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The Non-Conceptual Dimension of Social Mediation: Toward a Materialist *Aufhebung* of Hegel

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ABSTRACT

Sellars's relationship with Hegel is complex and itself 'dialectical' in interesting ways. Sellars follows Hegel in recognizing that the normativity essential to intentionality and conceptuality is a social phenomenon. But Sellars criticizes Hegel for his inability to independently explain the emergence and function of this essential group phenomenon. I shall argue that Sellars's critique of Hegel on this count is part of a larger, metaphysically ambitious and rigorously realistic position, which, though turning Hegel's ontology on its head, shares with Hegel the methodological ambition of arriving at a position which is globally explanatorily closed. Further, it will be suggested that although Sellars would surely have been critical of the ontological reification of Hegel's dialectical method, he nonetheless reserves an important role for conceptual dialectical development right at the heart of his system, namely in his understanding of the conceptual evolution that leads from the manifest to the scientific image. Finally, I shall argue that Sellars thereby aspires to provide nothing less than a materialist *aufhebung* of idealist Hegelian dialectics.

KEYWORDS Hegel. Sellars; dialectical method; sociality of the space of reasons; global explanatory closure of the scientific image; 'absolute materialism'

1. Introduction

The analytic tradition, of which Sellars was part, was – and still is – openly hostile to virtually every aspect of Hegelian philosophy. However, Sellars' thinking has many recognizably Hegelian elements. The Hegelian elements of Sellars' thought stand out more clearly if we see them as evolving out of his critique of Kant. Indeed, as deVries has emphasized (deVries 2017), Sellars moves from Kant to Hegel in at least the following respects: 1) He recognizes that the normativity essential to intentionality is an essentially *social* phenomenon, which cannot be properly understood individualistically. 2) He recognizes the possibility (and reality) of critically controlled conceptual change, and even of *categorial* change, as a response to explanatory anomalies (analogous to Hegelian 'contradictions') inhering in the 'manifest' conceptual framework in terms of which we initially make sense of the world and our place in it. That is, *contra* Kant, both Hegel and

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Sellars understand the history of humanity as a development toward an ever-more-adequate set of categories in terms of which we understand the ultimate being of the world and ourselves. 3) Sellars objects to a Kant-inspired notion of the Given: that is, he rejects the view to the effect that categorial space is fixed independently of a historically evolved 'space of reasons' culturally transmitted through language, in a way reminiscent of Hegel's critique of Kant. In this connection, Sellars, like Hegel, rejects both an exogenous Given (a supposedly unmediated connection of our minds to the world by means of perceptual experience) and an endogenous Given (an unmediated transparent access to the contents of our own minds) (Redding 2007). Perceptual experience and conceptual form are not given independently of the external world they confront. 4) He articulates a metaphysically ambitious and rigorously realistic position that is opposed to any form of subjective idealism. 5) Like Hegel, he rejects the *absoluteness* of the distinction between phenomenon and reality itself – which is not to say that he rejects the distinction altogether. We begin by grasping the world as it appears to us (the Sellarsian manifest image) and through the experience of an 'internal instability' of the framework, we formulate, from within our practices, the distinction between appearances and the underlying reality they represent (Brandom 2009, 99–101). However, since neither an exogenous nor an endogenous Given dictate a limit on our inquiries, it is possible to go behind appearances and come to understand reality as an underlying unity between ourselves and the world in itself.

Of course, there are many crucial issues in which Sellars would depart from Hegel too, the most significant of which perhaps being the fact that *contra* Hegel, Sellars argues that the world 'in itself', what is 'really real' (including man 'as he really is' as opposed to man 'as he appear to himself'), does not have conceptual structure, but is actually a contingently existing and qualitatively differentiated tissue of ongoing evolving processes lacking logical, modal, teleological, and even causal-dispositional structure.[1] Where Hegel spiritualizes nature, Sellars, moves in the opposite direction, and attempts to place 'spirit', or the 'intelligible order', *within* the 'real', physical, non-conceptual order. Roughly, the intelligible order is seen as a creation of the adaptive habits and practices we are collectively engaged in, especially the linguistic ones, and the forms of activity that the development of language enables – where, crucially, the 'practical activity' in question must be understood as essentially involving a non-conceptual, 'material' dimension, through which it is capable to interact with other worldly items and processes, thereby better coordinating our individual and collective behavior within our environment.

Yet, my purpose in this paper is not to delve on the similarities and differences between Hegelian and Sellarsian philosophy, although this project would be interesting in its own right. Instead, in this paper I will do three things: First (sections 2 and 3), I will focus on what I take to be one of the most important points of convergence between Sellars and Hegel, namely Sellars' rejection of the

'Robinson Crusoe conception of the world as generating conceptual thinking directly in the individual' (Sellars 1963a, 16) – an insight that is directly attributed by Sellars to Hegel. My ultimate purpose, however, will not be to make sense of this convergence, but, on the contrary, to understand Sellars' *criticism* of the above Hegelian insight (which comes immediately after praising Hegel for this insight). I shall argue that while this criticism purports to reveal a blind spot on Hegel's part, namely his inability (shorn of scientific image conceptual resources based on the theory of evolution) to independently explain the emergence and function of the manifest image itself as a group phenomenon, these critical remarks are ultimately put to the service of a metaphysically ambitious and rigorously realistic position, which, though turning Hegel's ontology on its head, shares with Hegel the methodological ambition of arriving at a position which is 'globally explanatorily closed' (section 4). Next, focusing on the Hegelian notion of dialectics, I shall attempt to show that although Sellars would surely have been critical of the ontological reification of Hegel's dialectical method, he nonetheless reserves an important role for conceptual dialectical development right at the heart of his system, namely in his understanding of the conceptual evolution that leads from manifest-image kinds/objects to scientific image 'counterpart' kinds/objects (section 5). Finally, I will suggest that Sellars thereby aspires to provide nothing less than a materialist *Aufhebung* of idealist Hegelian dialectics (section 6).

2. Sellars' endorsement and critique of the Hegelian conception of the sociality of the 'space of reasons'

In a crucial passage in 'Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man', Sellars acknowledges Hegel's deep insight into the social nature of the relation between the world and conceptual thinking in the individual. As Sellars puts it:

> It was not until the time of Hegel that the essential role of the group as a mediating factor in this causation [of the presence in the individual of the framework of conceptual thinking] was recognized, and while it is easy for us to see that the immanence and transcendence of conceptual frameworks with respect to the individual thinker is a social phenomenon, and to find a recognition of this fact implicit in the very form of our image of man-in-the-world, it was not until the nineteenth century that this feature of the manifest image was, however inadequately, taken into account. (Sellars 1963a, 17)

Yet, immediately after that, Sellars criticizes Hegel on that very point, continuing as follows:

> The manifest image must therefore be construed as containing a conception of itself as a group phenomenon, the group mediating between the individual and the intelligible order. But any attempt to *explain* this mediation within the framework of the manifest image was bound to fail, for the manifest image contains the resources for such an attempt only in the sense that it

> provides the foundation on which scientific theory can build an explanatory framework; and while conceptual structures of this framework are *built on* the manifest image, they are not definable within it. Thus the Hegelian, like the Platonist of whom he is the heir, was limited in the attempt to understand the relation between the intelligible order and the individual minds in analogical terms. (Sellars 1963a, 17–18)

Moreover, Sellars attempts to sketch the form of the solution through which we circumvent this Hegelian blind spot:

> It is in the scientific image of man in the world that we begin to see the main outlines of the way in which man came to have an image of himself-in-the-world. For we begin to see this as a matter of evolutionary development as a group phenomenon, a process which is illustrated at a simpler level by the evolutionary development which explains the correspondence between the dancing of a worker bee and the location, relative to the sun, of the flower from which he comes. This correspondence, like the relation between man's 'original' image and the world, is incapable of explanation in terms of a direct conditioning impact of the environment on the individual as such. (Sellars 1963a, 17-18)

These are obviously dense and highly complex passages, so let us pause to discuss them in more detail.

Sellars, in his 'Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man' (1963a), argues that the major strands of what he calls the perennial tradition in philosophy (i.e. the Platonic and Aristotelian tradition broadly understood, including Plato and Neo-Platonism, Aristotelian Scholasticism, major strands of medieval philosophy, but also contemporary phenomenology and even ordinary language philosophy), can be construed as attempts to understand the structure of the *manifest* image. Indeed, according to Sellars, the defining feature that unites the perennial tradition is that it construes the manifest image as ultimately real. Now, a key thought of Sellars here is that because an essential feature of the manifest image is that the connection between conceptual/rational thinking and reality cannot be understood in more elementary (non-conceptual, non-rational, pre-personal) terms, i.e. in terms which do not already, in some way or another, presuppose the conceptual framework of persons,[2] the perennial tradition was limited to understanding the relation between the intelligible worldly order and individual minds which use the conceptual framework of persons in terms which bear an essential analogy to (the capacities and abilities of) persons (Sellars 1963a, 15–16). For example, the relation between the conceptual and the real order was understood in terms of an illumination of the individual mind by the world, where the latter is construed as a being essentially analogous to a person (e.g. as intelligible essences, forms, God, etc.). Until the nineteenth century, that is, perennial philosophy shared the conviction that somehow the world, as intelligible, is the direct cause of the individual's image of the world, independently of social mediation.

Now, as was mentioned above, Hegel was perhaps the first to understand the essential role of the *group* as a mediating factor in explaining the relation between the intelligible/conceptual order and individual minds. For Hegel, subject (the individual mind) and object (the world standing over against the subject) are relata that exist only with and in their relations, so that their mediation can no longer be conceived in individualistic or mentalistic terms. They exist only as expressions of objective Spirit, the collective spirit embodied in a community of persons, held together by relations of mutual recognition,[3] which form the basis for understanding ourselves as social beings capable of forming intersubjectively binding judgments referring to the objective world (i.e. one and the same world for everybody). Moreover, the social nature of the mediation between the individual and the intelligible order puts us in a position to realize the situatedness of human reason, thereby opening our eyes to the fact that we can objectively justify our own epistemic and ethical standards only by conceiving reason (the 'space of reasons') in an essentially historical and self-correcting manner. That is, we can justify our own standards only if we can see them as removing conflicts and contradictions in former worldviews, by making explicit what were hitherto implicit presuppositions of worldviews that have become dysfunctional by their own standards (see Hegel 1979; Pinkard 1994; Habermas 2005). Thus, objective Spirit, as the mediating factor that explains the relation between the individual and the conceptual framework in terms of which it has access to the objective world is essentially social, intersubjective, historical, and self-critical.[4] However, according to Sellars, Hegel conceived of the relation between the conceptual order and individual minds by analogy to the capacities and abilities of person-like entities. The fact that Hegel explains this mediating role of the community as an expression of the social-historical unfolding of the world Spirit, although avoiding the pitfall of attributing a direct efficient causal action of some person-like entity on the individual, cannot escape endowing this communal mediating factor with person-like characteristics that exhibit the rational unity of a mind (e.g. the 'cunning' of reason, operating behind our backs), and are conceptually and explanatorily irreducible to more elementary (non-conceptual, non-rational, non-teleological) human activities.

Now, as we saw, Sellars denies that the manifest image, even augmented with the Hegelian insight that the community is an essential mediating factor between the individual and the conceptual order, is in a position to explain how it is so much as possible for the community to serve this mediating role. But why does he deny it? And why does he say that it is only in the scientific image of man-in-the-world that we begin to see the main outlines of the way in which man came to have an image of himself-in-the-world? I take it that his main reason for this is that at this basic level, the explanation of the possibility of emergence of the manifest image itself in manifest-image terms, would necessarily be unilluminating, as it would

presuppose the network of our basic categorial (person-like, normative, intentional) concepts in terms of which we collectively make sense of ourselves-in-the-world, and hence could not account for the possibility of their *own* emergence and function as a social-collective medium of representing the world and ourselves. This is Hegel's blind spot, which eventually leads to his controversial and ultimately idealist (even if not in the subjective sense) 'spiritualization' of nature, as the latter finds expression in the quasi-teleological causal powers that Hegel attributes to the social-historical unfolding of world Spirit.[5]

Now, as mentioned above, Sellars also offers a very sketchy, dense, and somewhat cryptic positive proposal about how we might begin to understand the coming into being of the community as an essential mediating representational factor between individual minds and the conceptual/intelligible order. He thinks that evolutionary theory, as applied to normatively constituted social phenomena (and, hence, as applied to the social sciences) is now in a position to see the mediating representational role of the community between the individual and the intelligible order as 'a matter of evolutionary development as a group phenomenon' and 'incapable of explanation in terms of a direct conditioning impact of the environment of the individual as such' (Sellars 1963a, 17).

Some important things to notice as regards this highly ambitious, even if extremely sketchy proposal, are the following: 1) Since, as is well known, Sellars takes scientific-image explanations to be non-intentional, non-person-like and non-normative in their content, he believes that, effectively, those kinds of explanations (their model being in this case evolutionary biology, as applied to cultural processes), can account for the emergence and representational function of social-collective dimension of the manifest image as such. 2) Interestingly, for Sellars, although these evolutionary explanations will be non-intentional, non-normative, and non-person-like, they will also have to be placed at the level of the *group*, rather than of the individual organism, to do their explanatory work. The big picture that seems to emerge out of this is that the complex and dynamic conceptual structures necessary for normatively understanding the relation of the world to ourselves through the mediation of the community, must be somehow explanatorily grounded (for accounting for their possibility) in – presumably equally complex and dynamic – socio-historical *causal* structures, themselves operating at the group-collective level. Just as in the case of the correspondence between the dancing of a worker bee and the location, relative to the sun, of the flower from which she comes, we can explain this correspondence not in terms of a direct conditioning impact of the environment on the individual bee as such, but, presumably, in terms of the survival and reproductive value that this correspondence confers in evolutionary time to a 'hive' of bees within a certain environment, so in the

case of the correspondence between man's original image and the world, we can explain it in terms of an evolutionarily conferred group adaptation to a specific environment, which is sustained and reproduced due to the survival and reproductive value that its coordinating function confers to the group or species (and, derivatively, to its members) in relation to other such groups or species within a certain environment. Moreover, if we take it that certain socio-historical 'forces' transcending the individual serve the role of the 'environment' to which we collectively adapt (think e.g. of Marx's modes of production, productive forces, relations of production), then this evolutionary way of thinking can be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, even to issues about the emergence, function and development of particular social practices and institutions within society.[6] This would be Sellars' peculiar way of revitalizing central notions of Hegel's system and of German Idealism (especially the dialectic of the complex and dynamic conceptual structures necessary for normatively understanding the relation of the world to ourselves as it appears, e.g. in Hegel's *Phenomenology*), while simultaneously transposing them in a decidedly naturalistic key.[7]

3. Toward an evolutionary explanation of the social-normative dimension of the manifest image

The reader will have noticed by now that Sellars' highly ambitious proposal of explanatorily grounding social-normative structures in social-causal (non-intentional, non-normative, yet 'collective') structures through a – presumably analogical – application of evolutionary theory in social-normative phenomena, depends on something that is conspicuously absent from his philosophy, namely, a proper philosophical treatment of the social sciences. Yet, although it is true that Sellars did not provide a philosophical account of the social sciences, I think that he does provide some conceptual resources that might enable us to offer an (admittedly very sketchy) first account of the place of the social sciences in his overall philosophical framework. This will enable us to better understand the way in which he conceives of the relation between normative social reality and the non-normative collective structures that sustain them and explain their emergence and function (in the sense of *raison d'être*).

Using Sellars' terminology, the question of the place of the social sciences in his system becomes the question of the place of the social sciences within the manifest and scientific images of man-in-the-world. And I take it that Sellars here could and should distinguish between a 'manifest-image' and a scientific-image' understanding of the descriptions and explanations of the social sciences, and of their objects of study, normative social structures and institutions. Manifest-image descriptions and explanations of such normative structures would essentially involve (analogical extensions of) the categorial concept of

a *person* and its normatively individuated capacities and abilities, as the latter are primarily expressed in the formulation of individual 'I-intentions' or collective 'we'-intentions' (i.e. intentions of the form 'I, as one of us (as a member of the relevant group), shall do x, in circumstances of kind y') (Sellars 1967, 220–22). On the other hand, I take it that scientific-image descriptions and explanations of social-normative structures would involve pre- or suprapersonal categorial concepts, with resolutely non-normative and non-intentional content, which yet would express essentially group-phenomena, 'incapable of explanation in terms of a direct conditioning impact of the environment of the individual as such' (Sellars 1963a, 17). Candidate scientific-image explanatory concepts here might be certain impersonally described group-attitudes, embodied in human collective pattern-governed utterance-involving behavioral dispositions and habits, sustained by a complex system of rewards and sanctions. And the emergence, maintenance and reproduction of those sanctioned pattern-governed utterance-involving dispositions and habits would be, in turn, accounted for in terms of their causal-functional role in better coordinating collaborative action (than other 'competitor' patterns) within a certain environment. Now, just as, for Sellars, the scientific-image account of worldly objects and properties goes beyond a manifest-image rendering of the latter in that it postulates unobservable entities and processes to account for observationally inexplicable anomalies (e.g. observationally unpredicted variations) in the behavior of these objects and processes, so the scientific image as applied to the social sciences (e.g. anthropology, psychology, history, economics), and, in general, to the study of social-normative structures and institutions, goes beyond a manifest-image rendering of those phenomena in that it postulates unobservable (i.e. non-manifest) and impersonal or pre-personal states, 'forces' and mechanisms (themselves, of course, unintended products of human activity) to account for inexplicable anomalies in the behavior of these normative-social phenomena as they are conceptualized within the 'personalistic' manifest-image framework.[8] Moreover, since the manifest-image *itself* (its very representational power) is revealed, through the refinement of its own descriptive-explanatory conceptual resources, to be one more such social-normative phenomenon, it seems that it generates a systemic anomaly at its very heart. It cannot explain its emergence and function as a community-mediated system representing the world to individual minds without presupposing that its basic categorial determinations (structures similar to persons obeying to norms, with intentions, desires, wants, ends) were always already in place. In other words, it is constitutively blind to the possibility of explaining social collective structures in a non-person-like way, and is forced to construe social-normative structures as irreducibly new, 'brute fact' realities, radically discontinuous from more elementary (e.g. evolutionary) group processes and facts. But, as Sellars always stressed, there is a way out from this descriptive-explanatory impasse. Human categorial concepts are not fixed 'Givens' or 'essences' distilled from the categorial framework in terms of which

we first encountered ourselves as distinctively human.[9] We can always develop novel categorial concepts and determinations, new ways of schematizing social-normative categories, in response to explanatory anomalies in our manifest-image conception of ourselves-in-the-world. Evolutionary scientific-image concepts, in an extended sense of the term that can find application in cultural (i.e. non-genetically transmitted) phenomena, if they prove explanatorily fruitful (e.g. by leading to novel predictions and explanatory accommodation of anomalies of the former categorial framework), can well be precisely such novel ways of schematizing social-normative categories, as to their descriptive and explanatory dimension.[10]

4. The global explanatory closure of the scientific image: toward an 'absolute materialism'?

In section 1, it was mentioned that Sellars' criticism of Hegel's understanding of the mediating role of the community in the manifest image's ability to represent the world and ourselves are ultimately put to the service of a metaphysically ambitious and rigorously realistic position, which, though turning Hegel's ontology on its head, shares with Hegel the methodological ambition of arriving at a position which is 'globally explanatorily closed'. In Sellars' view, of course, this global explanatory closure will be delivered by the *scientific* image (in the dimension of description and explanation). It is time to provide some cash for this claim.

I think that for Sellars, this global explanatory closure can be achieved by a scientific image whose general mode of explanation is the evolutionary-selectional one (as described in n. 10). We saw in section 3, how this model can provide the beginnings of an explanation of the emergence and function (in the sense of *raison d'être*) of the collective normative structures that provide the backbone of the representational function of the manifest image of man-in-the-world.

Now, to be globally explanatorily closed, the scientific image must be ultimately able to explain not only the emergence and function of the manifest image but also *its own* emergence and function. Also, it must explain why the manifest image *misrepresents* itself as being explanatorily autonomous. Although Sellars does not say much with respect to these issues, I take it that he has the general explanatory resources to cash out this claim.

For example, the fact that the manifest-image misrepresents itself in that it conceives of itself as an explanatorily autonomous image can again be explained by evolutionary considerations. Our basic categorial concepts and distinctions through which we represent the world and ourselves are not God-given and did not evolve for the purpose of ontological insight. There is no ontological 'pre-established harmony' between the general structural features of our existing categorially structured means of

representing the world and the world (or experience) as it is in-itself. Rather, categories are culturally evolving functional roles, transmitted through language from generation to generation (Sellars 1963b). At the fundamental level of explanation, our categorial concepts and distinctions evolved under selective evolutionary pressures within a largely unpredictable and hostile environment because of their central role in facilitating collaborative action; their *raison d'être* is *practical*, ultimately to be cashed out in terms of their contribution in our being able to collectively 'find our way around' within our physical and social environment (see e.g. Sellars 1953a, 1953b). This evolutionary way of thinking about the emergence, sustenance and reproduction of categories makes it possible to explain why the initial stages of our conception of ourselves-in-the-world might *misrepresent* itself as explanatorily sufficient. For most practical purposes (and in human-adjusted time-scales) this misrepresentation would not in the least jeopardize our survival, physical or cultural reproduction, even if it were ultimately false as an account of how things really are. Moreover, conceiving the world and ourselves under manifest-image (or even original-image[11]) categories would significantly simplify and compress the amount and complexity of the information processed by the human organism for its relatively successful navigation in the environment, without any significant practical loss (at least in the 'short-run', e.g. for a few centuries). In fact, not only would this simplification and compression of informational influx through original-image or manifest-image categorization not involve any significant practical loss, but it would arm human organisms with what we might call 'epistemic self-confidence', and would positively enable them to be collectively vigilant for responding successfully to life-threatening changes in the environment and for anticipating the near future with a measure of success. In other words, original-image or manifest-image categorization would make possible and facilitate relatively successful collaborative action. I think that the above, coupled with the fact that, for relatively similar evolutionary reasons, the surface grammar of categorial concepts and propositions involving such concepts is the same as that of ordinary empirical concepts that are 'about the world', provide some reason for thinking that the success in question could be easily (and without much practical cost, at least in the 'short-run') misinterpreted as an ontological insight into the very structure of reality.[12]

In this connection, it must be noted that the general evolutionary-selectional model of explanation presented in section 3 does not find application only in issues pertaining to the evolution of human practices, but can be generalized to include even *in*organic nature. And, although Sellars does not delve on this issue, this shows us yet another important sense in which the scientific image aspires to be globally explanatorily closed. The generalization of the evolutionary-selectional model of

explanation to cover even inorganic events and processes goes like this: What, under the spell of Newtonian models of explanation, we take to be eternal, immutable, necessary, universal laws of nature, can be understood as themselves, in the broadest sense 'habits' (sufficiently stable patterns/regularities) of the universe – a kind of order that has arisen contingently, but ultimately statistically explicable, by a selectional-adaptational process operating on a population of such regularities, which in turn provides the dynamic habitat to which all must collectively adapt.[13] This has two important consequences regarding the issue of global explanatory closure. It enables us to explain scientifically our most basic scientific-image conceptual resources *themselves*, such as causal or modal necessity and possibility, as devices that have an ultimately *expressivist*, not directly Representationalist (with a 'big R') function. They are 'tools' that successfully enable us to control, predict and hence anticipate what is going to happen in the surrounding world (see also Price 1991, 2012). In this way, it opens the possibility of formulating a picture of an 'a-perspectival' reality (e.g. comprised of a-modal, non-causal, non-thingish, evolving processes) on the basis of which we can – again evolutionarily – *explain* this very expressivist and 'perspectival' function of those *scientific*-image conceptual-methodological-normative resources, such as causal and modal necessity and possibility. Surprisingly, a radically nominalistic Humean ontological picture of the world, coupled with the category of evolving/adaptive process and an evolutionary-selectional model of explanation, seems sufficient to explain not only the emergence, sustenance, reproduction and ontological reification of the modally and normatively robust (Aristotelian-Kantian) categorial resources of the manifest image, but also the function and *raison d'être* of its *own* conceptual and methodological tools.

We saw above the structural similarity between Sellars' and Hegel's vision of arriving at a position which is globally explanatorily closed. But we should also stress the radical differences of the Sellarsian version from Hegel's understanding of that idea (where absolute spirit, beyond explaining everything else, can also explain its own possibility).

First, Sellars would not, I think, share Hegel's ambition of arriving at a total explanation of 'everything' at the *metaphilosophical* level. Recall, for example, that, according to Sellars, 'philosophical method consists of a diastole of confronting the infinite complexity of discourse with contrived models which we understand because we have made them, in the hope of seeing likenesses, and a systole of grasping at these likenesses and reshaping our models to take their unlikenesses into account' (Sellars 1967, 158). It is evident from this that philosophy, however comprehensive in scope, and perhaps precisely *because* of its very ambition of comprehensiveness, does not aspire to arrive at a static globally closed system. The preceding attribution of global explanatory closure to the scientific image is limited

to the level of description and explanation and is meant to distinguish it from the manifest image and its constitutive incapacity to account for its own emergence and structure.

Second, even in this restricted domain of description and explanation, there are important differences between Sellars' and Hegel's understanding of global explanatory closure, that do not only consist in the *content* of this global explanation (materialist in the case of Sellars, idealist in that of Hegel), but cut somewhat deeper, infecting their understanding of what explanation *itself* really amounts to. To see this, consider the fact that if Sellars' view of the nature of explanation, and of global explanatory closure, were the same as Hegel's, then it would follow that for Sellars, the world, however materialistically construed, would be descriptively-explanatorily 'totalizable' in that e.g. everything that is disclosed in the world through our descriptive-explanatory practices would prove to be necessarily connected (e.g. causally closed under fundamental laws of nature). But this would amount to a rationalistic ontological hypostatization of the world, i.e. to a comprehension of it as a kind of incarnated abstract entity – since, in that case, real connections (synthetic necessary ones) would be 'in the world' in a very literal sense. And has not Sellars himself explicitly rejected this kind of move throughout his career, exposing it as a form of the myth of the Given? Although Sellars does not discuss this issue, I think that the above considerations as well as his radically Humean-nominalistic views about ontology, would push Sellars toward a view according to which, *contra* Hegel, the ideal of an 'absolute' explanation is *not* a feature of the 'in-itself' but, at best, a practically indispensable tool of our descriptive practices, which, being precisely a *tool*, need not *mirror* the structure of reality, even if it is *successfully applied* to it. Recall, in this connection, that, for Sellars, explanations (scientific, ideal or 'absolute' ones) have *conceptual*, non-qualitative, relational/holistic structure and posit relations of real necessity in the world, whereas the Sellarsian in-itself has strictly *empirical* (non-conceptual), *qualitative, non-relational*[14] content and non-modal structure.

Moreover, this radical difference is not erased or turned into an identity, e.g. in the manner of Hegelian absolute idealism, even in the envisaged stereoscopic fusion of the manifest and the scientific image. The 'Idea' – which, according to Sellars, has normative/conceptual/modal structure – is never isomorphic with 'being' – which ultimately has empirical/non-conceptual/non-modal structure. Hence, the world, being precisely *not* isomorphic with the conceptual/logical structure of the space of reasons, is not 'totalizable' in the sense of being, in principle, exhaustively 'contained' in the 'Concept'.

5. The Sellarsian version of Hegelian dialectics

Here we should be reminded of another feature of Sellars' philosophy that will prove important for understanding the complex relations between Sellars and Hegel. Sellars has a very peculiar and complex view about the relations of the natural and the normative. Crucially, his scientific naturalism is highly idiosyncratic in that it is *non-representationalist* or non-descriptivist: This has at least the following important consequences: 1) This form of scientific naturalism resolutely rejects substantial (metaphysically inflating) representationalist views about truth and reference (i.e. substantial 'word-world' semantic relations). 2) It acknowledges that there can be knowledge and truths about various kinds of normative facts which cannot be reduced to knowledge and truths about non-normative scientific-image matters-of-fact, but accounts for this irreducibility not in terms of a supposed 'surplus ontological content' of normative over non-normative facts, but rather in terms of irreducible differences in the *semantic functional role* between normative and non-normative terms, in the context of our practices. Recall, for example, that according to Sellars, the semantic function of normative discourse is *not* assimilated to the descriptive and explanatory function of empirical discourse. Normative discourse – and hence 'normative facts' – are not in the business of describing the world. Instead, normative discourse functionally classifies certain empirical items in a way that *prescribes* and *evaluates* the 'behavior' of the latter (including human verbal and non-verbal behavior) according to standards or 'ideals' about their proper 'empirical realization' (Sellars 1963a, 38–40). Now, if the truth-evaluability and objectivity of normative 'phenomena' is understood in this non-descriptive/non-explanatory sense, then it is clear that in *this* sense they can well be irreducible to a scientific-image conception of normativity, while in *another* (ontological-explanatory) sense they *can* be so reducible. Thus, the objectivity and truth-evaluability of normative facts remains intact in our practices without any need for their being ontologically reified, thereby rendering the existence and objectivity of normative facts consistent with a radically materialistic and nominalistic Humean ontology.

What is more, it can be even argued that a certain subset of those normative facts (e.g. modal, intentional, semantic, categorial facts[15]) is *necessary* for the very existence and function of empirical-scientific descriptive and explanatory discourse. For example, as Brandom has convincingly argued, on behalf of Sellars, a subset of the above kinds of normative facts function as metalinguistic rules which make empirical-scientific description and explanation itself possible. Roughly, their expressive (non-descriptive) role is to make explicit (and hence amenable to criticism) what is implicit in the use of ground-level empirical concepts: the conditions under which alone it is possible to apply them, i.e. use them to make judgments (Brandom 2015, 35–39).[16] Thus, we arrive at a complex picture of the

relation between normative and scientific discourse in Sellars: The former depends on the latter for the *explanation* of its *raison d'être* while the latter depends on the former for its *rationality* i.e. for the possibility of its explanations being situated within a (dynamic, evolving and potentially revisable) 'logical space of (causal) possibilities', and hence for their having conceptual content and *objective purport*. Moreover, even more fundamentally, the existence and function of the normative-expressive resources of the manifest image (which make us the very persons we are) is *necessary* for our descriptive and explanatory practices in general (including those of the scientific image) to have a *point* in our lives in the first place.[17]

In what follows, I shall argue that this complex presuppositional relation between the prescriptive-normative and descriptive-explanatory dimension of our discursive practices, can be construed, from a more penetrating point of view, as a *dialectical* relation operative within the content of manifest-image kind terms, which accounts for their gradual self-transformation in scientific-image kind terms.

But before we cash out this claim, we must first distinguish Hegelian from Sellarsian dialectics. For, as is well known, Hegel believes that the dialectical development of our concepts through their 'internal contradictions' is a developmental process that occurs out there in the world itself. Put in Sellarsian-Brandomian terms, it can be argued that in this process, the various deliverances of sensuous immediacy are rationally integrated into a continually evolving whole unified by the exclusion of materially incompatible contents and the inclusion of material inferential consequences. This view ultimately leads to a robust conceptual and modal realism about the objective world, in which worldly objects and their properties stand in relations that include and exclude each other in modally robust ways[18] (Brandom 2009, 2014). Thus, Hegel in effect equates conceptual developments in the space of reasons with the 'movement' of reality itself. The world itself has conceptual, modal and teleological structure, and this is gradually revealed through the 'self-movement' of 'the Concept', a developmental process itself triggered by 'incompatible' aspects ('internal contradictions') present in the very content of the 'Concept' at its various stages of manifestation in reality. What could be more un-Sellarsian than that?

Although it is true that Sellars would never conceive of the dialectical development of our concepts as something that takes place in the world itself, a) he could, I suggest, concede that a *'counterpart'* – non-conceptual, non-normative, non-teleological – developmental process *does* occur in the world itself, and b) as was mentioned above, he reserves an important role for conceptual dialectical development right at the heart of his own system, namely in his understanding of the conceptual evolution that leads from manifest-image kinds/objects to scientific image 'counterpart' kinds/objects. What is more, although this dialectical development leads to a picture of

the world that is the direct opposite of Hegel's own, this view shares with Hegel the conviction that the dialectic is a methodological tool of fundamental importance for resolving perennial philosophical problems about the place of mind within nature. Indeed, I think that Sellars could have gone so far as to say that the whole dialectical developmental process of our descriptive-explanatory resources culminating in his materialistic and nominalistic Humean 'process'-naturalism, coupled with an ungrudging recognition of the truth-evaluability and objectivity of normative phenomena (above all, of personhood), constitutes a materialist *Aufhebung* of idealist Hegelian dialectics. (This latter issue will be discussed in section 6.)

Let us now provide some cash for the above somewhat unorthodox claims. Recall first how Hegel describes his dialectical method in the *Science of Logic* (1969), the *Encyclopedia Logic* (1991) and the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The content of a certain category or a certain 'shape of consciousness', when correctly applied, according to its own standards, at some point leads to (materially) *incompatible* commitments, according to those same standards. That is, the unpacking of commitments of basic philosophical categories or 'shapes of consciousness' inexorably leads, by their own standards, to their 'contraries', to 'internal contradictions'. Hegel then attempts to show that this negative result has a positive outcome, namely a new category (or 'shape of consciousness'), which resolves the preceding 'internal contradiction' in such a way that the former category or shape of consciousness is not only preserved but also abolished (i.e. it is *aufgehoben*). That is to say, it is preserved in the new category or shape of consciousness only with its original sense modified. At this point, we pass to a new level where the new shape of consciousness plays the role formerly played by the former shape of consciousness, and so on[19] (see also Forster 1993; Brandom 2009).

Consider now Sellars' account of the dialectic which leads from manifest-image to scientific-image categories. The scientific 'postulational' image arises out of the manifest image itself as a response to systemic explanatory anomalies of the latter. As Sellars frequently points out, the manifest image generates questions which cannot answer on its own (an example of this is the explanation of the mediating role of the community between the individual and the intelligible order discussed in section 3). In other words, it turns out that the descriptive and explanatory resources of the manifest image fall short of the explanatory task set by manifest-image epistemic criteria themselves.[20] In this way, the scientific image grows naturally out of the manifest image in an effort to accommodate systemic explanatory anomalies generated by the tension between manifest-image explanatory criteria and ideals and the actual conceptual resources it possesses to satisfy the latter. And, again it turns out that scientific-image new conceptual-categorial explanatory resources can resolve manifest-image systemic explanatory anomalies only by *changing* their very meaning (i.e.

their modal implications), thereby reconceptualizing the latter in terms that do not involve persons and the normatively laden conceptual categories they implicate (Sellars 1961, 1963c). Thus, the radical change of the meaning of manifest-image kind terms (and their objects of reference, for recall that what changes in this change of meaning is their very modal profile), turns out to be *necessary* for the very *preservation* of the epistemic ideal of the very descriptive and explanatory practices in which manifest-image kind terms are themselves embedded.

Very roughly, the big picture that emerges out of this might be described as follows: Every successor scientific-image framework in effect preserves and simultaneously transforms – or, better, preserves *by* simultaneously transforming – the respective 'predecessor' manifest-image 'lifeworld' concepts and objects. In this process, the 'schematic' normative aspect of the manifest image (the normative functional roles of manifest-image terms) is preserved while having undergone a radical change in its more 'determinate' 'contentful' aspect (the 'material realizers' of those functional roles). Even more radically, it is also the case that those radical changes of the 'contentful' aspect of manifest-image concepts and objects, being indispensable for the accommodation of explanatory anomalies of the latter, are necessary for the very *preservation* (i.e. non-disintegration, internal coherence) of epistemic ideals integral to our everyday communal practices of describing and explaining the world and our place in it.[21]

I think it is evident that Sellars' understanding of the relation between the manifest and the scientific image is a particularly striking example of implementing the first (two-term) form of Hegel's dialectical method as discussed above.[22]

What is even more impressive is that Sellars also implements the *second* (three-term) form of Hegel's dialectical method. To see this it must be remembered that, for Sellars, the above process of 'preservation-through-transformation' of the epistemic ideals of our manifest-image descriptive and explanatory practices makes full sense only if the scientific image is in a position, in principle at least, to replace the manifest-image framework in *all* its roles, including, importantly, its role in conceptually responding to worldly stimulations and in guiding action directly in the conceptual terms of the framework (Sellars 1963d, 97). A merely '*theoretical-postulational*' scientific-image bereft of a non-inferential direct role in guiding perception and action cannot be a complete image of man-in-the-world, and hence cannot really be the *Aufhebung* of the manifest image. This is why, according to Sellars, this 'preservation-through-transformation' process is ultimately cashed out only in terms of the *'stereoscopic fusion'* of the manifest and the scientific image where, interestingly, the very distinction between the manifest and the scientific image is eventually transcended: The normative core of the manifest image (the individual and community

intentions of persons) is preserved yet completely purged of its ontological-explanatory content, which is now fully accounted for in scientific-image terms. In this ideal situation, the world would be directly 'manifest' to us in scientific-image terms: we would understand ourselves as complex physical systems directly 'open' to other such complex systems and processes of our own making (social world) or not (physical world). In this sense, the manifest-image would be abandoned. However, the normative valence (objectivity, truth-evaluability) of the core categorial structure of the manifest image framework would be retained, though purged of its ontological implications. It would now be seen for what it is: an expression of a pragmatically indispensable self-correcting expressive-metalinguistic tool (the game of 'giving and asking for reasons'), created by our own collective instituting activity, for regulating collaborative action, whose ultimate *raison d'être* is to promote the general welfare of the community (in the most inclusive sense of the term).[23]

Again this is an exemplification of Hegel's three-term form of the dialectical method: A certain 'shape of consciousness', namely the manifest image of man-in-the-world, proves to contain a contrary shape of consciousness, the scientific image, and conversely, the scientific image proves to contain the manifest-image (since to be complete it must also be capable of directly – i.e. non-inferentially – guiding us in our perceptual and practical dealings with the world). This 'internal tension' in both these ways of experiencing the world and ourselves is resolved through their stereoscopic fusion, which preserves both our manifest-image and scientific-image experience of the world, albeit only by abolishing their original content.

6. Toward a materialist Aufhebung of Hegelian dialectics

We can conclude this essay by showing how this Sellarsian rendering of Hegel's dialectical method can be understood as a materialist *Aufhebung* of Hegel's idealist understanding of the latter. Recall first that, *contra* Hegel, Sellars takes it that the conceptual evolution that leads from manifest-image kinds/objects to scientific image 'counterpart' kinds/objects reveals that this dialectical process itself is part of the *normative* infrastructure of thought which must be resolutely purged of its ontological-explanatory implications. The dialectical development of our concepts and conceptual frameworks is not a process that takes place in the world itself; it is an expression of a regulative ideal of Reason and leads to a radically non-normative and non-teleological picture of the world and ourselves. However, I think that, at the same time, this very dialectical process toward 'more adequate' scientific-image renderings of the world and our place in it, ultimately shows that a counterpart – non-conceptual, non-normative, non-teleological – developmental process *does* occur in the world itself. For it shows that increasingly adequate conceptual

systems are connected, as material structures with matter-of-factual properties, to the world, in an ever-increasingly adequate way, with the adequacy in question now construed in terms of Sellars' notion of *picturing*.[24] And I take it that Sellarsian picturing can in turn be thought of as a result of a historically evolving dynamic process of *homeostatic equilibrium* between the organism, understood as a recursively self-maintaining metabolic system, and its external and internal environment, while the *adequacy* of picturing can be cashed out in terms of the *optimality* of the homeostatic equilibrium in question. This optimality, can, in turn, be understood in terms of conduciveness to survival and flourishing of a certain group or species of organisms within a certain environment, as the latter are determined by the ideal scientific image (i.e. in non-normative and non-teleological language).[25] From this resolutely non-normative 'cybernetic' point of view, the tensions or anomalies (material incompatibilities) in the conceptual order would be thought of as certain kinds of responses, expressed in conceptual, 'space-of-reasons' form, to 'counterpart' non-conceptually articulated *disruptions/disturbances* of the homeostatic equilibrium in the organism-environment system. And, in these terms, an 'adequate' conceptual response to such disruptions would amount to the abandonment of a certain (materially incompatible) set of conceptual connections and the forging of a novel such set, such that its material expression in our embodied behavior would result in collectively coordinating ourselves more effectively with respect to those regularities and irregularities in the natural and social environment on which our fundamental needs and interests conducive to individual and general survival and welfare ultimately depend.

But note that this would effectively constitute an *Aufhebung* of Hegel's idealist dialectic: From a Sellarsian point of view, dialectics *itself* is characterized by an 'internal contradiction': As it develops at the conceptual level through the 'teleology of Reason', it sketches a picture of the world bereft of teleological or even conceptual structure. But this 'contradiction' is overcome through a new understanding of the dialectic that preserves its 'idealist' themes, i.e. its normative-teleological character, as well as its culmination in 'absolute knowledge' (through the transcendence of the dualism between the normative and the natural), while at the same time blocking their ontological reification. For, *contra* Hegel, the dialectic would ultimately be revealed as an expression of a regulative idea of Reason (thus, not as a feature of the world itself), while its culmination in 'absolute knowledge' would now be conceived not as an absorption – and eventual identification – of the world by the 'Concept', but, conversely, as an absorption of the 'Concept' by the world itself, i.e. as the *concrete material realization* of normative structures and ideals in bodily and environmental (physical or social) processes, characterized by an ever-expanding range of homeostatic equilibrium.

7. Conclusion

I have argued that Sellars' relationship with Hegel is complex and itself 'dialectical' in interesting ways. As we saw, Sellars follows Hegel in recognizing that the normativity essential to intentionality and conceptuality is an essentially social phenomenon. But Sellars criticizes Hegel for his inability to independently explain the emergence and function of this group phenomenon. Yet, at the same time, his critical remarks are ultimately put to the service of a metaphysically ambitious and rigorously realistic position, which, though turning Hegel's ontology on its head, share with Hegel the methodological ambition of arriving at a position which is globally explanatorily closed. Further, it was suggested that although Sellars would surely have been critical of the ontological reification of Hegel's dialectical method, he nonetheless reserves an important role for conceptual dialectical development right at the heart of his system, namely in his understanding of the conceptual evolution that leads from the manifest to the scientific image. Finally, I attempted to show that Sellars thereby aspires to provide nothing less than a materialist *Aufhebung* of idealist Hegelian dialectics.

Notes

1. Note that the Sellarsian conception of the in-itself, although resolutely non-teleological, need not be understood as mechanistic. Indeed, Sellars himself explicitly says that this latter mechanistic conception of causation (i.e. the view that the world is causally closed under mechanistic laws) is the expression of the dominant 'scientific ideology', which is philosophically problematic and must be superseded by a non-mechanistic process ontology (Sellars 1981). In this sense, the Sellarsian in-itself could well be a 'self-organizing whole' yet without this self-organization being understood in teleological terms. (For example, self-organization can be understood in autopoietic terms (Maturana and Varela 1980) or in terms of dynamic systems theory (Seibt 2016).)
2. For example, the perennial tradition recognized '(a) that association of *thoughts* is not association of images, and as presupposing a framework of conceptual thinking, cannot account for it; (b) that the direct action of perceptible nature, *as perceptible*, on the *individual* can account for associative connection, *but not the rational connections of conceptual thinking*' (Sellars 1963a, 16).
3. According to this line of thought, normative statuses are instituted by attitudes of reciprocal recognition. Someone becomes responsible (for a belief, action, etc.) only when others *hold* him responsible, and exercises authority only when others *acknowledge* this authority (Brandom 2009, 70).
4. In Pinkard's concise formulation 'Spirit is a *self-conscious* form of life, that is, it is a form of life that has developed various social practices for reflecting on what it takes to be authoritative for itself in terms of whether these practices live up to their own claims and achieve the aims they set for themselves' (Pinkard 1994, 8–9).

5. Of course, Hegel is more subtle that this: His 'Spirit' is only the highest degree of organization and development of all the powers of nature. But, conversely, according to Hegel, seemingly inert matter is only the lowest degree of organization and development of all the powers of the mind. In any case, the fact remains that in this Hegelian monism of reason and nature, of the subjective and the objective, both poles are conceived as different degrees of organization of a single *living* or *vital force*, whose spatiotemporal unfolding can only be understood in terms of principles exhibited in the rational unity of a mind (see also Beiser 1993).
6. Of course, it does not follow from this that Sellars ought to be committed to a strictly Marxist explanation of history (although he was a Marxist, and even said that although he rejected the pseudo-Hegelian jargon of Marxist *Naturphilosophie*, he found more congenial the Hegelian overtones of Marxism as a schema of historical explanation) (Sellars 1975). Sellars here would be at most committed to the existence of complex and dynamic socio-historical causal structures that provide an evolutionary explanation (in the broad sense) of the correlative complex and dynamic socio-historical structures operating at the conceptual-normative-intentional level. Marx's theory of historical materialism is *one* way in which such a general explanatory program might be cashed out, but obviously there might be others too.
7. Again, here Sellars, in his programmatic adoption of the Hegelian or German Idealist agenda with regard to the significance of the social-historical dimension of social-normative phenomena, could be compared to Marx, who, like Sellars, takes Hegel very seriously, and even adopts parts of his methodology, while transposing his ontology in a materialistic key. Interestingly, Sellars may turn out to have been more radical than Marx in this naturalization of the Hegelian social-historical account of normative structures in that he attempts to offer a naturalistic-evolutionary explanation not only of the emergence and function of particular social practices within society, but of the emergence, maintenance and cultural reproduction of the whole categorial framework in terms of which we make sense of ourselves-in-the-world.
8. From this point of view, I think that, e.g. Weber's theory of social action (1978), Honneth's theory of social recognition (1992) and contemporary rational choice theory (which is offered as framework capable of grounding social sciences in general) are examples of a personalistic 'manifest-image' way of doing social science, while Durkheim's and Marx's theory of society, or even current applications of dynamic systems theory to social phenomena (De Landa 1997), are ways of doing social science that are more 'scientific-image' oriented.
9. As Sellars himself put this point: 'The human mind is not limited in its categories to what it has been able to refine out of the worldview of primitive man, any more than the limits of what we can conceive are set by what we can imagine. The categories of theoretical physics are not essences distilled from the framework of perceptual experience' (Sellars 1963a, 10).
10. To see why evolutionary explanations are perhaps the best candidate for living up to the above daunting explanatory task recall how they generally work: They make intelligible the contingent emergence of collective order from individual randomness by providing concrete, *situated historical narratives* of local, contingent, mutable practical reciprocal accommodations of particular creatures and habitats (Brandom 2011, 36–37; Peirce 1931-58). In

their most general form, evolutionary explanations do this by construing worldly events as *processes of adaptation* in which interaction with the environment (other processes) selects (preserves and reproduces) some elements, while eliminating others. This insight is encapsulated in the concept of *habit*, which can be used to explain not only evolution at the level of species, but also learning processes at the level of individual as well as the existence and function of institutions at the social level: *Mutatis mutandis*, these are all understood as the evolution-by-selection of a population of habits. In this way, for example, the emergence of fundamental discursive-linguistic practices as well as the first-personal practical knowledge needed for reliable 'navigation' in the inferentially structured 'space of reasons', can be understood in terms of collective flexible adaptive habits (forming a novel kind of collective embodied coping) that have occurred in a specific environment (e.g. obligate cooperative foraging) through evolution-by-selection at the level of the 'group' (see, e.g. Tomasello 2015). From this point of view, the backbone of the space of reasons, namely the 'assertion language game', can itself be understood as a multipurpose tool – sustained by a special kind of utterance-involving embodied skillful coping – that was selected for at the level of the group due to its capacity to express, align and revise the behavioral dispositions or other variable aspects of speaker's situations on which human collaborative action depends (see, e.g. Price 2011, 2013).

11. The 'original image' is Sellars' term for the original conceptual framework in which we attempted to make sense of the world. In this primitive 'animistic' image all kinds of objects (even ordinary natural objects such as winds, trees, and rivers) were understood on the model of persons and their capacities, abilities and impulses. The manifest image emerged out of the original image through the gradual depersonalization of natural objects and processes – which were eventually deprived of the full range of the capacities and abilities of persons.
12. Note that, if the above line of argument is correct, it follows that we are finally free of the Myth of the Categorial Given when we understand ourselves in scientific image processual-evolutionary terms.
13. C.S. Peirce (1931-58) was the first to conceive of generalizing the evolutionary-selectional model of explanation to inorganic nature. Indeed, he was the first to understand the importance of the new Darwinian mode of explanation in providing a comprehensive unified picture of the relation between mind and nature which would overcome Hegel's personalistic-idealistic limitations.
14. In saying that the Sellarsian in-itself has 'non-relational' content I mean that the processes comprising the in-itself have *intrinsic* properties. However, this is fully compatible with the view that these *non*-functional intrinsic properties of the processual in-itself can play (precisely in virtue of their *non*-functional content) various highly complex *causal-functional roles* which entitle us to treat them as legitimate explanatory posits. Think, for example, of Sellarsian non-conceptual sensory states whose intrinsic properties play a particular kind of causal-functional role in the behavioral economy of human organisms, which accounts for the ability of the latter to optimally navigate within a dynamic and constantly changing external and internal environment (Sellars 1967, 1981; Coates 2007). Thus, causal-functional roles can well be played by states and processes that are individuated by non-functional, intrinsic properties. And recall that even Sellars' ultimate

nominalistic entities, his 'basic particulars', function as such only in the context of a whole world-story – containing, as intrinsic properties of those particulars, all their synchronic and diachronic natural relations with other particulars in the actual world (Sellars 1947, 1948, 1949). In this sense, I think it is somewhat misleading to describe Sellarsian nominalism as 'atomistic', since its non-relational resources are such as to enable it to construct an analog of a seemingly contrary view, namely Spinozistic holistic relational nominalism.

15. This subset includes alethic modal facts, such as 'possibility', 'necessity' or 'law', semantic facts, such as 'meaning', 'reference' and 'truth', categorial facts such as 'propositions', 'facts', 'properties', 'kinds', 'universals', 'particulars', and intentional phenomena like 'belief', 'thought' or 'agency'. It can be argued that these kinds of normative facts are the 'ground-rules' on which the whole 'game of giving and asking for reasons' is based.
16. I take it that this distinctive metalinguistic, expressive, non-descriptive function of the above kinds of normative facts can *also* be rendered intelligible in evolutionary descriptive-explanatory terms. For example, the non-descriptive, metalinguistic functions characteristic of the 'space of reasons' could be understood as embodied in patterns of discursive habits selected and retained through a *self-differentiating* process which, by differentiating the expressive tools needed for better orienting ourselves in the world (descriptive-explanatory tools of empirical-scientific discourse) in an ever-expanding collective, collaborative and controlled manner (prescriptive-expressive tools of normative discourse), makes it possible for *both* sets of tools to better serve these purposes, thereby creating a dynamic, mutually beneficial and self-reinforcing 'symbiotic discursive relationship'.
17. From this point of view, the (normative-expressive) 'essence' of personhood cannot be eliminated by the scientific image, even if 'in the order of being' persons 'really' are bundles of processes (the unity of persons is normative-expressive, not ontological). Or, to put it somewhat paradoxically, the descriptive-explanatory elimination of persons in the scientific image has a point only to the extent to which it promotes the fundamental needs and interests that inform the normative-expressive dimension of personhood.
18. Material inferential rules (consequences, incompatibilities) are distinguished from purely formal inferential rules. According to Sellars, the validity of 'material' rules of inference depends on the content of the *non-logical* terms of the propositions involved, whereas in the case of 'formal' rules of inference it depends solely on the meaning of the *logical* terms involved (Sellars 1953a). For example, the inferences 'the cube is red → the cube is colored' or 'it is raining → it will be wet outside' are not formally valid, but are good material inferences. And the inferences 'this sample is pure copper → this sample is an electrical insulator' or 'this table is circular → this table is triangular' are not formal contradictions but are materially incompatible. Brandom has (to my mind convincingly) argued that Hegel's notion of logic and logical inference must be understood on the model of material inference. This view has the merit of somewhat demystifying the Hegelian notion of contradiction since it sees it as an expression of 'materially incompatible' commitments (Brandom 2002). Of course, even on this more deflationary Brandomian reading, Hegel would be still committed to the existence of materially incompatible facts out there in the

world, i.e. to real negation, whose 'restlessness' motivates us to change our beliefs about the world. Sellars would find this claim ultimately unacceptable.

19. Hegel's 'official' dialectical method, as it appears in the *Science of Logic*, involves showing a contradiction between two categories (e.g. 'being' and 'nothing') which is resolved by a third one ('becoming'). Category A proves to contain a contrary category B, and conversely, category B proves to contain category A, thus showing both categories to be self-contradictory. This self-contradiction is resolved by a new category C, which preserves the former categories, albeit only by abolishing their original sense. This is supposed to be Hegel's official dialectical method (we can call it the 'three-term' version), but he frequently deviates from it, using instead the 'two-term ' version presented above. I do not think that much hangs on this point. Hegel's dialectical method can well be a multi-structured formation. And, in any case, as I will attempt to show in a moment, we can find analogs of *both* those versions of the dialectic in Sellars' complex understanding of the relation between the manifest and scientific images.
20. This explanatory task or ideal can be understood as the demand, guided by epistemic norms of the manifest-image itself, for drawing material inferences concerning new cases (the unknown), in a way that explains the observed cases (the known), with the view of formulating a systematic body of empirical knowledge capable of yielding arbitrarily general pictures of the world and ourselves, at an arbitrary level of specificity in detail (Sellars 1964, 1988). This imperative for explanation is experienced precisely as a *demand*. To refuse to inquire further into the 'why' of things is to recuse oneself from the epistemic community of persons (see also Garfield 2012).
21. Let us provide an example of this 'dialectical' process: It might be thought that 'water' is picked out as 'whatever stuff causes certain effects'. In this case, it would be a schematic (manifest-image) causal-functional sortal which would really be a *placeholder* for less schematic (scientific-image) sortals. And the latter, less schematic scientific-image sortals, in turn, would be the expression of the communal epistemic ideals built into our manifest-image concept of 'water' -i.e. of what ideally *ought* to be the case for something to count as water. That is to say, scientific-image sortals would be justified by their superior explanatory power in accounting for explanatory anomalies of manifest-image observable 'water' phenomena. The same goes with the (normative-functional) sortals that identify and individuate intentional states and episodes. They are similarly schematic and ideal, and function as placeholders for less schematic scientific-image sortals that are expressions of communal epistemic ideals (concerning ideally rational behavior) built into our manifest-image concepts of intentional states.
22. We argued that the above Sellarsian version of dialectics, based on the notion of explanatory inadequacy, is structurally similar to Hegelian dialectics. But is Hegelian dialectics motivated by *explanatory* inadequacies? I would argue that it is, provided we understand 'explanation' in a broad sense in which it includes 'normative explanations' (e.g. reason-based explanations of our actions) in its scope. For Hegel, as for Aristotle, the normative is inextricably implicated in the descriptive and explanatory dimension of our practices. Normative descriptions and explanations of various forms (epistemic, practical, ethical) constitute a crucial part of our self-understanding, and it is

precisely the fact that they do not live up to the standards they themselves set in the context of each Hegelian 'shape of consciousness' that accounts for the latter's self-overcoming transformation into a new 'shape of consciousness', operating through different normative-explanatory categories. The difference between Hegel and Sellars on this count is that for Sellars the dialectic process leads to the gradual disentangling of the normative from the descriptive-explanatory dimension of our practices, and to the eventual de-ontologization of the normative, while for Hegel the entanglement of the normative and the descriptive-explanatory survives throughout the dialectical developmental process and leads to a supposedly metaphysically unproblematic ontologization of the normative. See also section 6.

23. I think that this is not the end of the story (though Sellars remains silent on this point). The Sellarsian stereoscopic fusion points toward a 'Peirceian' cognitive and practical utopia in which our conceptual-representational resources would be sufficient to lead to the avoidance of all surprise and to the establishment of a habit of positive expectation that shall not be disappointed. In this ideal situation, the normative level itself (our individual and community intentions) could be 'eliminated' in principle (though presumably not in practice), albeit only in the sense and to the extent to which it is *thereby concretely realized* in 'embodied' material processes (see Christias 2017). This would be again an example of Hegelian dialectics at work, though ironically culminating in a radically materialistic unHegelian vision of the world and ourselves.
24. Picturing is a non-semantic, natural relation between the sensory-affective system of an organism and its environment. It can be understood as an emergent, non-linear dynamic regime, implemented in nervous systems, which tracks and 'translates' changes in the external and internal environment of an organism and is tied in with motor actions and affective responses that ultimately serve navigational purposes of living organisms, including humans (Seibt 2016).
25. To see the generality of this point note that even socially laden human activities such as 'labor' can be understood in terms of homeostasis. Recall, for example, that Marx defined labor as 'man's metabolism with nature' in whose process 'nature's material is adapted by a change of form to the wants of man' so that 'labor has incorporated itself with its subject' (Marx 1906, 201). From this point of view, even social activities such as labor and consumption are but two stages of the recurring cycle of biological life. Even more generally, the very history of our civilization as a whole can be seen as a cybernetic process of expanding the range of homeostasis (which is another way of defining humanity's transformation of its environment) over several thousand years. For an examination of human civilization from this 'cybernetic' or 'engineering' viewpoint see (Lem 2013).

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