advice: in philosophy, we should have respect for the intuitive sense of an unsolved problem, and tolerance for long periods of the absence of an answer (Thomas Nagel, *Mortal Questions* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979], x–xii).

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Brandom, Robert. *From Empiricism to Expressivism: Brandom Reads Sellars.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015. Pp. 289. $35.00 (cloth).

One of the better known of the many bons mots of the Sellarsian corpus concerns his definition of philosophy: it is the attempt to understand "how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term." When applied to Sellars's philosophy in particular, one might be forgiven for doubting the possible success of such an endeavor. Richard Rorty once quipped of Sellars's followers that they were either "left-wing" or "right-wing," emphasizing one line of thought in Sellars's work to the exclusion of the other. The two lines of thought to which Rorty referred were, first, Sellars's conception of the normativity of all thought and language, famously captured by his evocative phrase "the space of reasons." Second, and equally important to Sellars, was his "*scientia mensura*," the notion (shared with contemporaries such as Quine) that "in the dimension of describing and explaining the world, science is the measure of all things, of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not" (Wilfrid Sellars, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 1 [1956]: §41, 303). The left-wing adherents to the normativity thesis included Rorty himself, along with John McDowell and Robert Brandom. Among the right-wing naturalists are such as Ruth Milliken, Jay Rosenberg, and Paul Churchland. Such a disparate group of philosophers suggests irreconcilable differences. Brandom himself reports in the introduction to his newest book, *From Empiricism to Expressivism*, that, "for a dismayingly long time, I did not really see how all the pieces of [Sellars's] work hung together, even in the broadest possible sense of the term" (24).

Like Rorty, Brandom sees a fundamental divide in Sellars, though for Brandom the divide is between two broadly "Kantian" themes or "axes" around which he sees much of the rest of Sellars's work revolving. Brandom argues that the first axis starts from Kant's conception of a privileged set of "categorial" concepts and consists in a distinction between concepts whose job it is to describe the world and concepts "whose principle expressive role is rather to make explicit essential features of the framework within which empirical description and explanation are possible" (24). Brandom thus argues that in Sellars's work Kant's (in)famous "Pure Categories of the Understanding" are redescribed in terms of a metalinguistic expressivism. The second axis is that of a "detranscendentalized" version of Kant's (in)famous phenomena/noumena distinction, upon which Sellars based his scientific naturalism and which is best understood in terms of a contrast between two "images"—the "manifest" and the "scientific"—with the scientific image understood as providing the ontologically privileged description of the world.

Brandom argues that the first axis constitutes some of Sellars's innovative and insightful work, while the second axis—Sellars's naturalism—is something that should be cast off as both philosophically problematic and inconsistent with Sellars's own best insights (80). Concerning these two axes Brandom has given us a collection of seven papers, three of which are previously published. In general, the papers build heavily on ideas familiar from Brandom's previous work. Chapter 1 gives a helpful overview of Sellars's philosophy and articulates the main thrust of Brandom's interpretation, which he then develops over the ensuing chapters. Chapters 2 and 3, both previously published, provide a reading of Sellars's most famous work, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," and develop an original line of thought concerning Sellars's rejection of empiricism, focusing in particular on empiricism's inability to adequately explain modal language and concepts. Chapters 4 and 5 primarily develop the conception of modality put to work in these initial chapters, culminating, in chapter 6, in a critique of Sellars's naturalism. Finally, chapter 7 utilizes the "expressivist" account of alethic and deontic modals developed in the previous chapters to explicate Sellars's nominalism.

In the rest of this review I discuss some aspects of Brandom's arguments concerning the two "axes" of thought identified above. My main goal here is not to provide in-depth criticism of Brandom's arguments so much as discuss the overall shape of his interpretation of Sellars, as well as places where one might part ways with Brandom. In particular, I focus on Brandom's discussion of Sellars's expressivist treatment of modality (§1) and his proposal for reading Sellars as endorsing a pragmatist-inspired form of naturalism (§2).

I. SELLARS'S EXPRESSIVISM

The first of the two main "axes" or "master ideas" (35) of Sellars's thought that Brandom characterizes consists in Sellars's "expressivism" (more on Brandom's use of this term in a moment) concerning alethic and deontic modals. Brandom argues that this position has deep Kantian roots, and that Sellars's treatment of modal language is a development of Kant's conception of a "pure" concept or category, which governs the application of empirical concepts. As Brandom puts it, "the expressive role of the pure concepts is, roughly, to make explicit what is implicit in the use of ground-level concepts: the conditions under which alone it is possible to apply them, which is to say, use them to make judgments" (37).

Brandom understands Kant's position regarding the status of the a priori categories as having two features—namely, categoricity and a priority. As the quote above indicates, Brandom construes the categoricity of the pure concepts of the understanding as constituted by their role in explicating the conditions under which any empirical concept could be applied. The a priority of these concepts consists, for Brandom, in "being able to deploy ordinary empirical descriptive concepts [such that] one already knows how to do everything one needs to know how to do in order to be able to deploy the concepts that play the expressive role characteristic of [the categories]" (39).

Brandom's point here is not merely that one must have some concepts in order to possess (and thus apply) others. This would be to say that the catego-

ries are semantic components of all our other concepts. This seems to have in fact been Kant's view, made clear by his talk of the categories as the "highest" concepts and as jointly constitutive of the most general concept of all, the concept *object*, which is itself always employed in our thinking about the world (on this point, see Clinton Tolley, "The Generality of Kant's Transcendental Logic," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 50 [2012]: 417–46, esp. §6). Rather, Brandom is conceiving of the categories as the semantic correlate of an underlying set of abilities which themselves are called upon in the making of any empirical judgment whatsoever. Put in Brandom's pragmatic expressivist terms, the kinds of things one has to be able to know how to do in order to make judgments with ordinary empirical content, include the abilities necessary to make judgments whose content includes the categories.

Brandom thus construes Kant as having had two key insights (I leave aside here whether Brandom's Kant is in fact Kant), which Sellars then capitalizes on. The first is that some of our concepts govern, in a certain sense, and are thus necessary for, the deployment of other concepts. The second is that the sense in which a class of concepts might be necessary for another is not, or need not be, merely semantic but rather can consist in the particular kinds of abilities necessary for their deployment.

Brandom then argues that Sellars takes up these points in his treatment of alethic and deontic modals, and that this forms the basis of Brandom's own brand of pragmatic inferentialism. In a passage which Brandom returns to time and again in the essay collection, Sellars, speaking of modal concepts, says, "once the tautology 'the world is described by descriptive concepts' is freed from the idea that the business of all non-logical concepts is to describe, the way is clear to an *ungrudging* recognition that many expressions which empiricists have relegated to second-class citizenship in discourse are not *inferior*, just *different*" (Wilfrid Sellars, "Counterfactuals, Dispositions, and the Causal Modalities," in *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, vol. 2, ed. H. Feigl, M. Scriven, and G. Maxwell [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1957], §79).

In what sense are modal or deontic expressions different? Brandom points to Sellars's discussion of modal language as "metalinguistic" (186). However, Brandom cautions that calling modal talk metalingusitic is also misleading (much like calling Kant's conception of the categories 'metaconceptual'). One would expect, in appealing to the metalinguistic, that modal talk would thus be talk about (first-order) talk. Indeed, Brandom quotes approvingly of Sellars's claim that, "to make first hand use of these [modal] expressions is to be about the business of *explaining* a state of affairs, or *justifying* an assertion. Thus, even if to state that p entails q is, in a legitimate sense, to state that something is the case, the primary use of 'p entails q' is not to state that something is the case, but to explain *why q*, or justify the assertion *that q*" ("Counterfactuals," 283). Thus according to Brandom's Sellars, "what one is *doing* in *using* modal expressions is explaining, justifying, or endorsing an inference" (136).

Now, this should seem a surprising claim, if for no other reason than that saying, for example, that anything that is hot enough to melt copper must also be hot enough to melt aluminum seems to be saying something about *heat, copper*, and *aluminum*, not about the concepts we use to pick out those things, or about sentences or inferences in which those concepts figure. By way of replay to this

worry Brandom notes that Sellars distinguishes between what is actually said and what is "contextually implied" in an assertion involving modal terms (139), which suggests that modal language could have a dual role. But Sellars also never fully explains what he means by such "contextual implication," using (here Brandom draws on a different and prior paper) only the following suggestive example: "there are two senses in which an utterance can be said to convey information. There is the sense in which my early morning utterance, "The sky is clear," conveys meteorological information; and there is the sense in which it conveys information about my state of mind. Let us use the term 'asserts' for the first sense of 'conveys,' and 'conveys' for the second" (Wilfrid Sellars, "Inference and Meaning," *Mind* 62 [1953]: 333).

Alternately put, we could say that, according to Sellars, in asserting that the sky is clear one reports a (putative) fact while expressing one's mental state (in this case, a belief). The move then is to say that in using modal talk, such as in making the statement that "it is impossible for something to melt copper but not aluminum" one is not, in what is said or reported, describing a modal fact, but rather expressing a mental state (or state type), for example, of approval for a certain class of inferences from the melting point of copper to the melting point of aluminum. This seems to be how Sellars sees it. On his view the mental state type is a form of approval, and specifically, approval of an inference pattern. Roughly, if our original sentence was

This torch melted the copper so it must melt the aluminum

then according to Sellars's view, we should understand this "must" as an endorsement of the inference pattern x melts copper x melts aluminum.

According to Sellars, similar things would be said for causal talk, or talk appealing to laws. Brandom notes, too, that the goodness of such inferences is defeasible, since the kind of conceptual *cum* inferential connections that underwrite these endorsements are nonmonotonic (192–93).

The resultant view is what Brandom calls the "Modal Kant-Sellars Thesis" (there is a "Normative Kant-Sellars Thesis" as well). According to this, all empirical descriptive concepts depend for their application on the subject's grasp of patterns of inference, and it is precisely these kinds of patterns which modal concepts explicitly capture (67, 151–52). Thus, the Modal Kant-Sellars Thesis construes all descriptive empirical concepts as suffused with modal notions.

For example, on this view of empirical concepts, grasp of even basic recognitional concepts, like the concept *red*, requires not only the ability to sort (paradigmatic) red things from nonred things, but also the (tacit or implicit) endorsement of inferences, such as those from "x is red" to "x is colored" or from "x is red" to "x is extended." Modal concepts are then supposed to be what allow us to explicitly capture such endorsement. To say that "necessarily, if x is red then x is colored" is making it explicit what one is doing in accepting (or asserting or believing) that something is red (for a related approach to modality that also builds on Sellars, see Amie L. Thomasson, "Modal Normativism and the Methods of Metaphysics," *Philosophical Topics* 35 [2007]: 135–60).

The Normative Kant-Sellars Thesis makes a similar claim about deontic modals—namely, that empirical concept application depends on the implicit grasp

of deontic modal concepts such as obligation and entitlement. Brandom's argument here again depends on the tight connection he sees between concept application (understood as the "deployment of a vocabulary" [168]) and assertion and inference. Though Brandom does not extensively develop the idea in this book (though see his *Making It Explicit* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994]), the Normative Kant-Sellars Thesis considers the linguistic practice of assertion as depending on the conditions under which one can be understood as making a particular claim, such as that a swatch of cloth is red. In making this claim one is also committed to others, such as that the swatch of cloth is colored (169). On Brandom's view, one does not count as a competent concept-user if one does not have a grasp of the kinds of commitments one implicitly makes in an explicit act of assertion. Making a claim is thus "taking up a particular sort of normative stance toward an inferentially articulated content. It is *endorsing* it, taking *responsibility* for it, *committing* oneself to it" (170). Correspondingly, since the content of every assertion is part of a broader inferential web, one is entitled to assert those claims to which one is committed.

So, as with the previous example, in making the assertion that the swatch is red, one is committed to the claim that it is colored and is likewise entitled to make the inference and the corresponding assertion of its being colored. Brandom further argues (170–72) that since an at least implicit understanding of normative statuses like commitment and entitlement is necessary for deploying concepts in acts of judgment then normative concepts and vocabulary are basically legitimate. Broadly put, "the *semantic* relations between what is expressed by the use of empirical descriptive vocabulary, on the one hand, and what is expressed by the use of modal and what (something different) is expressed by normative vocabulary, on the other, are essentially *pragmatically mediated* ones. To understand the relation between how things merely *are* and how they *must* be or (a different matter) *ought* to be, one must look at what one is thereby doing" (173).

At this point one might have noticed that Brandom's use of "expressivism" and its cognates differs from its more widespread use in metaethics and elsewhere. Exactly how to understand expressivism generally, and Brandom's brand in particular is a large topic—too large for me to adequately discuss here. But the basic idea which Brandom, Sellars, and contemporary versions of expressivism share is one according to which some areas of discourse have as their primary communicative function not the describing or reporting of states of affairs, but rather the expression of some pro or con attitude (note that this is compatible with there nevertheless being something described or reported in the relevant utterance or sentence). According to Sellars's and Brandom's construal of expressivism, what is expressed is a commitment to certain patterns of meaning-constituting inference. Saying "the stoplight is red" commits one to endorsing patterns of inference from that sentence to sentences such as "the stoplight is not green" and "red is a color." Brandom further uses "expressivism" to describe the position according to which one has developed a vocabulary for articulating the kinds of expressive acts one must engage in to successfully execute the relevant linguistic act. Elsewhere Brandom puts it this way, "we might think of the process of expression in the more complex and interesting cases as a matter not of transforming what is inner into what is outer but of making *explicit* what is *implicit*. This can be understood in a pragmatist sense of turning something we can initially only *do* into something

we can *say*: codifying some sort of knowing *how* in the form of a knowing *that*" (*Articulating Reasons* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000], 8).

Thus, Brandom is specifically thinking of expressivism in terms of (i) a differentiation between kinds of speech act—namely, reporting and expressing; (ii) the primacy of expressing over reporting; and (iii) the explicit articulation of a vocabulary for describing the expressive acts necessary for some act of describing or reporting (for defense of a Brandom-inspired version of expressivism in metaethics, see Matthew Chrisman, "Expressivism, Inferentialism, and Saving the Debate," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 77 [2008]: 334–58).

At this point, much of what Brandom has to say concerning the expressivist treatment of modality is an elaboration of Brandom's own Sellars-inspired views (198) rather than of Sellars himself. Partly, this comes in the form of developing a form of pragmatism Brandom takes to be merely implicit in Sellars's philosophy. But it also comes in explicit departures from Sellars's position. Nowhere is this clearer than in Brandom's attempt to combine the expressivist view just articulated with a particular brand of modal realism (89–91, 190–91). Why endorse a form of realism? Brandom rightfully worries that Sellars's distinction between reporting and expressing still requires that something be reported, and that it isn't at all clear what would be reported on the view that Sellars himself articulates. The notion that expressivism and realism are compatible is not itself new, having been endorsed, for example, by metaethical forms of expressivism (e.g., David Copp, "Realist-Expressivism: A Neglected Option for Moral Realism," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 18 [2001]: 1–43). Brandom takes advantage of this to develop his own version of Sellars's view of modality.

However, the "realism" that Brandom has in mind is quite minimal. He articulates it in terms of three theses (195): "(MR1) Some modally qualified claims are true. (MR2) Those that are state *facts*. (MR3) Some of those facts are *objective*, in the sense that they are independent of the activities of concept users: they would be facts even if there never were or never had been concept users."

The notion of a "fact" appealed to here is that of a Fregean "Thought" or "thinkable," not a (mind-independent) state of affairs understood as consisting of an object and a property or universal (195). Thus Brandom's realism is not likely to be one which would appeal to anyone who would endorse anything like the modal realism popular in post-Kripkean (and especially Lewisian) versions of possible world semantics.

What then are objective modal facts on Brandom's view? According to Brandom they are sets of incompatibility relations stemming from the kinds of material consequence relations empirical judgments may stand in (199–203). For example, what makes the property *red* the property that it is, according to Brandom, is its standing in a web of relations to other properties (or classes of properties), some of which are (nonlogically) compatible, and some of which are not. For example, it is compatible (indeed, required) with something's being (entirely) red that it is extended, but not that it is green. Thus Brandom construes properties as exhibiting the very same kind of holistic determinacy relations that he does for concepts. Moreover, since Brandom is conceiving of these objective facts as thinkables, it isn't clear that there is any ultimate distinction to be made between relations of property compatibility and incompatiblity that isn't also to be made for conceptual relations of compatiblity and incompatibility. It isn't just

that, on Brandom's view, when we get the conceptual issues right that our judgments adequately track the facts in the world. Rather, the conceptual order and the factual order seem for Brandom to come to the same thing. Thus the fact that these two go in such lockstep might, at least for some, undermine the sense in which Brandom delivers a genuine form of realism.

That Brandom's position is a departure from Sellars himself is quite clear, since Sellars explicitly denies that there are modal facts. In the same article from which much of Brandom's exposition is drawn Sellars says,

> The idea that the world can, in principle, be so described that the description contains no modal expression is of a piece with the idea that the world can, in principle, be so described that the description contains no prescriptive expression. For what is being called to mind is the ideal of a statement of 'everything that is the case' which, however, serves through and through, only the purpose of stating what is the case. And it is a logical truth that such a description, however many modal expressions might properly be used in arriving at it, or in justifying it, or in showing the relevance of one of its components to another, could contain no modal expression. ("Counterfactuals," 283)

The motivation for Sellars's conception of the world as all that is the case, and as not containing either modal or deontic facts, is part of his naturalism. Brandom explicitly rejects this part of Sellars's work, and it is to this issue that we'll now turn.

II. NATURALISM AND PRAGMATISM

I've presented Brandom as arguing that the best way to understand Sellars's views on modality is to construe him as distinguishing between what a statement says and what it conveys or expresses. Brandom then argued that the notion of "expression" is best understood in terms of approval or disapproval of certain kinds of activity—namely patterns of inferential reasoning. Brandom describes this conception of the modal as part of Sellars's antiempiricist argument that the empirical/descriptive depends on the modal, not in the sense that modal concepts are needed to refer to a particular subject matter, but rather that the kinds of inferential abilities and patterns that modal language explicates are themselves necessary for the having and applying of any empirical descriptive concepts whatsoever. All of this constitutes Brandom's elaboration of the first Kantian "axis" of Sellars's thought.

Brandom's other positive contribution to our understanding of Sellars is his suggestion that we replace the second axis—Sellars's naturalism, as informed by a privileging of science and its ontology—with a pragmatic naturalism. Though this idea is not extensively developed in the book—Brandom focuses more on a complex negative argument against Sellarsian naturalism—it is significant for attempting to show how a "left-wing", nonscientistic conception of nature and the natural might be developed from motivations inherent in Sellars's own work.

Despite Sellars's claim, quoted in Section I above, that we should not view nondescriptive concepts or language as inferior, just different, Sellars neverthe-

less seems to privilege description in the coming to know of what there is, and (ideal) science as providing the lingua franca for that description. Brandom suggests that this is a mistake. Adopting a distinction first made by Huw Price ("Naturalism without Representationalism," in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. D. MacArthur and M. Caro [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004], 71–88), Brandom distinguishes between two kinds of naturalism. According to the first, "object naturalism," the naturalistic project is one of showing how, given a representationalist semantics for the relevant area of discourse, the corresponding states of affairs might be "placed" or otherwise fit in with a particular privileged conception of the world (Brandom presents Frank Jackson's "location problem" as a prime example of this; see Frank Jackson, *From Metaphysics to Ethics* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000]).

In contrast, according to the second, "subject naturalism" that Brandom recommends, the naturalist "makes no assumptions about whether the target vocabulary admits of a properly representational semantics" (91). Instead of solving a "location problem," the subject naturalist seeks an account of the practices which underlie the thought and talk of the relevant subject. Brandom then argues that Sellars's insights concerning the expressive nature of modal talk (and the normative generally) are best suited to a form of subject naturalism.

Brandom illustrates the conception of subject naturalism with the example of naturalist treatments of mathematics. If one were an object naturalist one would likely find mathematical talk troublesome, as it would seem to require an ontology of nonphysical abstracta. Brandom suggests that this problem could be avoided by adopting a form of subject naturalism. In particular, the subject naturalist aims at constructing a pragmatic, rather than referential, metasemantic theory. This is accomplished by appeal to what Brandom calls a "pragmatic metavocabulary" which "enables one to talk about what one is *doing* in *using* linguistic expressions" (189). Why would this assuage one's naturalistic worries? Brandom claims that if we attend to the abilities and practices that underlie some area of discourse and find them to be naturalistically acceptable then "there need be no fear that anything is going on that is puzzling from a naturalistic point of view" (92).

This conception of naturalism as dissolving worries about ontological commitment by appeal to the mundane sorts of abilities required to engage in a particular form of discourse has deeply Wittgensteinian roots and bears a strong resemblance, in spirit if not in letter, to the "second naturalism" of Brandom's Pittsburgh colleague John McDowell (see chap. 4 of *Mind and World* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996]). Brandom's pragmatic naturalism is also agnostic as what constitutes the fundamental or privileged level of descriptive discourse. It could be (ideal) physics, the special sciences, the ordinary empirical discourse of the "folk," or something else entirely.

However, it isn't obvious that Brandom's proposal for a more relaxed or "extended" naturalism (95) is really going to resolve the kinds of ontological worry typically generated by its less relaxed adherents. For example, mathematical discourse raises worries for naturalism, among other reasons, because of our inability to satisfactorily explain the reliability of mathematical practice in generating knowledge, especially if this reliability is couched in causal terms. The fact that we can articulate a pragmatic metavocabulary explicating the sorts of

things one must do in being initiated into (what we might call) the "mathematical community of discourse" without invoking any mysterious abilities doesn't neutralize the epistemological worry, but rather exacerbates it. It is precisely because we consider nothing unusual to be going on in the learning of mathematics (or being initiated into the mathematical community) that we become perplexed as to the cognitive workings underlying mathematical knowledge. Brandom concedes that such considerations might "throw doubt on the aptness of this sort of discourse to the kind of representationalist semantic treatment that can be seen to be the source of these difficulties" (92). But if this is right it would seem that the kind of subject naturalism that Brandom is offering provides insufficient defense from the sorts of, for example, causal considerations that typically lead one to put scientific considerations first in the order of explanation and to designate as ultimately "noncognitive," "nondescriptive," or "nonfactual," those areas of discourse that sit poorly with what our best science tells us is the case. Thus it would appear that even if subject and object naturalism are distinguished by different methodologies, the results might be largely the same.

Such worries aside, Brandom's discussion of Sellars is extremely rich. I've considered only some aspects of the central themes of the book. There is much else besides, including an extensive discussion of Sellars's critique of empirical "givenness," his conception of observation, and a complex critique of Sellars's naturalism based on the nature of sortal concepts and their application conditions. Brandom offers a compelling, if very opinionated, take on central aspects of Sellars's work. Those interested in Brandom's or Sellars's work, the history of expressivism, or the history of analytic philosophy more generally will benefit greatly from this book.

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Bratman, Michael. *Shared Agency.*
New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. Pp. 219. $105.00 (cloth); $31.95 (paper).

Shared Agency brings together and further refines ideas in the theory of collective agency and action that Michael Bratman has been developing over the past twenty years or so. In it, he presents his account of shared intention, and its role in small-scale collective action, in its most comprehensive and systematic form. The theory presented in *Shared Agency* is developed in impressive detail; the arguments are careful and rigorous; and the overall view is both illuminating and challenging. It is a major achievement and a must-read for anyone interested in issues of collective action and intentionality.

FROM INDIVIDUAL TO SHARED AGENCY

The target phenomenon Bratman sets out to theorize is the form of agency exhibited by relatively small, nonhierarchical groups of people when they intentionally do something together—for example, singing an impromptu duet or