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Clarence I. Lewis has often been taken to be a proponent of epistemological foundationalism due to the conception of givenness that he developed in his account of knowledge. According to his theory, every empirical, or non-analytic statement refers to “the given element in experience” (Lewis 1929, p. 36), the latter constituting the ultimate foundation for our empirical knowledge. However, Lewis’s thorough elaboration of his understanding of the given could also be read as a strong criticism of traditional foundationalism, and could even justify ascribing anti-foundationalist to him (Gowans 1984). As a result, the notion of givenness in Lewis’s “conceptual pragmatism” is ambiguous and calls for clarification and reconsideration. One perspective that sheds light on the issue is that advanced by Wilfrid Sellars in “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind”, where he coined the concept of “the Myth of the Given” (Sellars 1997, p. 33, first published in 1956) – the idea widely commented and recently reinterpreted, among others, by Robert B. Brandom (Brandom 1997, 2002) and John McDowell (McDowell 1996). I shall first reconstruct a Sellarsian understanding of the given and explore why it is a myth; at the same time I will also distinguish between the following three aspects of empirical knowledge the *propositional* aspect of perception, the *normative*

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aspect of knowledge (including fallibilism), and the indispensable *learning* aspect in acquiring new knowledge (including inferentialism). Next, with this background in place, I will explore Lewis's construal of the given and try to juxtapose the general characteristics of the epistemic sphere (as distinguished in Sellars) in Lewis's account. I will argue that since Lewis's conception of givenness is not directly epistemological in the Sellarsian sense and his account of empirical knowledge has roughly a Sellarsian structure, then Lewis's conception of the given is immune to Sellarsian criticism of the "myth of the given."

SELLARS ON EMPIRICAL KNOWLEDGE AND MYTHICAL CHARACTER OF GIVENNESS

In *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* the problem of givenness is examined predominantly in terms of the empirical given (Sellars 1997, p. 14). The empirical given may be characterized in two different ways: first, that we as knowers can take our sensory experiences as basic, primitive epistemological items, and, second, that these experiences as such can serve as premises in inferences that form our beliefs. The critical misunderstanding comes down to the fact that our sensory experiences can hardly be considered epistemic, since they are not propositions and accordingly are not truth-evaluable. "They are not like judgements; they no more have propositional form than does an apple or a thunderbolt" (DeVries and Triplett 2000, p. xxxi). That being said, they cannot be straightforwardly included in our arguments as reasons because they have no epistemic status.

For our sensations to exemplify a form of knowing, they would have to be the apprehensions of facts, instead of particulars. If sense contents are some particular sense-data (visual images, patches of red color, etc.), then "the sensing of sense contents *cannot* constitute knowledge, inferential *or* non-inferential" (Sellars 1997, p. 16). In contrast with these sense contents are facts, for example, when our perception is understood not as "seeing a red sense content," but rather as "seeing that a certain physical object is red" (*ibid.*). Consequently, every item of knowledge, even the most primitive and non-inferential if it is to perform an epistemic role of justification, must have the possibility of being stated in the indicative mood as a judgment (Brandom 1997, pp. 127–128). Apprehended facts can be expressed only in the form of

a proposition. My perception, then, is sensing facts, “sensing that. . . .” And accordingly, the sentence ascribing knowledge to someone, including myself, has to contain a *that* clause: “S knows *that* things are such and so.”

The ambiguities in sense-datum theories that make them count as a version of the Myth of the Given stem from the conflation of sensing something and sensing *that* something is the case. Insofar as establishing the foundational warrant of perceptual knowledge requires showing why such knowledge needs no further justification, then perception is understood as mere sensing: non-conceptual, unanalyzable, and non-propositional. Yet, when the issue of perception as epistemic foundation able to confer further justifications on our observational knowledge is at stake, then perception is understood as non-inferential propositions. (DeVries and Triplett 2000, p. 12). Such a tendency was evidently epitomized in Russell’s distinction between non-propositional “knowledge by acquaintance” and propositional “knowledge by description,” where, in Sellars’s view, the mere concept of “knowledge by acquaintance” is fairly misleading, since, in fact, as non-propositional, it does not count as knowledge (Sellars 1997, p. 18).

Apart from the claim that a knowing has propositional form, Sellars insists on its not being reducible to anything outside the epistemological sphere. Thus, epistemic facts cannot be “analyzed without remainder . . . into non-epistemic facts, whether phenomenal or behavioral, public or private” (Sellars 1997, p. 19). He compares such attempts of converting the sphere of *sui generis* epistemic items into the domain of a sort of descriptive – naturalistic, psychological, etc. – items to the notorious examples of naturalistic fallacy in ethics, as described by G. E. Moore in *Principia Ethica* (Moore 1922). Moore claimed that analyzing the good in terms of pleasure mistakenly relies on reducing an essentially *normative* concept to naturalistic phenomena of, for example, someone’s feeling pleasant stimuli. For Sellars, epistemology is as essentially and irreducibly normative as ethics. And although Sellars himself does not employ the term “evaluative” or, better “normative,” in *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, it is also quite legitimate to apply these adjectives to epistemology (see DeVries and Triplett 2000, p. 13; Brandom 1997, p. 127; McDowell 1996, p. 14; Sachs 2015, p. 76). In what sense is epistemology *normative*? In short: in the sense that epistemic claims need our endorsing. They are, in principle, open to our assessments as to their correctness, plausibility, rightness, and as such they are require

justification. Therefore, the myth of the given consists in reducing a specifically epistemic sphere, which is normative, to some other, non-epistemic, descriptive sphere, and treating the latter as a foundation for the former.

Another aspect of the myth of the given – the one that I take to be implied in Sellars considerations on “inconsistent triad” of empiricism (Sellars 1997, pp. 20–21) – relies on our confusing what is learned with what is unlearned in perception. Empiricists, Sellars objects, “have taken givenness to be a fact that presupposes no learning, no forming of associations, no setting up of stimulus-response connections. In short, they have tended to equate *sensing sense contents* with *being conscious*” (Sellars 1997, p. 20). From the other direction, they usually acknowledge that “all knowledge *that something is thus-and-so* . . . all subsumption of particulars under universals, involves learning, concept formation” (ibid.). Still, for unlearned sense contents to be a candidate for basic, non-inferential knowing, it must involve someone’s classificatory ability to assert, in a proposition, that a sensed particular falls within such and such category or concept. Because the latter engages some minimal but necessary conceptual competence, it turns out, as empiricists themselves assume, to be something learned. The problem with empiricism is that it maintains that both claims at the same time.¹ Empiricism conflates these claims because it illusorily looks for an ultimate and solid foundation for knowledge. And when speaking about the specific character of the epistemic sphere in addition to recognizing the propositional and normative status of epistemic claims, our mere ability to state such claims is a matter of our learning from others. I will call this the *learning* aspect of knowledge.

All the aforementioned features of the epistemic sphere are, in a different way, present in Sellars’s reflections in section VIII: “Does empirical knowledge have a foundation?” (Sellars 1997, pp. 68–79), which can be regarded as the climax of the whole essay. Here, he defines the myth of the given in a slightly new manner: as

¹ At least if the proponents of empiricism still want to stick to an old, deeply rooted empirical tradition of nominalism (Sellars 1997, p. 21); otherwise, they would have to save their position by accepting some sort of realistic assumptions about pre-existence of universals and about our immediate, innate knowledge of them (Brandom 1997, p. 130).

“the idea that there is, indeed *must be*, a structure of particular matter of fact that (a) each fact can not only be noninferentially known to be the case but presupposes no other knowledge either of particular matter of fact, or of general truths; and (b) the noninferential knowledge of facts belonging to this structure constitutes the ultimate court of appeals for all factual claims – particular and general – about the world” (Sellars 1997, pp. 68–69).

This formulation of the myth differs from the former accounts, because Sellars restricts himself only to the possibility of propositionally structured epistemic items to serve as epistemic givens. Accordingly, if a proposition is to count as given, it must be non-inferential, which means that it cannot be inferred from any other propositions. Only if this condition were satisfied would a candidate for the given be epistemically independent (see DeVries and Triplett 2000, pp. 104–105). Once such a proposition is stated, it becomes “the ultimate court of appeals” for all further empirical statements about the world. While itself not having been inferred from any other statement, it is the one from which other claims are inferred, functioning as an unjustified justifier. That being the case, it, at the same time, becomes the propositional foundation for empirical knowledge.

In such an account, an epistemic given, despite its being propositional, is deprived both of its normative character – since the non-inferential claims in question are credible as they stand, not having to be evaluated, justified, or endorsed – and of the element, for the part of subjects, that has to be learned in order to be able to reliably such non-inferential claims. What particularly speaks for the mythical character of this view is that facts that are “noninferentially known to be the case” presuppose “no other knowledge either of particular matter of fact, or of general truths” (cf. Brandom 1998, p. 216, 1997, p. 162). Thus, one can read Sellars’s understanding of the authority of observation reports (*Konstatierungen*) – as setting out, first and foremost, arguments against the view that no other knowledge is needed to state non-inferential, epistemically independent claims. These arguments, in turn, lead Sellars straightforwardly to anti-foundationalism. At the same time, they weigh in favor of both the normativity of epistemic statements, including observational reports, and the necessity of our presupposing certain previous knowledge that must be learned in advance, if we are to make reliable observation reports.

So what does Sellars say about observation reports?² Since they are supposed to express knowledge, they cannot be supported by other statements; yet, given that they supposedly express knowledge, they must possess cognitive, epistemic *credibility* or *authority*. But what is such credibility constituted by? According to Sellars, there are two conditions for a report, for example “This is green,” to have such authority: first, it must be “a *symptom* or *sign* of the presence of a green object in standard conditions” and, second, “the perceiver must know that tokens of ‘This is green’ *are* symptoms of the presence of green objects in conditions which are standard for visual perception” (Sellars 1997, p. 75). Thus, the perceiver must be able to infer from the mere occurrence of such a report to the existence of a green object, and thus must have the concept *green* as well as the concept of uttering “This is green,” together with the concept of standard conditions of perception (Sellars 1997, pp. 74–75). Indeed, her report has to be “an instance of a general mode of behavior which, in a given linguistic community, it is reasonable to sanction or support” (Sellars 1997, p. 74). As a result, Sellars assumes a sort of reliabilism. Moreover, one can legitimately ascribe to this stance a certain version of *inferentialism*: one that requires the perceiver to have the ability to perform an inference from the token of “This is green” to the assertion of the existence of a green item in front of her (cf. Brandom 2002).

Sellars’s account of authoritative observation reports, involves both the *learning* and *normative* aspects of the epistemic sphere. According to this account, “one couldn’t have observational knowledge of *any* fact unless one knew many *other* things as well” (Sellars 1997, p. 75). These “other things” comprise the language within our linguistic community, the patterns of common behavior in certain types of situations that this community displays, and the differentiation between standard and unconventional perceptual circumstances. All of these are acquired in the course of our growing up, training, or learning a language. Although

² Here I only discuss the conclusions of Sellars’s positive account of observational knowledge, focusing neither on his more detailed criticism of empiricism with respect to so called *Konstatierungen*, nor on wider controversies concerning Sellars’s position. For a thorough discussion of this, see DeVries and Triplett (2000, pp. 67–107).

it is still unclear in which moment a child becomes a legitimate knower and a credible reporter of its observations (e.g., see Alston 1983), it is clear that such reliability is acquired from how we are corrected, supported, or sanctioned by other community members. In this way, the authority of observation reports is based not only on its content and the physical context of it, but also on “the cultural context of the reporter, for it is only in light of all these factors that the report can be correct, and, as correct, can license the inference to its (probable) truth” (DeVries and Triplett 2000, p. 82).

Unsurprisingly, along with the educational, cultural, or learning aspect of our report-making, the normative aspect of it appears. Being able to infer from one’s own making an observational report to one’s asserting the existence of an item that this report speaks about is a precondition of the authority of such a report (Sellars 1997, p. 75). The involvement of inferring, of justifying and being able to justify what one says, of giving reasons for a statement and endorsing it, means that in making authoritative observational report “we are placing it in the logical space of reasons” (Sellars 1997, p. 76). This, in turn, is clearly a manifestation of the normativity of empirical knowledge. And in just this sense knowledge has no ultimate foundation – in thinking it has, we go beyond the normative and consequently succumb to the myth of the given. Sellars concludes that “Empirical knowledge, like its sophisticated extension, science, is rational, not because it has a *foundation* but because it is a self-correcting enterprise which can put *any* claim in jeopardy, though not *all* at once” (Sellars 1997, p. 79). Knowledge is not only normative, but, at least in principle, *fallible*.

Now, let us ask the question: why is any given always mythical? If we assume, following Snowden (Snowden 2009; also Sachs 2015, pp. 23–35), that the core of the myth of the given is the definition from section VIII of Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind – certain facts can be non-inferentially known without our presupposing any other knowledge, and these facts constitute “the ultimate court of appeal” for any other empirical claim about the world – then we have to agree that the given is a specifically epistemological concept. In the last resort, it comes down to the idea that there is a sort of propositional, empirical knowledge that can be gained while no other knowledge is presupposed or involved. Then, “the idea of ‘givenness’ is a conception of the acquisition of knowledge. For the ‘given’ to be received is for knowledge to be generated (or present)” (Snowden 2009, p. 102). Sellars opposes such a

view with a sort of epistemic and conceptual holism: epistemic in the sense that all cognitive claims are placed in the background of the battery of some other claims. Because there is no way of stepping outside this theoretical, justificatory sphere, “there are no *non-theoretical* givens” (Snowden 2009, p. 104); and because knowledge *qua* given, if such a thing existed, is (by Sellars’s definition) epistemological, there cannot be knowledge *qua* given.

In this sense, such things as “sense-data,” “sense-contents,” but also “episodes,” “sensations, feelings, after-images, tickles and itches, etc.” fall victim to the myth of the given (Sellars 1997, p. 21) Sellars speaks about things like “*lookings* or *appearings*” (Sellars 1997, p. 32), or “seemings,” and he speaks about the “logic of ‘looks’” (ibid. et passim) – despite the fact that they all supposedly provide empirical, though non-conceptual content for our worldly beliefs (see Forman 2006), are still outside strictly conceived epistemic sphere.³ For that reason, they cannot be given – on pain of being mythologized. And it seems that something similar can be said not only about our sensory experience, but also about many other things that have been candidates for givenness, including material objects, the physical world, etc.

To summarize: the *epistemic sphere* is specified here by three different, though interrelated, general characteristics, namely by its *propositional* character, its *normative* character, and by what I have called the *learning* aspect. As a direct consequence of the normativity of knowledge, one can also point to its *fallibilism*, and as a consequence of Sellarsian learning aspect, its *inferentialism*. The given is determined as a specifically epistemological concept that must be ‘mythical’ because it involves either introducing non-epistemic items into the epistemic sphere (e.g., taking sense-data as propositions), or treating epistemic claims independent of epistemic abilities (e.g., taking observational reports as presupposing no other knowledge, no inferring ability on the part of the reporter). The given is thus inextricably tied to foundational accounts of knowledge, which also turns out to be mythical.

³ The latter, in principle, can play a role in justifications when rendered in propositional form of “x looks ϕ ,” still they could not “have the foundational status of an epistemological Given” (Koons 2006, p. 147).

GIVENNESS AND EMPIRICAL KNOWLEDGE IN LEWIS'S CONCEPTUAL PRAGMATISM

Clarence I. Lewis is today widely known as a strenuous defender of the given. He developed this conception in 1929 in *Mind and the World-Order* and gave it further elaboration in 1946 in *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation*,⁴ long before Sellars's critique of the given. Yet I will argue that Sellars's critique of the given should not be applied to Lewis's conceptual pragmatism. I shall also compare general characteristics of the epistemic sphere as specified in Sellars with the theory of empirical knowledge as it was formulated by Lewis.

If one were to read Lewis *after* having read Sellars, one immediately notices that in Lewis the given does not play a directly justificatory role in the acquiring of empirical knowledge, and as such it does not enter the epistemic sphere. Instead, what plays such a justificatory role is our interpretation of the given. And the given itself merely presupposes empirical statements. Then, the given is, by definition, non-conceptual and so non-epistemic. And if so, it is also – *contra* Sellars – not mythic.

Lewis's arguments for the given, as Carl Sachs aptly noticed, allude to Kant and are transcendental in character (Sachs 2015, p. 25). The method of philosophy, for Lewis, consists in starting from what he calls the “thick experience of every-day life” (Lewis 1929, p. 30) or the “thick experience of the world of things” (Lewis 1929, p. 54), which constitutes “pre-analytic data” for philosophical reflection (*ibid.*). Since this thick experience of the world is available to us “only because the mind of man takes attitudes and makes interpretations” (Lewis 1929, p. 30), the world we actually experience is already interpreted and (to some extent) structured by the active mind. Accordingly: “We do not see patches of color, but trees and houses; we hear, not indescribable sound, but voices and violins. What we most certainly know are objects and full-bodied facts about them which could be stated in propositions” (Lewis 1929,

⁴ Despite the existing controversy as to whether Lewis's *Mind and the World-Order* is consistent with his *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation*, and whether Lewis essentially changed his views in the latter (see Gowans 1984, 1989), I take, following Sandra Rosenthal (Rosenthal 2007), Eric Dayton (Dayton 1995), and Lewis himself, that the two works are principally the expositions of the same stance.

p. 54). This constitutes a starting point for further reflections. Next, by thinking through the world of thick experience, a philosopher examines the necessary conditions for the existence of such a world. As a result, he arrives at the concept of the given and settles that the given deduced in this manner is a necessary prerequisite for a thick world of experience. And being so, the given has to be independent of any conceptual interpretation of the subject and immune to the changing attitude of an active mind.

As Sachs remarks:

Lewis's transcendental argument for the given is that if there were no given, then there could not be any experience of the sort we manifestly have; if there were no given, we would be purely discursive beings who never apply or use concepts in perception or action. Indeed, given Lewis's pragmatist insistence on the tight connection between knowledge and action, a purely discursive being – a being to whom nothing was given – could not even be said to know anything at all. Such a being would be, however, nothing at all like the kind of being that we manifestly are – hence there must be something purely given which is conceptually interpreted to produce the world of thick experience, including our self-experience. Since the concept of the given is grounded in a transcendental argument, Lewis has not yet provided any reasons for thinking that his notion of the given is Mythic. (Sachs 2015, p. 25)

That is, Lewis's given is not mythic in the Sellarsian sense.

Lewis refers to the general conception of the given as “the absolutely given” (Lewis 1929, pp. 58, 305, 310), or “the total field of the given” (p. 134), and states that “there is, in all strictness, only one given, the Bergsonian real duration” (p. 58). This pure givenness is a philosophical abstraction. So determined, the given is beyond any categorization or classification, belonging to neither objective nor subjective, since it belongs neither to perceptible reality nor to the subject's sensory consciousness (Lewis 1929, p. 63). The given is invulnerable to skeptical doubt, not “because it is an infallible object of experience”, but “because the given is not an object of experience at all, and doubt is only intelligible with regard to objects of experience” (Sachs 2015, p. 25). Hence Sachs concludes that Lewis is not a foundationalist about knowledge (*ibid.*).

Now, one can ask how the given conceived “in all strictness,” “the absolutely given” or “Bergsonian real duration”, could enter the particular

cognitive acts of individuals. In this context, Lewis speaks about “the *element* of givenness in what we may, for usual and commonplace reasons, mark off as ‘an experience’ or ‘an object’” (Lewis 1929, p. 59), or about “a presentation” (p. 60). Differing from the absolute sense of the given, Sandra Rosenthal called it “relatively given,” “functionally given” (Rosenthal 2007, p. 72), or “given as taken” (p. 73), in the following sense:

The total or absolute field of the given provides the bedrock ‘stuff’ for awareness, and the interested mind ‘takes’ or abstracts from this field complexes that can be presentations of objects. Thus, the given, as the ‘stuff’ that enters into conscious cognitive processes, becomes, in fact, a taken. This element of givenness is an event, and the form of this presentation as a gestalt or complex whole is partially dependent on the interested mind and the conceptual structures that define its purposes, but the ultimate stuff of the complex is as it is, independently of conscious cognitive processes. (p. 72)

This construal of givenness – “the element of givenness” as abstracted from “the absolutely given” – underlies our everyday perception of particular objects or states of affairs.

However, apart from the previous formulations, the given can also be distinguished and employed as “the thin given of immediacy” (Lewis 1929, p. 54), or “there and given” (Rosenthal 2007, p. 73), being analytically discriminated and extracted from the ordinary presentation of an object as particular “given appearances” (Lewis 1929, pp. 354, 369). “It is the brute-fact element in perception, illusion and dream (without antecedent distinction) which is intended” (Lewis 1929, p. 57). Afterwards, for the sake of philosophical analysis, some groups of similar, repeatable appearances can be classified under one sensory qualia – such as “red,” “round,” etc. – which, in turn, are not concrete, unique appearances, but rather concepts or “sort of universals” (Lewis 1929, p. 124). What is important on this construal of the given is that we normally do not use them when stating observation reports, but only when we doubt the existence of what is perceived and want to verify a dubious empirical statement or improve our practical orientation toward future experience (Rosenthal 2007, p. 75).

The previous three versions of the given, though not explicitly articulated in Lewis’s writings, constitute different levels of interpretation based on the different roles play in his theory of knowledge

(Rosenthal 2007, p. 70). In the first sense of “the absolutely given,” it underlies our every perception, despite its being imperceptible as such. In the second sense of the presentation of objects, or of “the element of givenness,” it is what is shared by different people perceiving the same objects, what is constant in their experiences independently of any individual descriptions or classifications of it. This is also that constant element in my perception that the private and unique sense-appearances of mine (of the object) are correlated to, as well as which the corresponding appearances of someone else are correlated to. This is the third sense of momentary “there and given.” Thus, a “fountain pen” in my hand can be described, categorized, or interpreted in a different way by various people: a small child, an adult from a primitive culture when seeing it for the first time, and by myself. Still, something constant and unalterable lies there beneath all actual and virtual descriptions and interpretations. This is that which would remain if we tried to subtract all concepts from each particular determinations of a “fountain pen” (Lewis 1929, pp. 49–50). Only then would we face non-conceptualized, but at the same time “ineffable” (p. 53), given. Thanks to the given, not only is perception possible, but also intersubjective communication is secured. It assures us that our thoughts have objective purport.

As a result of this transcendental procedure, a philosopher is ready to admit that in empirical knowledge two elements can be distinguished: “the concept, which is the product of the activity of thought, and the sensuously given, which is independent of such activity” (Lewis 1929, p. 37). Consequently, “Empirical truth, or knowledge of the objective, arises through conceptual interpretation of the given” (ibid.). Thus both elements are needed if our knowledge is to be about the world, if it be at all assessable as to its truth. If both our experience and our knowledge were to be exclusively conceptual, then knowledge would have to be “contentless and arbitrary, there would be nothing which it must be true to” (p. 39) and we would end up on purely idealistic terms. In the opposite situation, “if there be no interpretation or construction which the mind itself imposes, then thought is rendered superfluous, the possibility of error becomes inexplicable, and the distinction of true and false is in danger of becoming meaningless” (ibid.) – which would lead us toward some implausible realism.

Now, what is the role of the given in justifying empirical knowledge? Obviously, it is this element which our empirical claims are about and that secures their objective purport. The given – *in this sense* – is capable of

providing the bedrock evidence for our knowledge.⁵ In just this sense our claims about the world are epistemologically significant. Still, I find it to be a mistake – taking into account Sellars’s considerations on the myth of the given – to count them as a strictly epistemological items, *pace*, for example, Moser (Moser 1988, pp. 193–196) and Bonjour (Bonjour 2004, pp. 196–199). For the only thing that enters the sphere of epistemic justification is not the given itself, but always our conceptual interpretations of it. And this is for us the only way to base our knowledge on the given. Thus, it is only the interpretations of the given that are employed as justificatory on an epistemic level.

Accordingly, in order to stipulate the epistemic sphere in Lewis, the question about propositional character of our interpretations of the given arises. And it seems that in Lewis any candidate for knowledge simply takes in that things are thus and so, thus capturing our experience by means of *a priori* – though pragmatically developed (Lewis 1929, p. 230, et passim) – concepts and Such a posit is implicit in *Mind and the World-Order* and *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation*.

In the latter book (Lewis 1946, chapter VIII), Lewis distinguishes three different types of empirical statements comprising empirical knowledge – to recall them here will be useful for discussing the normative and the learning aspects of knowledge. Lewis specifies the following: “expressive language, or expressive use of language” (Lewis 1946, p. 179), “terminating judgments” and “non-terminating judgments” (Lewis 1946, p. 181). The last mentioned, “non-terminating judgment,” constitutes an “empirical belief” (Lewis 1946, p. 190). The specific function of expressive statements is “that such language signifies *appearances*. And in thus referring to appearances, or affirming what appears, such expressive language *neither asserts any objective reality of what appears nor denies any*. It is confined to description of the content of presentation itself” (Lewis 1946, p. 179). Such statements are not judgments, since they do not assert anything with objective purport. Their only task is to express our apprehensions of the given. Paradigmatically, they use the language of appearances, saying for example: “I see what *looks like* granite steps before me,” not “There is a flight of granite steps before me” (Lewis 1946, p. 179).

⁵This, in turn, can be further interpreted, for example, in the spirit of phenomenism (Bonjour 2004) or conceptual realism (Dayton 1995). However, discussing this question goes beyond the scope of my chapter.

As such, they are beyond rational doubt and error. However, they can be treated as true or false only in the sense that the subject making such a statement may choose to tell truth or to lie about her own experience. Nevertheless, as Rosenthal concludes on this issue, “the immediate content apprehended . . . is not judged, it is ‘had’” (Rosenthal 2007, p. 81).

Characteristic of Lewis’s concept of a terminating judgment it states a single passage of experience: basing it on an immediate appearance of the given, it predicts that my undertaking a certain action will result in my experiencing some different appearance. Accordingly, the formal expression of the terminating judgment is: “S being given, if A then E” (Lewis 1946, p. 184), where S is a sensory intake, A – proposed action, and E – a predicted experience. Both S and E must be formulated in expressive language. Thus, given “there is such and such white shape in my visual field,” if “I do something with it,” then “there is such and so shape in my visual field.” The prediction stated in terminating judgments counts as knowledge because this prediction can be true or false. Since, it seems, it covers a single and unique passage of immediate experience, when it turns out to be true after such practical verification, it is true once and for all.

The third level of empirical statements, the non-terminating ones, are judgments of objective fact, which express empirical beliefs concerning these objective facts. The proper formal schema for it would be: “If this is a physical object ‘O’, then if ‘S’ appearance and action ‘A’, then in all probability ‘E’ appearance will occur” (after Rosenthal 2007, p. 82). Here, these statements, though verifiable in many particular cases, are not entirely verifiable and thus are always probable. Their verification would comprise virtually indefinite number of practical consequences and involve such a number of terminating judgments as its single corroboration. This is why it is impossible, restricting ourselves to actual terminating judgments or actions being tested, to gain complete verification and certitude. What remains, instead, is their probability. As Lewis sees it, claim such as “A piece of white paper is now before me” (Lewis 1946, p. 180) can be verified through a sequence of terminating statements it involves and practical consequences flowing from my action:

This judgment will be false if the presentation is illusory; it will be false if what I see is not really paper; false if it is not really white but only looks white. This objective judgment also is one capable of corroboration. As in the other example, so here too, any test of the judgment would pretty

surely involve some way of acting – *making* the test, as by continuing to look, or turning my eyes, or grasping to tear, etc. – and would be determined by finding or failing to find some expected result in experience. But in this example, if the result of any single test is as expected, it constitutes a partial verification of the judgment only; never one which is absolutely decisive and theoretically complete...it has a significance which outruns what any single test, or any limited set of tests, could exhaust. (Lewis 1946, p. 180)

Consequently, each and every objective empirical belief is always probable, and as such, fallible.

Having the aforementioned distinctions in mind, we can come back to discuss the next feature of the epistemic sphere, namely its normative aspect – including epistemic fallibilism – and what I called the learning aspect – including a version of inferentialism. Accordingly, empirical knowledge stated in non-terminating judgments is implicitly normative and explicitly fallible. Since complete verification – as Lewis understands it – of the non-terminating statements is beyond our reach, it is always probable and never certain. And since the number of its practical consequences, whose confirmed effects are needed for its verification, is indefinite, some future consequences may turn out not to be confirmed. Thus, in the face of some future data, possibly contradicting predicted effects of actions that the statement in question involves, the original non-terminating judgment would call for revision or even rejection. That is a feature of Lewis’s “pragmatic fallibilism” (Rosenthal 2007, p. 81, et passim). The empirical claims are also normative, because they both require justification and are open to new justification in the face of new evidence or unexpected practical upshots. The evidence and consequences as captured in expressive and terminating statements is thus analogous to what Sellars called the “logical space of reasons.”

As to the learning aspect, it is easier to start with inferentialism. First, we should ask: what is Lewis’s counterpart to Sellars’s observation reports? It seems that these reports, since they have objective purport, constitute a subclass of Lewis’s non-terminating judgments. Is there an analogy, even if a partial one, between these two? What they share is their inferential articulation through which we make such reports. In Sellars, for a perceiver to report some authoritative empirical content is for her to make an inference: from the token of a report (e.g. “This is green”) to her possibly asserting the existence of an object (the green

one) in her visual field under standard conditions (Sellars 1997, p. 75). What an analogous perceiver in Lewis does is also make an inference, where his having some sensory appearances (as rendered in expressive statements) and a tested prediction resulting in expected passage of experience (as stated in a terminating judgment) serve as a justification for asserting, albeit with an amount of probability, the existence of such and such object. And although Sellars did not distinguish the pragmatic aspect embedded in Lewis's conception under the term of "terminating judgement," it is not incompatible with Sellars's account.

Such inferentialism concerning the individual reporter's observation statements is included, in the learning aspect of the epistemic sphere, since our ability to infer is part of the broader process of our growing up, adopting certain patterns of common, social behavior, reacting in a certain way to certain kinds of stimuli, and learning the standard and unusual conditions of perception. Is there a similar situation in Lewis? Though not explicitly stated, it is nevertheless implicit in his "pragmatic conception of a priori" (Lewis 1923). In this context, Lewis declares that our concepts, categories, and definitions "are peculiarly social products, reached in the light of experiences which have much in common, and beaten out, like other pathways, by the coincidence of human purposes and the exigencies of human cooperation" (Lewis 1923, p. 177). He also claims that our "categorical modes of interpretation may be subject to gradual transition and even to fairly abrupt alteration . . . such alteration in categorial interpretations is a fact of social history" (Lewis 1929, p. 228). Accordingly: "The human mind' is distinctly a social product, and our categories will reflect that fact" (pp. 238–239), which is due to the fact that "the needs of individual humans are mostly served by cooperation with others" (p. 238). In view of this, our pragmatic *a priori* categories, adjusted by common needs and experience, as well as the likeness of our habits, or modes of behavior, in dealing with empirical world, are the products of our learning. This includes also the minimal knowledge behind our observation reports as well as the mere capacity for inferring.

CONCLUSION

The main task I set at the beginning of this paper was to explore both the nature of the myth of the given and, since the concept of given is closely related to epistemology, also the general characteristics of the

epistemic sphere. I distinguished these characteristics as three inter-related features: *propositional* aspect of perception, *normative* aspect of knowledge (including fallibilism) and indispensable *learning* aspect in acquiring new knowledge (including inferentialism). Because Sellars defined the given strictly in epistemological terms as mythical, for him there is no place for the given in empirical knowledge. Next, my task was to examine Lewis's conception of the given as it functions in his pragmatic theory of knowledge, and to inspect whether the features distinguished in Sellars can be ascribed – explicitly or implicitly – to Lewis. I assumed that if Lewis developed a different, not directly epistemological conception of the given, and since his general account of empirical knowledge displays the characteristics identified by Sellars, then his epistemology would be immune to Sellars's criticisms. In effect, I showed that in Lewis the given does not play the role assigned to this concept by Sellars and, thus, is not mythical. Despite all differences between the detailed conceptions of Lewis and Sellars,⁶ the three general features of the *sui generis* epistemic sphere: its propositional, normative (with fallibilism), and learning (with inferentialism) aspects are present in both conceptions. Thus Lewis's theory of knowledge and the given remains beyond the scope of Sellars's critique.⁷

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⁶ For interesting account of some of these detailed differences, see Sachs's exciting book: *Intentionality and the Myths of the Given: Between Pragmatism and Phenomenology*, chapter III (Sachs 2015).

⁷ Carl Sachs, analyzing a similar issue in (Sachs 2015), made another useful distinction between the epistemological and the semantic given. Sachs argues that while Lewis rejected epistemological given, he committed himself to the semantic given (Sachs 2015, pp. 29–41). I generally agree with Sachs's arguments, although I have decided to restrict myself only to the epistemic given.

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