggestion is that, regardless of whether Sellars himself saw things this way, his nominalism is in fact a much *better* reason to endorse an ontology of pure process than the homeogeneity of sensory experience.[10]

Liang claims, in opposition to Simonelli's suggestion, that emphasizing Sellars's process ontology as part of his solution to the problem of universals misses the point:

> The real crux of the problem of universals lies in how we are to understand the fact of "something's having some property," regardless of what category the property-bearing entity belongs to. If the relation between an object and its property calls for a Platonic explanation, then so too does the relation between an absolute process and its property, (168).[11]

But to say this is to underestimate the extent of Sellars's conceptual holism, which applies not just to *material* concepts, but also *categorical* concepts. That is to say, the categorical concept expressed by the term "property" (insofar as we continue to use this term), in the context of a process ontology, is *distinct* from the categorical concept expressed by this term in the context of an ontology of objects, properties, and relations. So there is not a single, univocal question about how we are to understand the meaning of "something has some property," across these different categorical ontologies. The crucial thought is that, in the context of a process ontology, we do not have the same sort of problematic bifurcation between particulars and generals that we have in an object/property ontology. So, whereas, in an object/property there is the problematic question of the nature of the "something's having some property"

[10] Sellars late views on how "sensa" are to be located in the scientific image is one aspect of Sellars's philosophy I continue to find unpersuasive, but for a sympathetic reconstruction of this argument see Landy (2019).

[11] 共相问题的症结仍然在于"某物有某性" 这件事情应当如何理解，而不论有性质的东西属于什么范畴。如果物体及其性质的关系要通过柏拉图主义来解释，那么绝对过程与其性质的关系亦莫能外。

relation, in the context of pure process ontology, there *is no* such relation. A particular φ-ing's being sortable *as a φ-ing* is not distinct from its being *the particular φ-ing that it is*, doing, in its particular activity, what φ-ing's do.

Simonelli takes it that this ontological picture cuts across levels of scientific articulation, applying not just to the micro-physical happenings described by fundamental physics, but, just as well, to the macro-physical happenings, described, for instance, by zoology. He considers the example of lions:

> According to this picture, something's being a lion is not its instantiating the general kind lionhood. Rather, it is its doing what lions do, being the locus of the patterns of processes that unfold in the world whenever you have a lion. So, to be a lion is to eat gazelles, to bear live young, to reflect light with a certain frequency, and so on. In this context, the criteria for the application of the sortal term "lion" to some particular lion, conceived of in terms of the pattern of processes that unfolds whenever you have a lion, can be articulated directly in terms of these processes, (2021, 1053).

Liang points out that this description, insofar as it is meant to be a description of a lion as a locus of pure processes, is not quite right. Simonelli says that to be a lion do "what lions do," but, as Liang points out, "if lions are ultimately composed of absolute processes, none of those processes has the lion as its subject, because absolute processes are subjectless," (168).[12] This is quite right, and Simonelli ought to have said (something like) "to be a lion is to be the loci of the doings that collectively constitute something's being a lion-ing." That is, the lions *are* these complex zoological processes that regularly unfold in the world; they are not the *subject* of them. This is indeed crucial, since, insofar as the proposal is that the ontology of pure processes makes intelligible ontological nominalism, there can be no real distinction between a subject and its acts, since this would just be a particular case of a distinction between an object and its properties.

Simonelli proposes that Sellars's functionalist semantics can make good sense of the identity and individuation conditions of particulars in a world of pure process. The idea is that pure processes can be individuated as being different sorts of pure processes in virtue of their functional roles, in virtue of the *difference* they make in a world of other pure processes. Liang claims that, on Simonelli's picture, pure process are *purely* functional entities (169). But to say that pure processes can be articulated in functional terms is of course not to say that they are *purely* functional entities.

[12]即便狮子最终由绝对过程构成，这些过程也无一以狮子为主体，因为绝对过程无主体。

As Sellars says (and Liang references), "nothing 'consisting of mere relations' can be transcendentally real. Reality must have qualitative content as well as relational form," (1968, 57). Given a set of pure process, we can *abstract* their functional roles, and consider them as such, for instance, inferentially articulating what it is to be an electron, or (to pick an example closer to Sellars's heart) what it is to be the a qualitative experience of the note C#. To do this is to articulate the "relational form" of an electron or a C#-ing. But to do this is always a matter of *abstraction* from the concrete *material* particulars which regularly unfold in certain relationally articulable patterns. Sellars is, after all, a materialist.

One of the upshots of the appeal to the process ontology in Simonelli's discussion of Sellars's nominalism is that it enables us to locate ourselves, within the scientific image, as complex systems of processes, some of which are languagings. In the context of this ontological framework, we can individuate these different languagings as having different "contents," staying solely within an ontology of particular processes, without any appeal to general conceptual contents to which they stand in an "expressing" relation. On this account, what it is for a particular languaging to be a *saying that p*, just is for it to be a happening of a particular sort, for instance, one that excludes a saying that *q*, necessitates (under certain conditions) a saying that *r*, and so on. Once again, this is not for it to stand in an "instantiation" relation to some general kind, but, rather, simply for it, as the particular happening that it is, to make the difference that it does. Now, there is an important distinction in how we conceive of these sayings as contentful whether we are in the frame of the conceptual or the frame of the real. In the context of both of these frames, we have a functional role semantics, yet, the flavor of the functional role semantics differs. In the frame of the conceptual, we have a *normative* functional role semantics, understanding our sayings as conceptual doings, individuated by their normative role among other such doings, whereas, in the frame of the conceptual, we have a *causal* functional role semantics, understanding our sayings as material happenings, individuated by their causal role among other such happenings. Thus, though "from within" we can only conceive of our sayings as norm-governed doings, adopting the perspective "from without" we can conceive of them as patterned material happenings. In both cases, however, we agree with Liang when he says, "At the most fundamental level of language, 'saying' and 'doing' are one and the same," (167).[13]

[13]在语言的最基础层面，"说"和"做"只是一事。

6 Conclusion: The Stereoscopic Vision

Liang closes his paper by drawing attention to Sellars's "synoptic" vision, according to which "Thus the conceptual framework of persons is not something that needs to be reconciled with the scientific image, but rather something to be joined to it," (PSIM, 408). Zooming in on the fundamental issue here, there are *two* conceptions of persons that must be unified. On the one hand, as indicated above, there are persons, understood as fantastically complex systems of processes, integrated into a system of other such processes. On the other hand, there are persons, understood as the sorts of things that *we* are: thinkers, speakers, and doers. The first conception is the conception of ourselves "as from outside," articulated in the context of a scientific theory of the natural world, which, since we belong to the natural world, includes us. The second conception is the conception of ourselves articulated "from within" our own self-conception as thinkers, speakers, and doers. Sellars's claim is that it is a mistake to try to locate the second conception *within* the scientific image. We will not find ourselves, so-understood, there. Rather, the thing to do is to recognize that, although "in the dimension of describing and explaining the world, science is the measure of all things" (Sellars 1953), our total conceptual scheme is not to be exhausted by a descriptive and explanatory conception of the goings on in nature. In addition to the "dimension of describing and explaining," it must also include a *normative* dimension, and it is in this dimension that we can locate ourselves as thinkers, speakers, and doers. We are agents who hold ourselves to norms and think, speak, and do accordingly. The crucial point is that to say such a thing is not to make an empirical description of ourselves: it is, rather, to locate ourselves in the space of reasons, as those who justify and call for justifications pertaining to what we think, say, and do. Liang points out that it, in a deep sense, the problem of universals, for Sellars, is nothing other than the problem of the normative, for universals just are the codifications of linguistic norms governing the use of predicates. In general, the "world of conceptual contents" conferred by the use of a given language is, is nothing but the explicit codification, in alethic modal vocabulary, of the norms governing the use of that language. The crucial Sellarsian thought, transposed into this frame, is that the world of conceptual contents is is not to be eliminated from our conceptual scheme, nor are we to try to locate this "world of conceptual contents" in the natural world uncovered by scientific theorizing. In that sense, we can say that this world is pheneomenal, rather than noumenal. To say this is not to denigrate the world

of conceptual contents, but, rather, simply to clarify its place in our overarching philosophical picture. Conceptual phenomenalism ultimately amounts to nothing more than this clarification.

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