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Pure Pragmatics and the Transcendence of Belief

Accuracy in the philosophical theory of rationality demands that we recognize particular beliefs as arising within the context of larger units, the cultural or conceptual schemes, patterns, or practices, involvement in which itself provides standards and grounds for their rational evaluation. At the same time, though, a satisfactory account of rationality cannot hold the standards, values, or commitments of one particular culture, practice, or conceptual scheme, even one's own, immune from rational criticism. In order to accurately and responsibly picture the shape of our commitments and the dynamics of their revision over time, in other words, the theory of rationality must reconcile the *immanence* of reason to particular cultural and conceptual units with its *transcendence* of them. This raises a deep and far-ranging problem of perspective. In his perspicuous presentation of it, Hilary Putnam put the problem this way:

There are two points that must be balanced, both points that have been made by philosophers of many different kinds: (1) talk of what is 'right' and 'wrong' in any area only makes sense against the background of an inherited tradition; but (2) traditions themselves can be *criticized* ... On the one hand, there is no notion of reasonableness at all without cultures, practices, procedures; on the other hand, the cultures, practices, procedures we inherit are not an algorithm to be slavishly followed. As Mill said, commenting on his own inductive logic, there is no rule book which will not lead to terrible results 'if supposed to be conjoined with universal idiocy.' Reason is, in this sense, both immanent (not to be found outside of concrete language games and institutions) and transcendent (a regulative idea that we use to criticize the conduct of all activities and institutions). (p. 431).

As Putnam argues, it is difficult to find a standpoint of theory from which the contrasting claims of immanence and transcendence can be reconciled. Some traditional philosophical projects attempt to present their standards or concepts as embodying a purely transcendent perspective; in so doing, they fail to recognize the dependence of their own normative and putatively necessary claims on the concrete historical and conceptual contexts in which they are formulated. To theorize, or attempt to do so, from the transcendent perspective is to present one's own standards and guiding principles of rationality as endowed with an austere *necessity* and immutability, turning a blind eye to the dependence of all such standards on particular historical and cultural contexts. On the other hand, as Putnam argues, to affirm a purely immanent perspective in philosophical theorizing, a perspective that affirms the *contingency* and contextuality of claims expressing rational standards, is to deprive oneself of the only consistent theoretical basis for rationally evaluating and criticizing culture and practices overall. The immanent perspective either denies the rational criticizability of particular cultures or conceptual schemes, thereby inviting an untenable and self-undermining relativism; or winds up applying what are avowedly *one's own* culture-immanent standards to all other cultures and practices, thus practicing an unacceptable *cultural imperialism* (which, Putnam notes, is also self-undermining for us given that we in fact do not take our commitments to be *constitutive* of rationality). Neither the

position wholly inside a particular practice nor the position outside all practices will do; each position fails to recognize something essential to rationality.

Philosophers in the analytic tradition have long recognized the relevance of metalinguistic semantic theory to any comprehensive account of the interrelated notions of *truth*, *verification*, *justification*, and *rationality* in a language. In the practice of a language, the evaluative use of these notions is inseparable from the use of semantic discourse to characterize the meaning of the particular sentences to which they apply. As is well known, the Quinean model of radical translation, further developed by Davidson as the model of radical interpretation, captures this interdependence by showing that the determination of meaning and the characterization of truth-conditions for sentences in a language are systematically interrelated in interpretive practice. On the Davidsonian picture, we gain a specific grasp of meaning for a language as a whole only by characterizing the recursive structure of its truth predicate; similarly, it is reasonable to suppose that any comprehensive theory of rational justification for a language as a whole will depend on the metalinguistic perspective of semantic discourse. Rational justification, like truth, is perspicuous in the practice of a language only in terms of the behavior of its speakers in accepting or refusing to accept new claims and sentences, and in their own articulation of the standards by which they do so. Within the ambit of the theory of interpretation, then, to make sense of what is involved in understanding a sentence is at the same time to make sense of what would be involved in justifying it or accepting it. It follows that an account of the conditions for the possibility of characterizing a sentence's meaning within a language will at the same time provide the basis of an account of its rational acceptability.

What is perhaps less obvious is that considerations of the pragmatics of interpretation can provide the basis for a semantic model of rationality that solves the problem of immanence and transcendence. The pure pragmatic model we develop in this paper shows how particular beliefs, adopted in the course of a specific linguistic practice, can attain the status of *transcendence* with respect to that practice – that is, can be recognized as providing grounds for its rational criticism – without leaving the *immanent* perspective constituted by the patterns and rules of use definitive of that very practice. The possibility of characterizing beliefs as simultaneously immanent and transcendent, and thereby providing the basis for a solution to Putnam's problem, depends on our recognizing in the concrete dynamics of intersubjective interpretation the pragmatic basis for the determinations of rational justification and warrant that we subsequently present as binding standards, both for ourselves and for others. Identifying these standards as they actually operate in the concrete practice of a language itself requires, as we shall see, paying somewhat greater attention than is usual to the basis of semantic discourse in the intersubjective constitution of the situation of interpretation itself. The yield is an avowedly theoretical characterization of rational belief-fixation that nevertheless espouses, in its consistent avoidance of the particular perspective of theory from which the problem of transcendence and immanence itself arises, a more thorough and consistent pragmatism.

I

Beginning in 1947, Wilfred Sellars outlined a program of semantic analysis that he called "pure pragmatics." The program aimed to solve traditional philosophical problems through the characterization of semantical concepts in terms of the pragmatics of their use. Sellars conceived the program as a supplement to existing formal characterizations of syntactic and semantic notions, for instance the Tarskian characterization of truth. The supplement would be *pure* in that it would retain the non-factual character of existing formal analyses; but it would be *pragmatic* in that it would give a formal analysis of semantic predicates like "meaningful" and

“verified,” predicates whose adequate analysis would require an explanation of how an *entire language* could be meaningful at all.¹ Thus, pure pragmatics would comprise a “pure theory of empirically meaningful languages,” and its formal analysis would display the pragmatic conditions that are required for any speech behavior to amount to empirically meaningful language:²

I shall explore the possibility that the assignment of the above predicates [viz., ‘verifiable,’ ‘confirmable,’ ‘verified,’ ‘confirmed,’ and ‘meaningful’] to the expressions of an object calculus can be clarified by the recognition of a class of meta-linguistic rules which figure in neither pure syntax, nor in pure semantics *as at present conceived*; rules which define a new dimension of calculus structure, a dimension which alone entitles them to be called *languages* in a genuinely epistemological sense of the term.

I have ... suggested that the term ‘pragmatics’ be rescued for philosophy through the assignment of the title ‘pure pragmatics’ to that branch of the pure theory of language which deals with the above predicates, and clarifies their relation to this new dimension of calculus structure.³

For Sellars, the formal character of the analyses of pure pragmatics is the key to its avoidance of a psychologism that would reduce the semantic predicates it treats to descriptions of factual behavior. It is only as a formal inquiry, indeed, that pure pragmatics succeeds in capturing the *normativity* of these predicates in the practice of a language:

Pure pragmatics or, *which is the same thing*, epistemology, is a formal rather than a factual area. In addition to the concepts of pure syntactics and semantics, pure pragmatics is concerned with other concepts which are *normative* as opposed to the factual concepts of psychology, as ‘true’ is normative as opposed to ‘believed’, or ‘valid’ is normative (again, remember that our use of the term ‘normative’ is tentative) as opposed to ‘inferred’.⁴

According to pure pragmatics, the semantic predicates of a language – predicates like “verified” and “meaningful” – work by characterizing the abstract *semantic roles* of utterances in the language, the causal and dispositional roles occupied by them in the practice of the language. The meaning of a sentence is to be clarified by invoking the abstract habits, dispositions, and tendencies that typically underlie its use, habits that can themselves be characterized in terms of the causal stimuli that typically elicit particular utterances and the patterns of reasoning that speakers exhibit in the practice of communication. But it is essential to the purity of pure pragmatics that the formal description of these roles accomplished by semantic predicates does not view them simply as instances of *factual* speech-behavior.⁵ Rather, pure pragmatics is to characterize them *formally*, in terms of the special use of metalanguage semantic predicates to characterize the meaning of terms and utterances in the language. Though this use depends on reference to the causal roles of the utterances it characterizes, it does not simply (as we shall see in more detail) do so by *describing* these roles as factual behavior. In this, pure pragmatics suggests, lies the possibility that the semantic predicates of a language genuinely operate as normative ones, capable of supporting determinations of truth and validity that go beyond the description of facts.

¹ Sellars (1947b), p. 33.

² Sellars (1947b), p. 31.

³ Sellars (1947a), pp. 7-8.

⁴ Sellars (1948), p. 69.

⁵ Sellars (1947a), pp. 8-9/

Sellars applied the program of pure pragmatics to a variety of specific problems in epistemology and metaphysics, including the problem of inferred entities and the problem, decisive in his most famous work, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, of the epistemic authority of first-person inner-state reports. But what is perhaps still most significant in his program is his identification of the concrete *recognition* of linguistic roles in intersubjective interpretation as the basis for our acceptance and modification of beliefs. According to pure pragmatics, to understand the meaning of a sentence is not to describe to *recognize* it as *instantiating* an abstract semantic role, a role that one is oneself capable of instantiating. Such recognition makes possible the translation of sentences in an unfamiliar language; for on this account, to translate a foreign sentence just is to recognize it as occupying the same abstract role, in the foreign language, that the translation does in one's own. The possibility of translation is here, as on the Quinean/Davidsonian model of interpretation, the basis of any possible metalinguistic determination or evaluation of the standards of rationality exhibited in the foreigner's utterances and practices. But according to pure pragmatics, the general possibility of such recognition, and its characterization in semantic discourse, does not depend on or presuppose the possibility of giving any *reductive* or *theoretic* account of the role recognized. Its pragmatic basis, in each case, is not the *comprehension* of an abstract semantic role but rather the *recognition* of it as an element in one's own behavioral repertoire. All that is required is that one *see* the role occupied by the foreign sentence as *the same as* the role occupied by one of one's own sentences. Semantic discourse, in fact, provides means for asserting this similarity even when one is in no position (as one generally is not, absent the knowledge of a comprehensive linguistic theory) to describe or characterize the role so recognized in theoretical terms.

As we shall see, construing the basis of semantic discourse as non-theoretical in this way provides the key to a theory of rationality that solves the problem of immanence and transcendence. For it allows us to portray commitments undertaken *within* a practice – even our own – as genuinely transcendent to it, without demanding that we take an impossible theoretical *perspective* outside that practice. Based, as they are, in the intersubjective recognition of shared semantic roles, our judgments of rationality are then perspicuous as fully *our own*, wholly dependent on the concrete practices in which they arise, but at the same time capable of embodying the terms in which those practices are themselves criticizable.

II

In the history of the analytic tradition, clarification of the standards of rationality has consistently taken the form of the theoretical description of the semantic and syntactic rules of the languages in which they figure. For the logical positivists, to specify a language is to define the syntactic and semantic rules for the use of its terms. Freely stipulated on the level of the definition of a formal language, these rules admit of some degree of variation and choice. Accordingly, throughout his career, Carnap defended a *pragmatic conventionalism* about meaning, truth, and standards of rationality. For the late Carnap, to pursue philosophical theory is to be faced with the choice of a variety of possible linguistic frameworks, each one specifying its own standards of justification, acceptability, and truth: the choice between them is to be made, where it is possible at all, on pragmatic grounds of suitability to our antecedently conceived needs.⁶ But as Quine would later suggest, the perspective from which Carnap claimed to be able to describe this pragmatic choice is itself untenable: outside the context of any particular language, there are *no* standards in virtue of which to make the choice, not even 'pragmatic' ones. Carnap's position envisions a clean separation between 'internal' questions within a semantic framework and

⁶ Carnap (1950).

'external' questions about which framework to adopt; such a separation is itself only possible if each framework can be defined by a set of meaning postulates analytic for the language. In "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" Quine notoriously challenged the meaningfulness of assertions of analyticity of the sort that Carnap had relied on to define his language frameworks, and accordingly suggested with his own holism that the wholly external perspective from which Carnap had aimed to define the choice between language frameworks is itself unoccupable.⁷ Quine's solution was to assert the dependence of our transcendent standards of judgments, applicable to the evaluation of particular practices, on those practices themselves. For instance, the epistemology of empirical science emerges, on Quine's picture, as simply a chapter of the empirical science of psychology itself, 'naturalized' as part of our best empirical theories of the world.⁸

But as Putnam argues in his own presentation of the problem of immanence and transcendence, it is not clear that this Quinean position, insofar as it retains normative standards at all, avoids an ultimately self-undermining relativism. One problem, Putnam argues, with the purely immanent position that sees normative standards as entirely dependent on the practices or conceptual schemes that are their contexts is that it leads inevitably to such a relativism, which must be self-undermining.⁹ For the purely immanent perspective does not offer any place from which to *articulate* the general claim of relativism to which its adherents, impressed by the dependence of standards on their cultural contexts, are tempted. The only alternative, consistent with a purely immanent perspective, is to absolutize the claim of one's own standards to validity while nevertheless recognizing them as immanent to one's particular culture. This amounts to assuming *cultural imperialism*, a position that, even if not *necessarily* incoherent, is clearly inappropriate.¹⁰

The problem with taking a purely transcendent perspective, such as that of Carnap's 'pragmatic choice' of frameworks, is that such a perspective distances itself from the contextual conditions under which alone rationality is possible, and so undermines its own claim to intelligibility as a rational position. But there is a sense in which the problem with the purely immanent perspective *also* results from the temptation to find a position for theory outside any particular practice or conceptual scheme. For it is really only from such a position that the overall claim of relativism can be articulated at all. We can only say that particular standards of rationality are *relative* to cultures from a position that abstracts from the particular culture in which we are operating. On the other hand, to give a description of the standards of rationality that avoids this "outside" perspective is ultimately to refuse to acknowledge the rational criticizability of practices overall. This is why, as Putnam argues, the purely immanent position, if it stays purely immanent, can ultimately only be culturally imperialist. If it really stays purely immanent, it must simply take the standards of its own culture as *the* standards, the only possible ones.

There is no obvious way to give a theoretical characterization of the source of standards of rationality that avoids the dilemma entirely. Any such characterization must choose its position; and every conceivable theoretical position either fails in some way to recognize the dependence of our standards on particular practices or the rational criticizability of those practices. On the other hand, the dilemma will be resolved if there is a way to *avoid* viewing our own practices from an impossible "outside" position while *still nevertheless* recognizing them as rationally criticizable overall. This will be possible if we can *without leaving an immanent perspective* legitimately portray certain norms and beliefs as nevertheless *transcendent* to our practices. The

⁷ Quine (1950).

⁸ Quine (1969).

⁹ Putnam (1983), p. 431.

¹⁰ Putnam (1983), pp. 431-34.

dilemma is unavoidable, as long as the goal is the adoption of a comprehensive reductive or explanatory *theory* of standards; but it is far from obvious that there is no alternative to this goal. And in fact reconceiving the role of philosophical theory in the elucidation of rationality allows for a consistent solution. For the suppressed common premise that generates both the impossible position of transcendence and the self-undermining relativism of immanence is that a philosophical *description* of rationality must be a philosophical *theory* of the source of rational norms. The premise can be questioned, and replaced, within the context of a consistent *practice* of philosophical description that exploits, rather than theorizes, the norms and standards to which the practitioner herself is committed. Within such a practice, we shall argue, guiding principles and rational standards can be recognized as having a genuinely transcendent status, and thereby providing grounds for the rational criticizability of the practices in which they are embedded. But it is nevertheless wholly unnecessary to leave the theoretical position of pure immanence, of full commitment to claims recognized as completely dependent on their contexts.

III

What does it take for a belief or commitment, undertaken within a particular practice, to be able to serve as a basis for the rational criticizability of that practice itself? A belief has the status of *transcendence* with respect to a particular practice if:

1) It is rationally intelligible as *binding* for practitioners of the practice in a way that does not just depend on their *in fact being* practitioners of that particular practice (so that it is rationally intelligible as binding for practitioners of other practices as well).

and

2) Adherence to it is rationally intelligible as a *precondition of the possibility* of that practice (and other conceivable ones as well).

The transcendence of beliefs with respect to a practice takes determinate shape in the intersubjective context of interpretation, the same context in which determinations of the *rationality* of an interlocutor's beliefs are at stake. Here, the determination of whether a form of words expresses a rational and binding belief is inseparable from the determination of what it means. The only language we have in which to characterize the beliefs of our interlocutors as rational or irrational, warranted or unwarranted, is the semantic language with which we characterize meaning, and is dependant on interpretation in the same way. In the context of interpretation, the utterances that we characterize as expressing rationally warranted standards will be ones that we construe as embodying *our own* standards, standards that we ourselves antecedently accept. The beliefs so recognized, especially if they are understood to occupy a central role in one's own processes of rational deliberation, are candidates for the status of transcendence. To recognize them, in the context of interpretation, in the discourse of the representative of an alien practice is to see them as binding on that practice as well as one's own, and in that sense as transcendent of either one.

What are the pragmatic preconditions for the possibility of this recognition of beliefs as transcendent? The Sellarsian solution to the problem of immanence and transcendence turns on a pragmatic construal of the resources of *semantic* discourse in intersubjective interpretation. In this context, the determination of rational norms and standards depends on the determination of meanings: it is only by determining what a form of words *means* that the status of the rational norm that it embodies can be determined. To describe a sentence as *meaning* thus-and-so,

however, is to characterize it as occupying a particular *role* in the cognitive economy of the speaker. Accordingly, the Sellarsian solution begins by considering the pragmatic preconditions of the semantic practice of describing a sentence as meaning thus-and-so. Sellars develops the account in a series of articles, but perhaps the clearest presentation is contained in the article “A Semantical Solution to the Mind-Body Problem.”¹¹ Here, Sellars is particularly concerned with the semantical status of discourse about inner states such as sensations; but the method of his solution has more general applications. Here as elsewhere, the solution to what appears to be a deep philosophical problem depends on our understanding the pragmatic status of the functioning of the semantic predicate “means.” For Sellars, this predicate has the metalinguistic use of gesturing at an *abstract semantic role* which may be shared by several different sentence-types across different particular languages.

We can appreciate the pragmatic form of the indication of such a role by considering what might be said by a sentence that accomplishes it. Consider, for instance, Jones’ utterance of:

When Smith says “es regnet,” he *means* that it is raining.

In saying this, according to Sellars, Jones refers to an abstract semantic role Ψ that can be characterized in terms of the functional schema:

“Es regnet” uttered by b means *it is raining* \leftrightarrow Ψ (“es regnet”, b)

Here, the right side of the biconditional “says of b that it has certain habits relating its utterances of ‘es regnet’ to other utterances, to other habits, and to sensory stimuli.”¹² It is these habits of practice, habits responsible for the systematic role, in b’s practice of the language, of his uses of ‘es regnet’, that qualify these uses as meaning that it is raining. As the predicate “means” is generally used, though, “es regnet” can mean the same thing when uttered by a German-speaker as “il pleut” means when uttered by a French speaker; so we can take it, Sellars suggests, that the habits of the German-speaker with respect to “es regnet” share a “common generic feature” with the habits of the French-speaker with respect to “il pleut.” Thus, we can write the general schema:

“...” uttered by b means *it is raining* \leftrightarrow K (“...”, b)

where K (“...”,b) says that b has the particular habits concerning “...” that qualify it, when uttered by b, to mean *it is raining*.¹³ In other words, the right-hand side of the biconditional says that “...” occupies the particular pragmatic and conceptual *role* in b’s cognitive economy and practice of the language that makes it an utterance meaning that it is raining. But the scheme is now general; it characterizes anything that plays this role, regardless of the language in which it plays it. That b’s utterance, within *any* language, fills this role means that it instances the generic tendencies and habits which qualify b as a competent user of the phrase “it is raining”. Viewed from another direction, of course, these generic tendencies and habits are just those that qualify b as a competent verbal reporter of *rain*, and thus invest his utterances of “...” with the empirical meaning that *it is raining*.

The suggested analysis of the semantic term “means,” then, analyzes the assertion that an utterance has a particular meaning as the assertion that it occupies a particular semantic role in the cognitive economy of a speaker and the practice of a language. But it is essential to the pragmatic character of Sellars’ suggestion about the nature of mentalistic terms that one cannot,

¹¹ Sellars (1953).

¹² Sellars (1953), p. 236.

¹³ Sellars (1953), p. 237.

in general, *specify* the semantic role in question except by issuing, in one's own language, a token utterance that *occupies* it. Equivalently, one cannot, in general, *specify* the habits and dispositions that a meaningful token of a particular content must manifest, without issuing a token utterance that itself *manifests* those very habits and dispositions:

Now we are all familiar with the fact that when we say 'Jones' utterances of 'es regnet' means it is raining' we are mentioning 'es regnet' and using 'it is raining' to convey what is meant by 'es regnet' as uttered by Jones... [If] what we say of Jones' utterances is true, then the utterance 'it is raining' which we *use* is the manifestation of habits generically identical with Jones' habits with respect to 'es regnet'. Thus, when I utter

"Es regnet" uttered by b means it is raining <-> K ("es regnet", b)

the "it is raining" of the left hand side is a manifestation of the habits mentioned by 'K ("it is raining", Sellars)', and when I utter

"It is raining" uttered by Sellars means *it is raining* <-> K("it is raining", Sellars)

the unquoted "it is raining" on the left hand side is a *manifestation* of the habits mentioned by the right hand side. (p. 237)

Sellars emphasizes that a description of a speaker's utterance as meaning thus-and-so can *convey* information about the semantic role of the utterance by comprising an utterance that *occupies* the same general role, without involving any *description* of the role itself.

On the analysis, in fact, the use of ordinary semantic discourse depends, in general, on the possibility of *conveying* without *specifying* the conceptual roles of the specific utterances it characterizes. The analysis therefore shows how semantic discourse can be 'about' semantic roles, in the special pragmatic sense of 'about' in which a semantic sentence can be 'about' a semantic role by *exemplifying* without *specifying* that role.¹⁴ This kind of exemplification cannot be understood, in general, except through a pragmatic description of the capability of semantic discourse to *show* or *exhibit* what it does not explicitly state. Accordingly, it is a consequence of the suggested analysis that a particular utterance can be construed as meaningful only by an interpreter capable of employing utterances with the *same* linguistic role as that occupied by the expression of that state. Semantic language tokens the role in question itself, *showing* the speaker's recognition of it as something of which he is himself capable; but there is no reason to suppose that for such a tokening to be possible, the speaker must be able to *describe* or *characterize* the role thereby tokened:

While we can convey how Jones uses 'es regnet' by the use of "'es regnet' uttered by Jones means it is raining' only to someone who shares our habits with respect to 'it is raining', we can convey this information even though neither of us has a 'clear and distinct' idea of what these habits are, and even though neither of us is able to characterize these habits without the repeated use of statements of the form "S means ****", and indeed of the form "in Jones' mind there is a thought about ****". (p. 244).

¹⁴ Sellars (1953), p. 245.

Because semantical pragmatics is (loosely put) a matter of *showing* rather than saying, only someone capable of meaningfully making an utterance can describe an utterance meaning the same thing, when issued by another agent, as meaningful

Elsewhere, Sellars emphasizes again that even though the identification of semantic roles in intersubjective interpretation *is* the identification of the typical *causal* roles of token utterances, such identification does not depend on detailed knowledge of, or invite reduction to, *descriptions* of those causal roles:

And let me emphasize ... that to make a semantical statement about a verbal event is not a shorthand way of talking about its causes and effects, although there is a sense of 'imply' in which semantical statements about verbal productions do imply information about the causes and effects of these productions. Thus when I say "'Es regnet' means it is raining," my statement 'implies' that the causes and effects of utterances of 'Es regnet' beyond the Rhine parallel the causes and effects of utterances of 'It is raining' by myself and other members of the English-speaking community. And if it didn't imply this, it couldn't perform its role. But this is not to say that semantical statements are definitional shorthand for statements about the causes and effects of verbal performances. (pp. 92-93)

On the pure pragmatic account of semantic discourse, then, the *theoretical description* of semantic roles cedes to their *pragmatic recognition*. To understand someone else's form of words, on the account, *just is* to recognize those words as exemplifying a semantic role that one is oneself capable of exhibiting. It is essential to the possibility of this recognition that the object of recognition, the abstract semantic role occupied by an interlocutor's utterance, is something one oneself *shares*, and accordingly is capable of exhibiting in semantic discourse. And there is no general reason to expect that the concrete recognition so expressed must be based on any form of descriptive knowledge of what is recognized. Semantic discourse, after all, adequately invokes the understanding of an utterance not by describing it from a theoretical perspective, but by exhibiting it directly, by instancing it. On the pure pragmatic account, the concrete recognition of a semantic role, expressed with a semantic sentence that exhibits it, is all that is necessary for the understanding of meaning. Neither the ordinary speaker nor the philosophical theorist, in order to do justice to the epistemological and pragmatic basis for semantic discourse, need supplement this account of recognition with any further substantive description of the role involved.

The replacement of description with recognition makes a decisive difference to any account of the functioning of semantic discourse and all the kinds of linguistic evaluation and characterization that depend on it. Most discussions of semantic roles remain strongly *reductionist* in their identification of meanings: on standard accounts, to give an account of the meaning of a sentence must be to give an account of the semantic role it in fact satisfies. Standard accounts of interpretation, including Davidson's, retain this reductionism (despite an overall semantic holism about the *relationships* of meanings) in their conception of a "theory of meaning" for a language as providing a set of recursive rules governing the semantics of the language. Sellars's account, by contrast, is *anti-reductionist* in that it provides no particular reason for thinking that the semantic roles exhibited in semantic discourse ought to be theoretically describable at all. Since the abstract descriptions of these roles are not opaque even to those who exploit them in ordinary discourse, the philosophical theorist of meaning can do no more than redescribe the ordinary linguistic practice with them. Given the grounding of determinations of meaningfulness and rationality in concrete acts of recognition, she cannot hope

to provide any general account of the semantic role of a sentence that completely abstracts from these acts.

This anti-reductive, recognitional account of the understanding of metalinguistic claims provides the basis for a Sellarsian characterization of transcendence that shows how beliefs can have properties 1), and 2), above, *even if they are arrived at purely from an immanent standpoint*. On the pure pragmatic account, the evaluation of the rationality of various beliefs, especially in the cross-linguistic context, wholly depends on the metalinguistic resources of semantic discourse. The recognition of a belief, in one's own form of words or another's, as rational and binding, is just an aspect of the concrete recognition of the meaning of that form of words. To characterize a belief as rational and binding, then, is just to use metalinguistic discourse to exhibit this recognition, without theorizing it. But to exploit the metalinguistic resources of semantic discourse in this way, even in the interpretation of an unfamiliar language, is *not to leave* the purely immanent perspective of a particular language and practice for an impossible, transcendent one; it is, rather, simply to make use of the means and standards, intrinsic to each natural language, by means of which it leaves room for its own criticizability. On the pure pragmatic account, the possibility of semantic discourse itself shows how semantic roles can be *exhibited* without being *described*. It follows that the metalinguistic semantic discourse that expresses judgments of rationality by carrying out this exhibition need not, in general, adopt a descriptive or theoretical position transcendent to the practice in which it figures; for it need not adopt any descriptive or theoretical position at all. The perspective from which it speaks just is the ordinary one of the practice of the language, and there is no warrant within the account for going beyond it.

Nevertheless, pure pragmatics also gives the theorist the ability to construe judgments as genuinely *transcendent* in that they satisfy 1) and 2) above. For on this account, construing another person's concepts and judgments as *rational* will depend on *recognizing* these very concepts and judgments as binding on oneself just as construing another's utterances as *meaningful* depends on *recognizing* a shared semantic role. The understanding requisite to interpreting a particular form of words as embodying a rationally binding standard depends in each case on a concrete act of recognition. This understanding is manifest in the semantic *description* of a belief as rationally binding, a description that will not operate by *stating* the semantic role of the belief so described, but rather by *exemplifying* it. What is primary in the evaluation of a belief as rational, then, is a metasemantic act of *recognition* that is not reducible to any abstract metasemantic *knowledge*. In the interpretive context, the role recognized is essentially *one's own*: a configuration of dispositions or habits that one oneself possesses. But in recognizing an utterance as expressing a rationally binding standard in this way one concludes *in the very act of recognition* that it is binding in a way that is not simply dependent on one's adherence to a particular practice (and so satisfies 1) above). For to interpret the utterance at all is already to see it as binding, *not* only for oneself, but also for the distinct practice that one's interlocutor represents. Here as elsewhere, the ultimate epistemic source of normativity is not theoretical access to a set of standards transcendent of the interpretive context, but rather the concrete recognition of the self in the other *within* that context. It is the relationship constituted by the situation of interpretation itself that insures that this recognition can present particular beliefs as rationally authoritative. It is the recognition of the self-exemplification of the meanings and rational standards that makes possible shared meanings and rational standards.

It is seeing judgments of rationality as dependent on recognitive acts, rather than on a special philosophical form of knowledge, that allows the theorist to present the beliefs that embody these judgments as *preconditions for the possibility* of the practices in which they arise. For the concrete acts of recognition, in which, on the account, judgments of rationality are grounded, are

themselves judgments of meaning. To judge that a particular form of words expresses a rational standard is to perform a recognitive act that is identical with the recognitive act by means of which one identifies the *meaning* of that form of words, and the metalinguistic description of its rational status operates by exemplifying the object of recognition, *this* sentence with *this* meaning. It is, however, a transcendental condition for the possibility of a language – or of a specific linguistic practice – that its sentences have the meanings that they do. On the account, then, to identify a belief as rational for one's practice is, at least in part, to recognize it as a precondition for that self-critical practice. The transcendent status of the belief is shown in the recognitive act by which it is simultaneously understood and judged to be rational within the practice.

IV

On the basis of the pure pragmatic account of the grounding of semantic judgments in concrete acts of recognition, then, it is possible to portray particular beliefs arrived at *within* a practice as nevertheless expressing standards and judgments of rationality that are *transcendent* to that practice. The dilemma of theoretical position that generates Putnam's problem of immanence and transcendence is solved in that perceiving the basis of judgments of rationality in concrete recognitive acts allows the theorist to portray them as genuinely transcendent to practices while also absolving him of any need to *take* a problematic transcendent perspective outside those practices themselves. Instead, the theorist adopts a position that is essentially the same as the position of ordinary, non-theoretical speakers in their everyday utilization of semantic discourse. The consistent maintenance of this position allows the practices at its basis to be seen as the rationally criticizable ones that they are, while nevertheless neither inviting nor allowing the transcendent, context-less perspective that makes the recognition of one's own dependence on specific, contingent practices impossible.

If pure pragmatics is to be successful, it must avoid both horns of Putnam's dilemma: it must neither take an untenable transcendent perspective nor result in a relativism grounded in the immanent perspective. And even if it is clear that pure pragmatics avoids the first horn in its refusal of any perspective outside the semantic resources of its own language, it is perhaps not as obvious that it avoids the second. For on the picture, one's determinations of the rationality of another's statements, whether couched in one's own language or another, are, after all, in each case *from one's own perspective*. Because they are neither conducted, nor are seen as conducted, from the transcendent perspective of a context-free reason, it might seem impossible for these determinations to avoid an inherent relativization to one's own context. But further reflection on the pragmatic form of the Sellarsian model suffices to show that no relativism threatens. For consider the claim of relativism itself. The claim is that standards of rationality are *relative* to particular practices, and can only to be judged true from within them. Even though this general claim typically arises from the embedding of one's own judgments within the immanent perspective of one's own practices, it is in fact articulable, as Putnam points out, only through the illicit adoption of a transcendent perspective. It is only from a perspective outside *all* practices that the claims of any particular one can be presented as relative to it; and this is just the perspective that the consistent application of pure pragmatics denies. Instead, it presents the determination of rational standards as arising from the *engagement* of one practice with another, in the concrete recognition of shared semantic roles. This recognition never requires taking a perspective external to the particular practice in which one accomplishes it. The model, then, not only provides no warrant for relativism, but makes its positive statement impossible.

If pure pragmatics is right, then, *there is no way* to occupy a position from which it would be meaningful to claim, of a variety of practices or cultures, that each of their sets of claims are true relative to themselves. Does the position amount, instead, to a *cultural imperialism*? Recall that Putnam argued that the consistent adoption of a purely immanent perspective leads, almost inevitably, to cultural imperialism. For in the encounter with another culture, given the purely immanent perspective, one can only assume the legitimacy of one's own standards, applying them as normative for the unfamiliar cultures or practices one encounters. But actually this result only follows from the purely immanent perspective if taking it is construed as a matter of being *committed* to a set of *assumptions*, assumptions taken to be normative not only for one's own practice but for another's practice as well. If the perspective of semantic discourse were necessarily supported by the theoretical commitment to a set of propositionally stateable assumptions intelligible from outside one's own practice, then the determination of the rationality of another agent's claims in interpretation could indeed only amount, consistently with the maintenance of an immanent perspective, to cultural imperialism. To understand the other would then be, necessarily, to apply or project one's own propositionally stateable assumptions of rationality to their case. But the pure pragmatics model offers a more realistic alternative to this construal of the situation of interpretation. For on the model, the determination of rationality in interpretive practice is not a matter of the *application* of stateable *assumptions*, but of the performance of acts of recognition *without* any pre-existing basis in general, propositionally articulable standards. It was the envisioned application or projection of such standards in the situation of radical interpretation that invited the charge of cultural imperialism; but the non-reductionism of this model allows it to show how interpretation and the determination of rationality can operate without any such assumptions.

On the model of pure pragmatics, the application of one's own standards or principles to the partisan of an alternative practice is always dependent on an act of recognition conducted from within, from the purely immanent perspective of the practice itself. Communication, then, does not consist in the application of a set of claims imposed upon the other, but the acts of recognition that constitute *identification* with the other. Since the recognition of standards always occurs from within a particular form of discourse, and since their meaningful propositional expression is only possible within that form of discourse, to judge that another person's practice is meaningful is already to construe its partisans as adhering to the same standards that one already accepts from the immanent perspective on one's own practice. Sometimes, of course, no such recognition is possible: the alternative practice is then recognized as unintelligible, and interpretation breaks down. But in either case, since any statement of the norms and standards that are at issue between two interlocutors is possible only from the immanent perspective on a particular practice – a perspective that must be recognized as shared by the practitioner of an alternative practice, if communication is possible – there is never any ground for the imperialist assertion of the universality of his own standards. Since the imperialist's statement of his own claims depends entirely on the immanent perspective of his own practice, he can construe another practice's standards as largely misguided only by construing the practice itself as unintelligible. Any mutually comprehensible statement of the imperialist's universalist claims, by contrast, will be possible only if standards are already largely shared.¹⁵

¹⁵ This conclusion closely echoes Davidson's (1984) conclusion that, owing to the interconnection of belief and meaning in radical interpretation, an interpreter can understand an interlocutor at all only if the interlocutor already shares many of the interpreter's beliefs. Pure pragmatics goes beyond Davidson's position, however, in emphasizing that any explicit statement of the preconditions for the possibility of understanding is itself possible only from the purely immanent perspective of a particular practice. It follows that, even though large-scale agreement in belief and standards of rationality is a precondition for any possible understanding across practices or cultures, there is no perspective except the purely immanent one from which a practitioner can articulate the propositions to which any comprehensible interlocutor must

We have argued that pure pragmatics offers a philosophical model of rationality that explains how both substantive and methodological commitments, undertaken within a practice, can be both contingent on that practice, and hence immanent to it, and also transcendent with respect to it. In this way, pure pragmatics solves Putnam's general problem about the relationship of immanence and transcendence in semantic terms, with a generality sufficient to solve the problem for any semantic practice that includes, at least, the resources of semantic metalanguage. But though the solution is a general one, it is helpful to see how it operates in a specific and decisive example. The problem of immanence and transcendence itself takes on a special relevance with respect to the status of the claims of *empirical science*, where the recognition that particular claims and methods are dependent on the history of science or the shape of historically specific paradigms or practices can seem to threaten the objectivity of these claims and methods. Here, the solution suggested by pure pragmatics shows how the standards, methods, and results of empirical inquiry can be recognized as fallible and revisable, while nevertheless fully capable of yielding knowledge that is genuinely objective.

Pure pragmatics denies that there is any special meta-perspective, beyond the perspective of its practitioners, from which to evaluate either the standards or methodological principles of empirical science. In this, our story is similar to other pragmatic and naturalistic positions in the philosophy of science and mathematics. But here there is an explanation of how it is possible for the fully immanent standards of empirical science nevertheless to be genuinely transcendent. Such an explanation is particularly welcome since empirical science *itself* has long recognized the immanent, contingent, and fallible nature of its practice while simultaneously taking its practice to be objective in the sense that it is directed toward discovering the truth about the world. That is, while empirical science recognizes itself to be fallible, its methods are also recognized as leading to results, at least some of which, are recognized as being at least approximately true in that they hold, or most likely hold, not only relative to the practice of empirical inquiry or a particular moment in it, but objectively and generally. Rather than seeking any special philosophical justification of the standards or methodological principles of empirical science, on the pure pragmatic account, the philosophical theorist simply *finds* empirical science as a self-critical semantic practice complete with its own semantic recognitions concerning the shared standards, methodological principles, and moves within the practice. The role of pure pragmatics is simply to explain how it is possible for these standards and moves to be simultaneously fully immanent and genuinely transcendental.

One can only see how this works by considering how empirical science looks *from the perspective of its own practitioners*. As a self-critical practice, empirical science recognizes both its own immanence and transcendence: Or, in words more familiar to the practice of empirical inquiry, it is recognized *within empirical practice* that the practice of empirical science is both *fallible* and *objective*. And the ways in which empirical science is fallible and objective are themselves available within the practice of empirical science. The fallible nature of empirical science is, for example, recognized in that we have good *empirical* justification for believing that both the standards of empirical science and the specific moves made within it are contingent on the historical development of empirical inquiry and contingent on the psychological features of inquirers (James Cushing (1994), for example, argues, within the

be committed; so the Davidsonian point about the impossibility of large-scale disagreement in belief does not itself license any imperialist conclusion. Indeed, combined with the pure pragmatist insistence on the unavoidability of any transcendent perspective, it helps to show that the imperialist's general claim of universality is impossible.

practice of physics, that the conceptual development of quantum mechanics was contingent on specific historical concerns in physics in the early 1900's, then uses this fact to argue for increased openness in physics to more recent so-called hidden-variable formulations of quantum mechanics. And Donald Hoffman (1998) argues, within the practice of cognitive science, that the nature of empirical experience is contingent on cognitive rules that structure the empirical evidence that we use to discover the rules of visual perception.). But insofar as it is also recognized within the practice of empirical science that its methodological principles and inferential moves are truth-directed, these principles and moves are recognized as involving something that goes beyond the contingent features of those practices. Indeed, the internal success of scientific inquiry is taken from within as evidence of its objective nature.

Not only are they recognized within the practice of empirical science but the ways in which the standards, methodological commitments, and moves of empirical practice are fallible are recognized as themselves legitimate topics of empirical inquiry, and it is expected that knowledge of such contingencies may in turn lead to improvements in scientific method that will allow it to track truth better. Such innovations as microscopes (where we use what we have learned about the nature of light and electrons to extend what we are willing to accept as reliable empirical evidence), double-blind experiments (where we use what we have learned about our psychological tendency to systematically produce what one is looking for to restrict our attention to more reliable empirical data), and refinements in the proper subject matter of empirical science (where we use what we have learned about the limits of empirical inquiry to conclude, for example, that an empirical account of human origins should not be expected to provide an account of the value of human life), exemplify the ways in which reasoning about the contingency of scientific practices is exploited to improve these practices themselves. In each such case, it is within the practice of empirical science that we have learned about the nature and limits of science, and used this knowledge to refine our understanding of the nature and limits of science. And it is within the practice of empirical inquiry that the standards and methodological commitments that result from these refinements are recognized as furthering its objective progress. They provide an example of the ongoing revisability of the standards and methodological principles of empirical inquiry themselves given the self-recognized fallibility of empirical science and its objective goals.

This reflexive revisability of the standards and methodological principles of empirical science has long been taken, within the practice of empirical science itself, to be a methodological commitment that exemplifies the objectivity of scientific practice. Embracing both the fallibility and the objective aims of empirical science, C. S. Peirce argued that "The most that can be maintained [within scientific inquiry] is that we seek for a belief that we shall *think* to be true" (Peirce 1877, 115). In scientific inquiry while

"I may start with known and observed facts to proceed to the unknown; ... the rules that I follow in doing so may not be such as investigation would approve. The test of whether I am following the method is not an immediate appeal to my feelings and purposes, but, on the contrary, itself involves the application of the method. Hence it is that bad reasoning as well as good reasoning is possible; and this fact is the foundation of practical logic." (Peirce 1877, 121)

And this unrestricted revisability of methodological principles in empirical inquiry goes hand-in-hand with the empirical inquiry being itself a legitimate topic for empirical inquiry for it is in the context of the empirical study of the nature of empirical inquiry that one discovers how one's methodological commitments might be revised to best further the goals of empirical inquiry.

That the practice of empirical inquiry is recognized as fallible need not, and typically does not, undermine the practitioners' commitment to the objectivity of the practice. Rather, at least in the case of empirical inquiry, the methodological commitment to the objectivity of scientific claims and the transcendence of the methods and judgments that lead to them *itself* depends on a general commitment to the revisability of those very methods. That is, it is recognized *within scientific inquiry* that the transcendent nature of one's methodological commitments is intimately bound with the *way* in which they are immanent. In recognizing the possibility of having to revise any standard or methodological principle within the context of empirical inquiry, we recognize that such inquiry concerns *objective* knowledge—knowledge concerning empirical matters of fact that are not and cannot be constituted by any personal or shared feelings, purposes, or opinions. As Peirce puts it, from the perspective he adopts within the practice of empirical science, empirical science concerns the nature of *real* things: things “whose characters are entirely independent of our opinions about them” and things such that “by taking advantage of the laws of perception, we can ascertain how [they] really are” (Peirce, 120). Or put another way, it is recognized in the practice of empirical inquiry that even *universal* consensus would be insufficient to justify the methods and conclusions of scientific inquiry; indeed, that even universal consensus would be irrelevant to the appropriateness of empirical principles or the truth of empirical fact. Recognizing the transcendent nature of recognitions concerning the standards and methods of empirical inquiry is essential to understanding the nature of empirical inquiry; for it is only this that allows practitioners to meaningfully distinguish between good and bad science.

Pure pragmatics explains how it is possible for the recognition *within empirical inquiry* of a standard, result, or method as objective to be a recognition of it as *fully* objective: as binding, in principle, not only on the actual adherents of our own practice but on any practitioner interested in truth at all. For on the present account, the concrete acts of recognition that determine the meaning of speech acts themselves suffice to give the contents of those acts a fully transcendent status. To commit oneself to a judgment, in performing a recognitional act within the practice of empirical inquiry, can be to commit oneself to its truth and objectivity in quite literally the strongest meaningful sense. Of course, one can acknowledge at the same time that all of one's judgments – this one included – are revisable and in principle fallible. This acknowledgment cannot threaten the concrete act of recognition, which itself confers the judgment's objectivity for the practitioner. The recognition is a necessary precondition for the meaningfulness of the specific self-critical practice. As such, it is neither exportable from the practice of empirical science nor reducible to any contingent feature of this practice.

Note that, on the present view, terms like *fallible*, *objective*, *standard*, *true*, *real* and *empirical* as used above gain their significance by dint of the relevant shared recognitions within the self-critical practice of empirical science (In Barrett (2003) for example, it is argued, from considerations within physics, that the sense in which empirical science has yielded probable approximate truth is not a problem for a specially philosophical analysis but can *only* be understood within the context of ongoing empirical inquiry: More specifically, it is argued that for us to begin to say what we mean in claiming that a current physical theory is approximately true is for us to begin to construct the next generation of physical theories.). Such pragmatic notions occur within the immanent practice of empirical science, yet they have a significance that is recognized within the practice as being fully transcendent. Their transcendence is a precondition for their having the significance that they are in fact recognized to have within the practice.

What is distinctive in Peirce's pragmatic perspective is that he takes himself to be speaking within empirical inquiry about the nature of empirical inquiry. Indeed, he denies the coherence of any theoretical perspective, external to the practice of empirical science itself, from which its standards, methods, and claims could be justified. In this, pure pragmatism agrees with Peirce and more recent pragmatist and naturalist positions on the epistemology of empirical science. At the same time, however, pure pragmatics offers to supplement the pragmatist's or naturalist's position with an account, *fully accessible from within that position*, of how judgments made from it can nevertheless have a transcendent status. This can be seen, in particular, in the response of traditional pragmatism and pure pragmatism to the challenge of radical doubt: The challenge that alleges that none of the foundations of empirical science are secure because all can be doubted.

The first step in the general pragmatic response to the skeptic is realizing that the *possibility* of doubt does not necessarily mean that it actually exists in practice. What W. V. Quine would later call "first philosophy" demands an overall justification for empirical practice from a prior position that is not itself the position of empirical practice, and construes this prior position as showing that doubt is always possible. But this is precisely what the pragmatist denies. Peirce long ago argued that the generalized doubt of the skeptic is not relevant to empirical inquiry: "in point of fact, an inquiry, to have that completely satisfactory result called demonstration, has only to start with propositions perfectly free from all actual doubt. If the premises are not in fact doubted at all, they cannot be more satisfactory than they are" (Peirce 1877, 115). He went on to recognize that the actual cessation of doubt, in *particular* contexts, suffices to put an end to argument, even when no *overall* defense of the foundations of empirical inquiry has been made: "Some people seem to love to argue a point after all the world is convinced of it. But no further advance can be made. When doubt ceases, mental action on the subject comes to an end; and, if it did go on, it would be without purpose" (ibid.).

Quine similarly held that empirical inquiry requires no epistemic foundations in first philosophy: rather Quine, echoing Peirce's pragmatic starting-point, held that empirical science is "fallible and corrigible but not answerable to any supra-scientific tribunal" (1975b, 72). The Quinean naturalist "begins his reasoning within the inherited world theory as a going concern. He tentatively believes all of it, but believes also that some unidentified portions are wrong. He tries to improve, clarify and understand the system from within" (ibid). And this work from within need only appeal to the standards of justification of empirical science, which, for his part, Quine took to consist in "observation and the hypothetico-deductive method" (ibid).

Maddy has recently developed a more thoroughgoing version of Quinean naturalism in the context of both empirical and mathematical practice. Maddy agrees with Quine that empirical science and mathematics in no way stand in need of first philosophy: "Our naturalist begins within natural science—that is, within both the methods and the theories of science ready to hand—and she sets out to explain how human beings, as they are characterized by science, come to knowledge of the world, as it is characterized by science" (1997, 182). But she goes further than Quine in trying to determine what native standards and methodological principles are in fact involved in the practice of empirical science and in the practice of mathematics in particular. For Maddy, as for Quine, the philosopher of mathematics must *go native* in order to determine the standards and methods of mathematical practice. In particular, Maddy considers the philosopher of mathematics to be something akin to a sociologist of mathematical practice who enters the community of mathematicians in order to investigate first-hand those standards and methods exhibited in native practice that may (or may not!) prove to be relevant to traditional philosophical concerns.

For Maddy there is an asymmetry between the philosophy of science and the philosophy of mathematics. The philosopher of mathematics has a perspective outside of mathematics, namely the perspective of natural science, from which to view mathematics. From this perspective, mathematics can be viewed as a social activity, a linguistic practice, a psychological activity, etc. But there is no corresponding perspective for the philosopher of science outside the practice of science. Maddy's *Second Philosopher* does not *go native* to study scientific practice. She is so completely immersed "she doesn't speak the language of science 'like a native'; she *is* a native" (39).

This inquirer is born native to our contemporary scientific world view She begins from common sense, she trusts her perceptions, subject to correction, but her curiosity pushes her beyond these to careful and precise observation, to deliberate experimentation, to the formulation and stringent testing of hypotheses, to devising ever more comprehensive theories, all in the interest of learning more about what the world is like. She rejects authority and tradition as evidence, she works to minimize prejudices and subjective factors that might skew her investigations. Along the way, observing the forms of her most successful theories, she develops higher level principles -- like the maxim that physical phenomena should be explained in terms of forces acting on a line between two bodies, depending only on the distance between them -- and she puts these higher level principles to the test, modifying them as need be, in light of further experience. Likewise, she is always on the alert to improve her methods of observation, of experimental design, of theory testing, and so on, undertaking to improve her methods as she goes. (Maddy 2003, 6-7)

In this sense the Second Philosopher does not even have any *particularly* philosophical concerns. Maddy notes that while "We philosophers, speaking of her the third person, will say that such an inquirer operates 'within science', that she uses 'the methods of science ... she herself has no need of such talk'" (Maddy 2003, 7). And, like Peirce's empirical scientist and the Quinean naturalist, Maddy's Second Philosopher is entirely immune to philosophical skepticism concerning the ultimate justification of the standards and methods of scientific inquiry. Rather than worry about skepticism, the second philosopher "will continue her investigation of the world in her familiar ways." (Maddy 2003, 12). Finding the skeptic's general challenge to all of the methods and practices of empirical science intelligible, she responds (if at all) to the skeptic's generalized doubt by referring to the particular, fallible practices and methods of empirical science that she takes to answer to particular doubts, in particular cases. Though she has no response to the skeptic's *generalized* doubt, Maddy suggests, she is justified in answering particular questions about the legitimacy of particular epistemic procedures on the only basis she has, the basis of her own practice of empirical inquiry.

There is a sense in which the Second Philosopher will nonetheless still be able to do philosophy:

She will ask traditional philosophical questions about what there is and how we know it ... but she will take perception as a mostly reliable guide to the existence of medium-sized physical objects, she will consult her astronomical observations and theories to weigh the existence of black holes, and she will treat questions of knowledge as involving the relations between the world -- as she understands it in her physics, chemistry, optics, geology, and so on -- and human beings -- as she understands them in her physiology, cognitive science, neuroscience, linguistics, and so on. (Maddy 2003, 12)

But this is fully naturalized philosophy. It is not the first philosophy of the Cartesian tradition. It is second philosophy—it is just empirical science, and the Second philosopher offers no apologies.

Faced with the demand to justify her empirical practice overall, the Second Philosopher simply points to aspects of that practice, the particular empirical claims and methods that suggest to her that her practice is capable of exhibiting the truth. This makes for a consistent position, and a consistent way of resisting the skeptic's general challenge; but it is not clear that the position is philosophically satisfying. The obvious *philosophical* criticism, of course, is one of circularity: the Second Philosopher should not be allowed to use the standards and methods of empirical science to justify the standards and methods of natural science, for *this* kind of justification does not provide grounds for anyone who is not already within the practice. Of course, this criticism need not undermine the Second Philosopher's confidence in the standards and methods of empirical science. Indeed, it is unclear what more she should ask for since, paraphrasing Peirce, if the Second Philosopher *in fact* does not doubt her standards and methodological commitments, they cannot be more satisfactory than they are. But one cannot help feeling that something is missing. After all, the Second Philosopher has at best only shown that empirical science is in some sense self-supporting; she has not shown how the claims and methods of empirical science might be genuinely transcendent, binding not only on practitioners of empirical science but on *anyone* interested in truth and objectivity.

This is where pure pragmatics makes its modest contribution to the pragmatic tradition. It does not supply an external perspective from which the standards and methods of empirical science can be once and for all justified. Indeed, it agrees with the Second Philosopher in holding that there is no such perspective, and there can be no such external ultimate justification insofar as it is a feature of the actual practice of empirical science that its standards and methods are revisable. Rather, what the current story explains is how it is possible for genuinely transcendental recognitions to occur *within* the practice of empirical science. Rather than justify the standards and methods of empirical science, pure pragmatics merely explains how it is possible for these standards and methods to be fully and completely transcendently justified *from within the practice itself*.

There is a critical distinction to make here. The Second Philosopher, in response to the skeptic, expects to find a naturalistic account within empirical science for why natural science can be expected to lead to the truth about the world (or approximate truth or probable approximate truth or useful truths or whatever else is in fact involved in the practice empirical inquiry) that justifies the practice of empirical science. On the pure pragmatic account, by contrast, there are preconditions for the standards and methodological commitments of empirical science being understood within the practice as being rationally justified, truth-directed, or whatever else is in fact involved in the practice of empirical inquiry: it is that they be *recognized* to have the cognitive status that they in fact have within the practice. In order for the pragmatic standards and methodological commitments to play the role that they do in the practice of empirical science, there must be shared recognitions of this role. The transcendental status of the judgments made concerning the justification of the standards and method of the practice are the result of such semantic recognitions. They define the methods and standards of empirical science as having the meanings that they do, and hence as binding for anyone who can understand these meanings.

One might tell a traditional naturalistic story (grounded in, say, an empirical psycho-physical model of visual perception and belief formation) for the reliability of some element of scientific practice. Reflecting on this story might occasion the recognition of the semantic role played by

the particular element of the practice (that the element contributes to the truth-directed nature of empirical inquiry, for example). But, on the present view, it is the recognition of the semantic role of the element of the practice that is the precondition for the practice, not the traditional-style naturalistic story. Empirical science is a self-reflective discursive practice that meaningfully employs semantic notions like rational justification, objectivity, and truth. If such pragmatic terms are to be characterized in a precise way, the pragmatic naturalist or second philosopher will hold, they must be characterized within the practice of empirical inquiry, for there is no other place to stand where one might characterize them. But while such pragmatic terms might be used, explained, and understood within the context of empirical stories concerning the nature of empirical inquiry itself, it is ultimately shared recognitions in the practice that gives them their significance. As pure pragmatics has it, the specific content of the standards and methodological principles of empirical inquiry and what we in fact *mean* in empirical inquiry by such notions as *objective truth*, *approximate truth*, *probable approximate truth* and *empirical justification* are determined by recognitions in the context of scientific practice. The philosopher does not determine the content of any of these notions; rather, she merely provides an account of semantic content such that it is possible for there to be such pragmatic transcendental notions in the practice of empirical inquiry.

If there is no ultimate external justification of the specific standards and methods involved in the practice of empirical science and not even an external or philosophical characterization of the pragmatic terms employed in the practice, then one might naturally wonder what pure pragmatics has to offer the Second Philosopher. What pure pragmatics provides here is a modest bit of philosophy. It is a bit of philosophy that the Second Philosopher may wish to append to her own views if she wants to know how it is possible, given the immanence she and other practitioners affirm, that she could also be involved in a genuinely transcendent activity, an activity where she is genuinely involved in something like discovering the truth about the world. Semantic recognitions concerning her standards and methodological commitments that they have the cognitive state they in fact have in the practice are necessary for the practice. Pure pragmatics explains how it is possible for the Second Philosopher's self-critical practice with standards that are taken to be not merely relative to her own practice but rational binding in general. This is a bit of philosophy that can be consistently added to *our* empirical practice that contains the shared recognitions that make it meaningful. The transcendent nature of empirical inquiry is secured through shared recognitions native to the practice but transcendent in the sense provided by pure pragmatics and objective in a sense understood by anyone involved in the practice itself.

VII

The pure pragmatic model of intersubjective interpretation, we have argued, provides the basis for a consistent theoretical description of the articulation of standards of rationality that solves the problem of immanence and transcendence. The key to the solution is Sellars' account of semantic discourse as dependent on the pragmatic *tokening* of abstract semantic roles recognized as shared even in the absence of any theoretical account of them. The account solves Putnam's problem by showing how a philosophical theorist, exploiting the pragmatic resources of semantic discourse, can present particular beliefs as genuinely transcendent while nevertheless retaining the perspective of full immanence within a particular practice and culture.

It is important to correctly understand exactly what problem is solved here. Pure pragmatics as we have reconstructed it does not pretend to provide any special extra-scientific justification that will answer the demands of the radical skeptic. Indeed, pure pragmatics does not give any justifications outside of a specific practice. So answering the skeptic in his own terms here (that is, outside scientific practice) is impossible since standards of scientific justification, while being

fully transcendent to any particular practice, nevertheless gain their normative status through semantic recognitions *within the specific practice*. The aim here is to show the philosophical interpreter how the practicing scientist, insofar as she is involved in meaningful scientific practice, is already performing recognitions that make hyperbolic doubt impossible and how *she* can be justified in doing so even while both she and the philosophical interpreter recognize the fallibility and contingency of scientific practice. This does not refute the skeptic, but it does explain why his apparent threat does not and should not figure as an obstacle to scientific practice.

The practicing scientist may be engaged in her task of discovering the probable and/or approximate truths about the empirical world without being interested in explaining how this activity is possible. On the other hand, the philosophical interpreter presumably is interested in explaining how it is possible for the scientist's immanent, contingent, and fallible methodological commitments can nevertheless fully succeed in having a transcendent status that the scientist takes them to have--the status of being objectively binding to all rational inquirers whether they recognize it or not. These immanent, contingent, and fallible methodological commitments clearly do not themselves explain *this*.

On the present account, this explanation is provided by an understanding of how empirical practice comes to have the significance it has for the scientist. This semantic explanation does nothing to justify the practice of empirical science to the skeptic or to anyone else unfamiliar with the recognitions that render the practice possible. But it is different from the naturalistic stories that the practicing scientist tells since pure pragmatics is not contingent on the current methodological commitments of empirical science. Indeed, it is an account of the preconditions for the possibility of authentically holding these contingent methodological commitments. That is, it is an account of how the scientist can hold that her practices are contingent, but not have any doubt of their transcendent status.

It is impossible for a practicing scientist to have any real doubt concerning those recognitions that make his talk meaningful. She might say she has such doubt, but on the semantic account here, this claim must be either false or literally meaningless for her and other practicing scientists. Put another way, on the Sellarsian model, one cannot be involved in the meaningful practice of empirical science and ask the standard sort of skeptical questions without already having just those the semantic recognitions that make genuine doubt concerning the normative standards of the practice impossible since the methodological standards of empirical science are only meaningful to someone who has semantic recognitions that lead to the inquirer judging that they are in fact self-correcting and truth-directed.

This does not answer the radical skeptic, but it does provide an understanding for the philosophical interpreter, and for the practicing scientist should she wish to have it, of how the immanent and fallible practice of the scientist can nevertheless also be fully transcendent, normative, and truth-directed. Pure pragmatics shows how this justification can be transcendent, and hence binding on those of other methodological persuasions who want to understand what the empirical inquirer is doing, *even if* it is also recognized as immanent, that is, as not resting on any standard except the empirical ones of the practice itself. It allows the inquirer to take a new position with respect to the validity claim of her own methodological standards, the standards she already has as a practitioner.

Pure pragmatics doesn't give the scientific practitioner a 'higher-grade' or more robust justification than she already has for her practices. What it does offer her is reassurance that these practices are justified in the sense of being transcendent (objective, truth-directed, etc.),

even if they are also recognized as immanent. While this does not refute the radical skeptic on his own terms, this kind of reassurance may be just what she should want in response to the skeptic. Without pure pragmatics, the practitioner might pursue her practice without in fact ever raising doubts or questions, but pure pragmatics shows that her refusal to raise doubts is not just dogmatic.

Just as the practicing scientist cannot understand radical skepticism, the radical skeptic does not have the recognitions that the scientist does, and so cannot understand his practice as meaningful. The skeptic would become convinced of the probity of scientific practice should he become involved in the practice. Here his former skeptical doubt would be rendered impossible, indeed nonsense, by the recognitions that would make his involvement in empirical practice possible. This would, of course, not count as answering the skeptic in his own terms. But again the epistemic problem addressed here is not how to convince the radical skeptic, but how to understand the immanent empirical practice of the scientist as being in fact self-correcting and truth-directed.

With the problem solved, its origin in standing and traditional assumptions about the nature of philosophical theory can more easily be deduced. The problem of immanence and transcendence, as we have seen, is one of theoretical perspective. The challenge it poses is to locate a perspective of theory from which one can acknowledge *both* the dependence of one's own standards upon a particular culture and the rational criticizability of that culture on the basis of commitments and claims that are transcendent to it. And given the assumption that the identification of rational norms must depend on or yield a *theory*, the problem is insoluble. For there is no consistent perspective from which any theory can satisfy both demands. Insofar as a theory adopts the immanent perspective of recognition of the dependence of its own standards upon a particular culture, it fails to capture the rational criticizability of this culture from the outside; but insofar as it adopts standards envisaged as capable of providing the basis for criticism of an entire culture, it fails to acknowledge the dependence of all standards on particular cultural contexts. Pure pragmatics dissolves the problem by allowing the theorist to take a pragmatic turn. On the basis of this turn, he now characterizes determinations of rationality not theoretically, in terms of the standards they presuppose or apply, but pragmatically, in terms of the practical preconditions of the discursive acts that embody them.

To characterize the basis of judgments of rationality this way is, admittedly, to abandon the search for a *theoretical perspective* from which the *standards* of rationality within a particular culture or practice can be described, at least in abstraction from the particular intersubjective contexts of interpretation in which they always figure. This abandonment of theoretical perspective might seem unsatisfactory, particularly if one sees the goals of philosophical theory as involving not only the articulation, but also the rational *evaluation*, of norms and standards of practice. But we have seen that the pragmatic turn that abandons the search for such norms is necessary if the problem of immanence and transcendence is to be avoided; and to take it is not to deny the evaluability of standards, but rather simply to occupy more consistently and self-consciously the pragmatic position that makes it possible, both in everyday life and philosophical discourse. Given the availability of the pragmatic turn, and the inevitability of the problem of immanence and transcendence if it is *not* taken, there is evidently little reason to suppose that the philosophical quest to articulate norms and standards of rationality out of the pragmatic context of their use ought to be successful. The quest for them can instead be abandoned as quixotic, replaced by the more pragmatically and phenomenologically accurate description of particular judgments of rationality as grounded in the concrete acts of recognition that in fact *do* provide the only grounding they have in ordinary interpretive and discursive practice.

Given this, it would be a grave error to suppose that the recognitive judgments that are the essence of judgments of rationality on Sellars' account require, for their adequate description, any *further* account of the knowledge or understanding that they presuppose. On Sellars' account, metasemantic judgments are grounded in the recognition of abstract semantic roles that one is oneself competent to deploy; but there is no reason, in general, to suppose that this kind of "knowing-how" rests on any further articulable "knowledge-that." Indeed, the semantic form of our utterances is generally opaque to us; it is only through the device of semantic discourse that we are able to identify semantic roles at all, and then only by instancing or tokening them in the way Sellars describes. According to the pure pragmatic account, the general form of a semantic judgment is not that a specific utterance has a specific semantic role, but that an utterance has *the same* semantic role as one that someone else is capable of, where the respects in which they two are the same are *not further specified*. The basis of semantic judgment is not propositional knowledge of semantic roles, but recognition of one of one's own competences in another. Ultimately, then, the basis for the evaluation of the rationality of *any* utterance is not its comparison with a standard antecedently known to the evaluator, but the recognition of oneself in another.

Does the minimal criticizability of judgments of rationality require, at their basis, more than this kind of act of recognition? In particular, is the account of judgments of rationality as grounded in acts of recognition empty, without a further account of the success- and failure-conditions of these acts? The response of a consistent pure pragmatism is again to deny that there is any general theoretical perspective from which such conditions could be elucidated, while nevertheless affirming that they can be recognized as implicit in our practices, provided the pragmatic turn is taken. For even though judgments of rationality are, on the account, always grounded in concrete acts of recognition, acts whose success or failure *cannot* be explained in terms of the success or failure of some further kind of knowledge that figures in them, ordinary language and practice already provide all the mechanisms we need to evaluate them. From the pragmatic perspective, the success or failure of a particular recognitive act, shown in the semantic discourse that tokens the semantic role identified, is already intelligible in the ordinary forms of criticism and question to which any semantic utterance is ordinarily open. There is always room for questioning determinations of meaning, even without having available the abstract description, in terms of semantic roles, of the meanings so determined. The consistent perspective of pragmatism, faced with the question of the conditions of success or failure of ordinary semantic judgments, can simply gesture to the ordinary linguistic practices of questioning and criticism that make for this room.

And as our discussion of pragmatic naturalism suggests, the semantic basis of the pure pragmatic solution effectively offers the Second Philosopher a new form of response to the skeptic who challenges her to justify her entire scientific practice. Faced with the skeptical challenge, the Second Philosopher can now point out the transcendent status of her methodological and thematic commitments. Insofar as the skeptic himself can recognize the semantic roles that these commitments occupy, he will already accept the bindingness of these standards and commitments, and so be incapable of occupying the position of comprehensive doubt that he purports to occupy. Of course, the skeptic can always refuse to recognize the semantic roles exhibited by the Second Philosopher's purely empirical defense of the empirical practice; but he does so only at the cost of failing to understand this defense at all. Here as elsewhere, the cost of maintaining a consistent, global skepticism is that the skeptic makes himself unintelligible to the practitioner he challenges. There is nothing to prevent the skeptic taking this position of unintelligibility, but once he occupies it consistently, there is also no intelligible challenge to be made.

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