Sellars and Wittgenstein, Early and Late

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1. The Issue

There is a famous passage, at the very beginning of *Science and Metaphysics*, in which Sellars speaks of the history of philosophy as the *lingua franca* of philosophy, to be used as a means of communication among philosophers, though not only as a means of communication:

> The history of philosophy is the *lingua franca* which makes communication between philosophers, at least of different points of view, possible. Philosophy, without the history of philosophy, if not empty or blind, is at least dumb. Thus, if I build my discussion of contemporary issues on a foundation of Kant exegesis and commentary, it is because, as I see it, there are enough close parallels between the problems confronting him and the steps he took to solve them, on the one hand, and the current situation and its demands, on the other, for it to be helpful to use him as a means of communication, *though not*, of course, *as a means only.* (SM, 1; the latter italics is ours)

Another significant passage concerning this issue can be found in Sellars's *Autobiographical Reflections*. This passage is somewhat more personal, in that Sellars tells us the story of how he came to write "Realism and the New Way of Words" (1948), after several years of mostly silent reflections:

At last I had found a successful strategy for writing … I soon discovered that spinning out, as I was, ideas in a vacuum, everything I wrote was idiosyncratic and had little direct connection with what others had said. Each spinning required a new web to support it, and the search for fixed points of reference became a struggle for coherence and completeness … I soon came to see that a dialectical use of historical positions is the most reliable way of anchoring arguments and making them intersubjectively available. In the limiting case, this use of history is illustrated by correspondence and controversial exchanges with contemporaries. (AR, 293)

In what follows we would like to examine whether this idea of the history of philosophy as a means of communication can actually be seen at work in Sellars's dealings with a specific philosopher. Since Sellars suggests that being a means of communication is not the only use of the history of philosophy, we also aim to investigate its other possible uses.

The specific philosopher we shall focus on is Ludwig Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein's case is especially worth investigating, for reasons that pertain both to Wittgenstein's side and to Sellars's side. For what concerns Wittgenstein, the interesting point is the rather obvious one that there are (at least) two clearly distinguishable Wittgensteins: the early Wittgenstein (represented by the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*) and the later Wittgenstein (epitomized in the *Philosophical Investigations*). For what concerns Sellars, the interesting point is that Sellars wishes to *use both* Wittgensteins. Those who use Wittgensteinian themes for their own philosophical purposes usually choose one of the two Wittgensteins. On the other hand, philosophers or scholars who are interested in Wittgenstein from a historical-philosophical perspective often focus on the continuity/discontinuity issue between the two phases of Wittgenstein's philosophy.

For these reasons, the present paper can also be read as a contribution to the understanding

of the tangled vicissitudes of Wittgenstein in America, and of the role Sellars played in this story. At first, American philosophy neglected or failed to understand the thought of Wittgenstein, especially that of the later Wittgenstein, even when, as in the 1940s and 1950s, a Wittgensteinian philosophical style was becoming dominant across the Atlantic, notably at Oxford and Cambridge.

During the 1930s and 1940s the linguistic and cultural distance made it difficult for American philosophers to read, let alone understand, Wittgenstein. It happened quite often that they mistook the philosophy of Wittgenstein for the most similar thing they had stumbled upon, namely, the philosophy of Rudolf Carnap: a relatively well-known example of such confusion is Ernest Nagel's "Impressions and Appraisals" of "analytic" philosophy, published in 1936, after a sabbatical year in Europe (Nagel 1936). However, the assimilation of Carnap's thought into American philosophy mainly took place through the criticisms of Quine, Goodman and others. As a consequence, Wittgenstein was allowed entrance into the US as an obscure and less scientific *Doppelgänger* of Carnap, a great philosopher, yet one who arguably had made epochal mistakes, which were predominantly exposed by American philosophers themselves (for an authoritative reconstruction of this story see Hacker 1996 and Glock 2008; the present account, however, heavily relies also on Tripodi 2009).

In the 1960s and 1970s things changed, at least in part, and several influent analytic philosophers in the US took Wittgenstein (especially the later Wittgenstein) into serious consideration. Yet in most cases it was an unsympathetic appraisal: for example, to mention only the most well-known and remarkable cases, Putnam attacked Wittgenstein's notion of criterion, Davidson criticized the distinction between causes and reasons, and Fodor charged

Wittgenstein's philosophy of mind with behaviourism and verificationism (Putnam 1962, Davidson 1963, Chihara and Fodor 1965, Fodor 1975). Only a scant group of philosophers, concentrated around Norman Malcolm at Cornell University, defended Wittgenstein's philosophy, but they were rather isolated and marginal with respect to the mainstream. There were of course some exceptions, philosophers who knew Wittgenstein well and appreciated his philosophy: from Cavell and Dreben to Stroud and Arrington. Yet, this does not change the overall picture: American philosophy, which in the meantime had become "analytic", proved to be impervious to Wittgenstein, or even hostile to his style of thought.

Given this background, Sellars's case is uncommon and peculiar. Sellars was a respected philosopher, and his importance and influence were by no means related to some sort of Cornell-inspired Wittgensteinianism. However, he was well acquainted with Wittgenstein's philosophy, early and late, and he was able to recognize both its elements of continuity and its differences with respect to Carnap. This does not mean that Sellars was completely clear of any confusion between Carnap's and Wittgenstein's views, but rather that his degree of awareness was greater than that of most American philosophers belonging to his generation. The present paper provides a contribution to the understanding of Wittgenstein's alternating fortunes in the US by analysing and interpreting Sellars's stance[1], which was characteristically against the tide: for his use of both Wittgensteins for philosophical purposes and, in particular, for his attempt to make Wittgenstein's and Carnap's semantic ideas interact with each other.

As has just been stated Sellars wishes to *use both* Wittgensteins for philosophical purposes. From a philosophical point of view this raises at least two questions:

Does it work? That is, is Sellars's unique combination of motives from both the early and

the later Wittgenstein philosophically tenable?

Are the uses of motives from both the early and the later Wittgenstein in some way connected, or correlated, to Sellars's famous distinction between the scientific and the manifest image of the world?

Other questions can be asked from a historical-philosophical perspective – that is, from a perspective that focuses on exegetical issues as well as on the more general assessment of Wittgenstein's place and role in the history of philosophy. Among these questions are:

What are Sellars's interpretations of the philosophies of the early and the later Wittgenstein respectively?

What is Sellars's view concerning the continuity/discontinuity issue?

Yet our main question is somewhat different: How does Sellars make the two Wittgensteins interact with each other? Our guess is that it is in these modes of interaction that the originality of Sellars's approach is most clearly apparent. In any case, all these questions could be investigated by considering several different aspects of both Wittgenstein's and Sellars's philosophies. We choose to focus on one topic – albeit a large one –, that is semantics, broadly conceived.

2. From Carnap to the Later Wittgenstein

Sellars was in agreement with many of Wittgenstein's later views: antifoundationalism in epistemology (according to which there is no ultimate and self-justified belief, or set of beliefs,

on which our knowledge is based); anti-Cartesianism in the philosophy of mind (which rejects the idea that we know our own thoughts and sensations directly and with absolute certainty); a sort of anti-reductionism according to which the normative dimension (of logic, epistemology, action, language, morality, and so forth) cannot be reduced to naturalistic terms; and even some metaphilosophical views (for example, the idea that philosophy and science ultimately have different goals and work, as it were, on different levels). In this section, however, we shall focus on a specific issue: Sellars's and the later Wittgenstein's conceptions of semantics.

In *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (1956) Sellars makes it clear that there is a strict connection between the myth of the given – his main polemical target – and certain conceptions of language. Roughly, the myth of the given is the idea that any knowledge we may have is ultimately based on some noninferential, immediate knowledge of basic, self-justified and epistemically independent elements (see de Vries and Triplett 2000, 186 for this formulation). According to Sellars, one way to avoid the myth of the given is to realize that what he refers to as psychological nominalism is true, that is, that 'all awareness of sorts, resemblances, facts, ect., in short, all awareness of abstract entities – indeed, all awareness even of particulars – is a linguistic affair' (EPM, § 29). Consequently – and, in a way, symmetrically – Sellars also thinks that a special form of the myth of the given, formulated as a rejection of psychological nominalism, is the idea that some awareness of abstract entities – or of particulars – is pre-linguistic. On this basis, he suggests that the myth of the given goes hand in hand with a thesis concerning the acquisition of language, namely, the view that 'there is awareness of logical space prior to, or independent of, the acquisition of a language' (EPM, § 31).

In this connection, Sellars explicitly refers to Wittgenstein's later work and, in particular, to

the first sections of the *Philosophical Investigations*, where Wittgenstein criticizes the so-called Augustinian picture of language, i.e., the idea that every word has a meaning, that this meaning is correlated to the word, that the meaning of a word is the object for which the word stands, and that the essential function of words is naming (cf. Wittgenstein 1953, § 1). Sellars focuses, in particular, on the Augustinian picture of language acquisition, the view according to which 'the process of teaching a child to use a language is that of teaching it to discriminate elements within a logical space of particulars, universals, facts, etc., of which it is already undiscriminatingly aware, and to associate these discriminated elements with verbal symbols' (EPM, § 30). The reference to Wittgenstein is clear and straightforward: not only in this context does Sellars refer to the case of a child, but he also evokes the case of a 'carrier of slabs' (EPM, § 30), which directly calls to mind § 2 of the *Investigations*. According to Sellars, the Augustinian picture conveys an especially tempting form of the myth of the given because it expresses a view 'to which even philosophers who are suspicious of the whole idea of *inner episodes* can fall prey' (EPM, § 30). In fact, even nominalists, who think that there are only particulars, can fall prey to it. Sellars therefore emphasizes the fact that the real test for a theory of language is its account of what, in borrowing the idea from H.H. Price, he calls, 'thinking in presence', as opposed to 'thinking in absence'. The former expression indicates the Augustinian situation in which the alleged meaning of a name – the named object – is there before the language user (EPM, § 30; cf. Price 1953).

Sellars is well aware, however, of the fact that the Augustinian picture of language typically presents itself in the form of a Platonist view, according to which the meaning of a predicate is the abstract entity it stands for. For example, the word 'red' means (that is,

designates) the quality (or property) *red*. This Platonist view is based on two claims: that 'the word "red" would not be a *predicate* if it didn't have the logical syntax characteristic of predicates'; and that it would not 'be the predicate it is, unless … we tended to respond to red objects in standard circumstances with something having the force of "This is red"' (EPM, § 31), in a way similar to that in which a thermometer tends to respond to a certain temperature with something having the force of, say, '37 degrees'. According to Sellars, however, the main argument for the idea that the meaning of a predicate is the abstract entity it stands for is a different one, and depends on what he refers to as a relational conception of *means*. This is a view of the logic of 'means' that depends on a superficial analogy: since the statement '(In German) "rot" means *red*' superficially resembles such relational statements as 'Cowley adjoins Oxford', then we can assimilate the form '". . ." means - - -' to the form 'xRy'. This analogy invites us to 'take it for granted that meaning is a relation between a word and a nonverbal entity' and to 'suppose that the relation in question is that of association' (EPM, § 31).

According to Sellars, this analogy is misleading. In fact, one should provide an entirely different picture of semantics. He argues as follows:

> The truth of the matter, of course, is that statements of the form '". . ." means - - -' are not relational statements … The rubric '". . ." means - - -' is a linguistic device for conveying the information that a *mentioned* word, in this case 'rot', plays the same role in a certain linguistic economy, in this case the linguistic economy of German-speaking peoples, as does the word 'red', which is not *mentioned* but *used* – used in a unique way; *exhibited*, so to speak – and which occurs 'on the right-hand side' of the semantical statement (EPM, § 31).

Moreover, the absurdity of the Augustinian picture immediately turns out if, for example, one considers the word 'und', rather than the word 'rot', as the meaning of a connective is clearly given by its inferential role, rather than by its being associated with an alleged Platonic entity – or so Sellars seems to think. As is well known, in several papers Sellars formulates his inferentialist view of semantics by employing the so-called dot-quoting device. Consider, for instance, the semantic statement '"Rouge" in French means *red*', as it is typically formulated, for example, in Carnap-style semantics (cf. Carnap 1942).[21] According to Sellars this statement should be translated as '"Rouge" in French means ·red·', which in turn means '"Rouge" in French plays the same role that "red" plays in English'. In this way, the Augustinian reading of the semantic statement is explained away, and semantics turns out to be, at least *prima facie*, an entirely intralinguistic affair (for a general description and discussion of Sellars's philosophy of language see, for example, O'Shea 2007, chapter IV, de Vries 2016, as well as Marras 1973).

After EPM Sellars often associates his functional role semantics to Wittgenstein's later view of meaning as use. For example, in a passage that occurs several times in his works, he writes that

> according to this analysis, *meaning is not a relation* for the very simple reason that 'means' is a *specialized form of the copula*. Again, the meaning of an expression is its 'use' (in the sense of function), in that to say what an expression means is to classify it by means of an illustrating functional sortal. (LTC, 116; CC, 181; MFC, 431; NAO, 78; see also BEB, 158, TC, 203, letter to Ausonio Marras, 26-11-1975, in CSM)

It is interesting to notice, however, that when he put forward his functional role semantics for the

first time (at least in a rudimentary form), Sellars was not primarily concerned with the later Wittgenstein. Rather, his attempt was that of discussing, developing and criticizing Carnap's semantic views, as Carnap presented them in his *Introduction to semantics* (cf. Carus 2004 and Olen 2016 for the relationship between Sellars and Carnap). This implicit dialogue with Carnap on semantics lasted from 1947-1948 ("Epistemology and the New Way of Words" and "Realism and the New Way of Words") to 1953 ("Inference and Meaning"). Only around 1953 and especially in 1954, with the publication of "Some Reflections on Language Games", Sellars started to systematically present his functional role semantics by using the later Wittgenstein's vocabulary and conceptual apparatus, framed in terms of *games*, *language games*, *system of rules*, *grammar*, *use*, *rule-governed activity*, and so forth.

As already suggested above, an apparent consequence of Sellars's semantic views is that semantics is entirely intralinguistic, which means that within semantics we do not reach out to the world. One might not believe this to the case, since in several places Sellars states that functional roles involve not only *intralinguistic moves* but also what he calls *language entry transitions* (such as my seeing something red in front of me and uttering 'This is red') and *language exit transitions* (such as my uttering 'I shall catch a red thing' and stretching my arm out toward a red apple in front of me). However, Sellars denies that this is enough to guarantee a language-to-world grounding. For example, he writes:

> Just as an intralinguistic move is not in the full sense an *inference* unless the subject not only conforms to, but obeys, syntactical rules …; so a language entry transition is not in the full sense an *observation* unless the subject not only (in normal circumstances) tokens 'This object is green' if and only if a green object is present to his senses, but is able to infer (in a pragmatic metalanguage)

from 'The thought *this object is green* occurred to Jones at time t in place s in circumstances c' to 'a green object was present to Jones' senses at t in s'. (ITSA, 313 footnote; see also SRLG, reprinted with extensive additions in SPR, 334-35)

The point here is that such behavioural moves and transitions are nothing but conditioned responses and do not involve any semantic/normative connection between language and the world (for a discussion of such issues, with a special focus on Sellars's multifaceted attitude towards behaviourism, see Tripodi 2011). However, if semantics proper has nothing to do with causal relations between the speakers' behaviour and the world, then once again semantics seems to be an entirely intralinguistic affair, and the danger of linguistic idealism (i.e., 'the miserable absurdity' that 'the world belong[s] to the linguistic order', TC, 209) becomes imminent. In sum, on the one hand, Sellars's main preoccupation is to deny the idea that a predicate such as 'red' acquires meaning 'because we come to obey "semantical rules"' (such as the rule: red objects are to be called *red*), since this idea clearly 'presupposes the existence of prelinguistic concepts', which would be a form of the myth of the given (see SRLG, reprinted with extensive additions in SPR, 334). On the other hand, however, Sellars must recognize that his functional role semantics, which is inspired by Wittgenstein's later view of language, and which avoids the myth of the given, has a possible shortcoming; namely, the problem of linguistic idealism, the view according to which in language we never reach out to the world.[3]

3. The Tractatus

Sellars explicitly addressed linguistic idealism as a problem in "Truth and 'correspondence'" (1962). Such a problem is addressed by both interpreting and using the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, or better, by using some suggestions drawn from the *Tractatus*, *as interpreted by Sellars*.

According to Sellars the *Tractatus* – rather unsurprisingly – requires an interpretation that is in accordance with Sellars's own conception of semantics. In fact, Sellars holds that if a Tarski-Carnap-style semantics is adopted (see endnote 2), then the *Tractatus* turns out to be incoherent. Let us consider the semantic statement

(1) *S* (in L) means *aRb*,

where L is the object language, and '*aRb*' belongs to the metalanguage in which the semantic statement is formulated. According to the doctrine of the *Tractatus*, a statement, or a sentence, can occur within another statement or sentence only truth-functionally. But in (1) '*aRb*' occurs in a non truth-functional way (for one cannot substitute *salva veritate* '*aRb*' with another sentence having the same truth-value). Therefore (1) is, strictly speaking, unsayable. This is the famous thesis of the ineffability of semantics, which Sellars regards as a paradoxical and unacceptable result (see TC, 208).

Now, the paradox of (1) can be solved if either condition (i) or (ii) is satisfied:

(i) '*aRb*' does not really occur in (1);

(ii) (1) is not a statement proper – as Sellars says –, that is, it is not a Wittgensteinian *Satz*, a declarative sentence that may be true or false in that it describes a matter of fact.

Both (i) and (ii) are satisfied if one adopts Sellars's functional role semantics. (i) is satisfied because (1) is reinterpreted as

(2) *S* (in L) plays the same role as '*aRb*' (in ML),

where ML is the metalanguage. What occurs in (2) is not '*aRb*', but rather '"*aRb*"'; in a way, '*aRb*' is mentioned or, as Sellars says, it occurs only indirectly.

To show that (ii) is also satisfied, a different example of semantic statements is taken into consideration, in which the notion of truth is involved. According to Tarski-Carnap semantics, the predicate 'is true' can be defined as:

'Chicago est grande' (in French) is true iff $\exists p$ ('Chicago est grande' (in French) means p, and p)[42].

According to Sellars's view of semantics, this formula must be modified in the following way:

'Chicago est grande' (in French) is true iff $\exists$that-p ('Chicago est grande' (in French) expresses the proposition that-p, and that-p is true),

where the phrase 'expresses the proposition that-*p*' is equivalent to

is a ·Chicago is large·,

which in turn must be understood as

plays the same role played in English by 'Chicago is large'.

It is plain to see that in this case, once again, semantics remains entirely intralinguistic.

Yet, the crucial question to be answered now is: What do statements such as 'that Chicago is large is true' mean? Sellars's formula

'Chicago est grande' (in French) is true iff ∃that-*p* ('Chicago est grande' (in French) expresses the proposition that-*p*, and that-*p* is true)

cannot be regarded as a statement providing a genuine definition of the predicate 'is true', since such a predicate occurs both on the left-hand side and on the right-hand side of the biconditional.

According to Sellars a more revealing way to answer the question is by means of the following formula:

'That Chicago is large is true' entails and is entailed by 'Chicago is large'.

This is to be understood as a principle of inference, i.e., as a rule that warrants us to *do* something with language (because 'inferring is a doing', as Sellars says in TC, 206). This same view, according to which the meaning of 'is true' is entirely captured by such rules of inference finds further confirmation in *Science and Metaphysics*, where Sellars speaks of truth as *assertibility* (see especially SM, chapters IV-V).

There are some morals to be drawn.

First, it has been shown that semantic statements are to be understood as rules, hence not as statements proper. This also holds for examples such as

(1) *S* (in L) means *aRb*.

Therefore, condition (ii) – i.e., that (1) is not a statement proper – is also satisfied; the ineffability problem is doubly solved; the *Tractatus* is salvaged and shown to be coherent.

Second, the case of semantic statements involving truth once again shows in what sense semantics according to Sellars's view never reaches out to the world.

Third, it should be noted that this intralinguistic dimension – so to speak – cannot be transcended whenever we have to deal with propositions or facts (in Sellars's framework propositions or facts belong to the space of reasons and only occur in the context of semantic statements such as those illustrated above).

Sellars explicitly recognizes that this view can be accused of linguistic idealism, and that linguistic idealism is a problem. However, he also thinks that a solution to the problem comes from a suggestion that can be found in the *Tractatus* itself. The previous characterization of truth

in terms of rules of inference holds (according to Sellars and according to the *Tractatus* as interpreted by Sellars) for all kinds of truth, from mathematical truths to factual ones. Yet, in the case of factual statements (matter-of-factual statements, as Sellars sometimes calls them) there is something more to be taken into account: the picture theory.

For Sellars the picturing relation is a highly complex relation of projection, based on natural regularities, holding between two complex (that is, structured) natural objects. It is important to explain what it means that the terms of the picturing relation are natural, and what it means that they are objects, as well as why they must be so. As to the fact that the terms are natural, they are the linguistic sign, which must be conceived of as a purely natural object (an item in the order of causes and effects, in *rerum natura*), and the pictured object in the world (see TC, 222). The reason why they *must* be natural is that the causal nature of the picturing relation demands *natural* terms. But in addition to that, the terms of the picturing relation are and must be objects, rather than facts. The pictured complex object is outside of language, but in order for it to be so, it cannot be a fact, since facts (or propositions) are linguistic entities inhabiting the space of reasons.

It should be remarked that the picture theory, conceived of in this way, does not belong to semantics proper. Somewhat equivalently, Jay Rosenberg pointed out (Rosenberg 2006 126), that Sellars's picturing is devoid of any epistemological significance. It is clear that Sellars's view of picturing is quite different from Wittgenstein's: in the *Tractatus* the picturing relation has a distinctly *non*-natural dimension (having to do with the role played by the projective relation and the metaphysical subject), and its two terms – the proposition and the pictured fact – are definitely *not* complex objects, but rather *facts*. This of course means that Sellars's own

interpretation of the *Tractatus* is rather idiosyncratic[5]: Carl B. Sachs, in his contribution to this volume, goes so far as characterizing Sellars's speaking of *picturing* as an "unfortunate … choice of terminology", which obscures the pragmatist-Deweyan connection.

We can thus summarize the two distinct domains of semantics and picture theory according to Sellars. In semantics we have formulas such as

'*aRb*' (in L) means *aRb*,

which is to be understood as

'*aRb*' (in L) plays the same role played by '*p*' in ML.

Here '"*aRb*"' is the name of a meaningful sentence of L; speaking of a role played by '*aRb*' or by '*p*' inevitably involves normativity; the semantic statement as a whole is to be understood as a principle of inference. It should be noted once more that in the semantic situation one never goes beyond the linguistic sphere.

In the picture theory, on the other hand, we have formulas such as

aRb pictures *a´R´b´*.

This is to be understood as

aRb is in a certain (highly complicated) relation of projection with *a´R´b´*.

aRb is of course a complex natural object (e.g., a combination of sounds or ink spots), devoid of any normativity. *a´R´b´* is a complex natural object as well (e.g., a cat on the table; *not* that a cat is on the table). The picture theory statement is an object language description of a natural regularity. It is worth observing again that in the picturing situation there is nothing genuinely linguistic or semantic (i.e., nothing involving normativity).

It might seem therefore that semantics and picture theory are entirely disconnected. Yet, for Sellars there is a connection between them. More precisely, there is a connection between the truth of a statement and the correctness of a picture. The correctness of a picture is not meant as a normative notion: a picture is said to be correct if it is projected in a way that conforms to certain (highly complicated) causal regularities. The criterion according to which we decide whether a statement is true is whether the same statement, conceived of as a complex object in the realm of causes and effects (i.e., as a natural complex object) is a correct picture. In other words, the statement does not *say* that the picture is correct, but it *implies* that the picture is correct, since that is the criterion for its truth (see TC, 223). Thus, in a somewhat indirect way, according to Sellars a connection between language and the extra-linguistic reality is finally secured.

4. Uses and Interpretations

The main question of this paper – How does Sellars, in his investigations on semantics, make the

two Wittgensteins interact with each other? – can now be answered, thereby shedding some light on the general topic of 'Sellars and the history of philosophy'. Firstly, Sellars used the later Wittgenstein's vocabulary as a *lingua franca* to formulate his own view of semantics, which he himself had already developed some years before in a different context; namely, discussing, developing and criticizing Carnap's relational semantics. At that time, Sellars had already read Wittgenstein's *Blue and Brown Books*, and he was also acquainted with Ryle's critique of the 'Fido'-Fido conception of meaning (cf. Wittgenstein 1958, Ryle 1949), which in its turn was influenced by Wittgenstein's critique of the Augustinian picture. Apparently, however, only in the *Investigations* – published in 1953 – did Sellars find an extremely useful vocabulary and conceptual apparatus (i.e. game, language game, system of rules, grammar, use, language as rule-governed activity, rule-following, the analogy between the rules of language and the rules of chess, etc.) It seems that the use of Wittgenstein's later vocabulary helped Sellars to provide a clearer formulation of his functional role semantics. In other words, the later Wittgenstein was, for Sellars, a good means of communication. And this is particularly interesting in the general context of the history of analytic philosophy in America, especially if one realizes that in that period in the US few people were able to properly understand what was going on in the *Philosophical Investigations*, let alone to use that work for their own philosophical purposes (see Hacker 1996, Glock 2008, Tripodi 2009).

Sellars's semantics, which originated as an ideal dialogue with Carnap, and then developed employing Wittgenstein's later conceptual apparatus, had some shortcomings. This was recognized by Sellars himself. In particular, one of the dangerous consequences seemed to be linguistic idealism. Sellars found a solution to this problem in the *Tractatus*'s picture theory. In
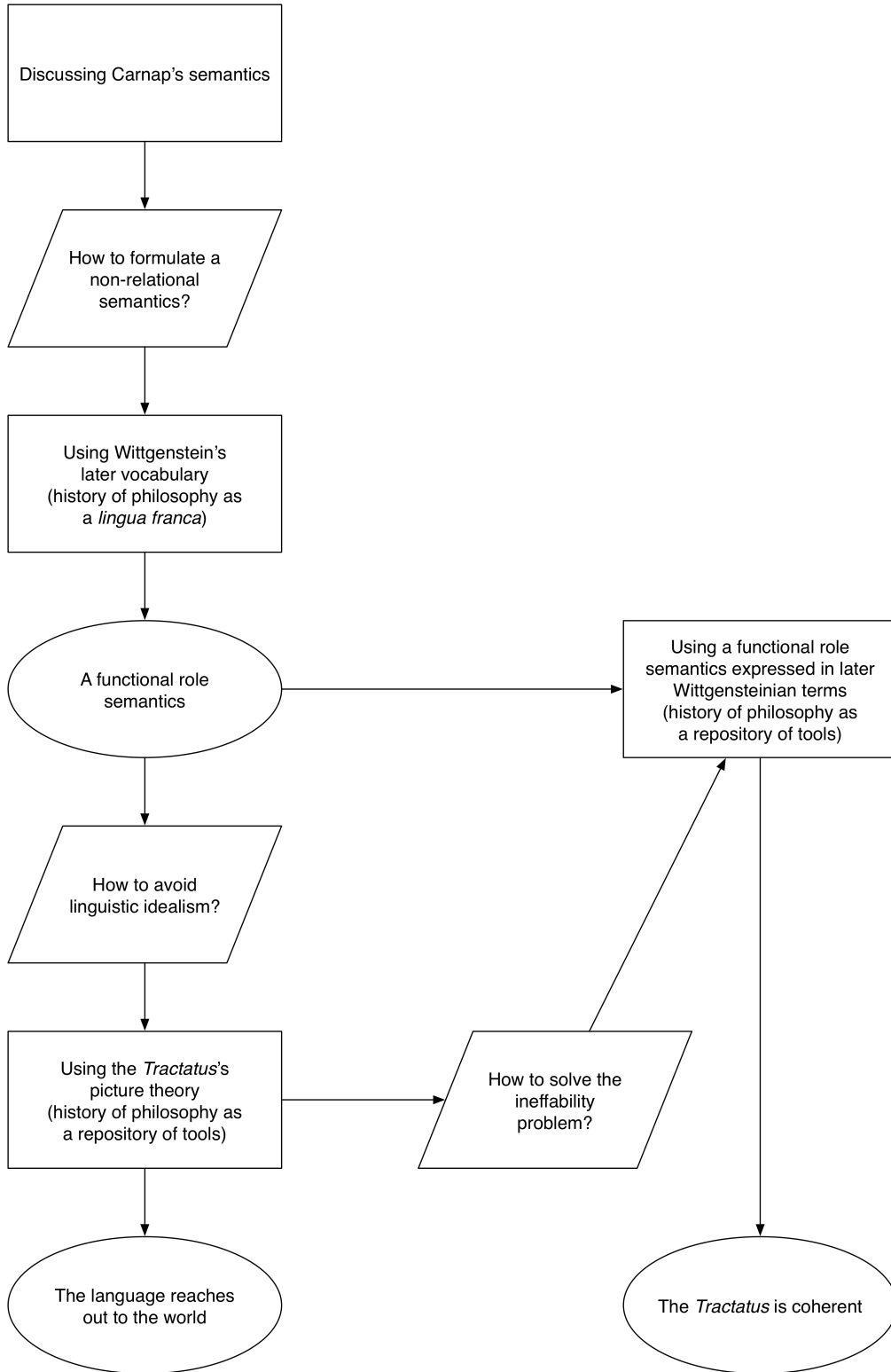
this case the history of philosophy is regarded by Sellars as a repository of philosophical tools, rather than as a *lingua franca*. In particular, the picture theory borrowed from the early Wittgenstein is a philosophical tool which Sellars employed to solve a problem that arose in the context of a semantics inspired by the later Wittgenstein.

Sellars's use of the *Tractatus* raises a further, interpretative issue: which interpretation of the *Tractatus* is adopted by Sellars? Sellars's own interpretation of the *Tractatus* is rather original and, at the same time, controversial. The need for a new interpretation had an independent motivation, namely, the purpose of solving a philosophical problem Sellars found in the *Tractatus* itself: the problem of the ineffability of semantics, and the related problem of the incoherence of the *Tractatus*. This suggests that Sellars oscillates between three options and tasks: interpreting the *Tractatus* for the sake of understanding (the early) Wittgenstein; interpreting it for the sake of solving a philosophical problem he found in the *Tractatus* itself (the problem of ineffability); and interpreting it with the purpose of solving a philosophical problem originated outside the *Tractatus* (in particular, the intralinguistic and somewhat idealistic nature of his functional role semantics). It is worth noting that – as one can see, for example, in the passage taken from Sellars's *Autobiographical Reflections* quoted at the beginning of the paper –, the three options are not considered by Sellars to be discrete alternatives but, rather, they spread along a continuum.

There is also an additional complication, which once more shows that, for philosophical purposes, the way in which Sellars made the two Wittgensteins interact with each other is a particularly interesting and complex one. As we have just stated, Sellars interpreted the *Tractatus* in order to solve the ineffability problem, in the attempt to make the *Tractatus* itself coherent.

However, he did so by using the later Wittgenstein. Or better, he did so by reading the *Tractatus* on the basis of a functional role semantics, partly inspired by the later Wittgenstein, rather than on the basis of a Tarski-Carnap semantics (which, in a way, could have appeared as a more natural alternative).

The following is a schematic representation, or a diagram, of the interesting and complex ways in which, as far as the issue of semantics is concerned, the two Wittgensteins interact in the hands of Sellars.

Discussing Carnap's semantics

How to formulate a non-relational semantics?

Using Wittgenstein's later vocabulary (history of philosophy as a *lingua franca*)

A functional role semantics

Using a functional role semantics expressed in later Wittgensteinian terms (history of philosophy as a repository of tools)

How to avoid linguistic idealism?

Using the *Tractatus*'s picture theory (history of philosophy as a repository of tools)

How to solve the ineffability problem?

The language reaches out to the world

The *Tractatus* is coherent

[1] We believe that it is not a coincidence that, in the US, the current interest in Sellars and Wittgenstein often goes hand in hand in the work of Robert Brandom and John McDowell.

[2] Sellars always associates this kind of semantics with the name of Carnap, and sometimes also of Tarski (see, among others, RNWW, TC, SM, letter to Gilbert Harman, 26-2-1970, in CSHT). The historical importance of the publication of Carnap's *Introduction to Semantics* in 1942 is difficult to overestimate. After having rejected for many years the feasibility of a semantics along Tarskian lines, Carnap gradually changed his mind in the second half of the 1930s, a process which was finally accomplished in 1942 (see Coffa 1991, chapter XVI). This turn was a disquieting surprise for many people, even for some who had always belonged to the same philosophical *milieu*. The first criticism came from Otto Neurath, already in the mid 1930s (see Mancosu 2008); then, after the publication of Carnap's book, came the criticisms by Hall 1944, Bergmann 1944, Bergmann 1945, Black 1945 (see Hochberg 1994, Hochberg 2001, 2-10; Bonino 2007); W.V.O. Quine, Nelson Goodman, and even Tarski himself, though for different reasons, were also critical with respect to Carnap's project (see Frost-Arnold 2013).

[3] Sellars takes it for granted that linguistic idealism is flawed. However he does not elaborate either on the notion itself of linguistic idealism or on the reasons why it is objectionable. Some interpreters, such as Rorty, suggested that Sellars's solution to the problem of linguistic idealism, that is his theory of picturing, could throw Sellars back into some sort of foundationalist position, in the mire of the myth of the given (see Rorty 1979, 91). As we and other interpreters (such as Rosenberg 2007 and Sachs in the contribution to this volume) show, this danger seems to be averted by the fact that the relation of picturing is neither semantic nor epistemological. Yet, some doubts may still linger on in connection with Sellars's poor elaboration of the concept of linguistic idealism: in order to make a conclusive assessment of this dispute, one should probably provide a definition of the problem of linguistic idealism that is independent of the theory designed to solve it.

[4] In his *Introduction to Semantics* Carnap actually uses the verb 'designate' rather than 'mean'. Here we are adhering to Sellars's use.

[5] The case of picturing is not the only one in which Sellars exhibits an idiosyncratic or at least controversial interpretation of the *Tractatus*. Another significant case is Sellars's interpretation of proposition 3.1342 of the *Tractatus* as suggesting an argument in favour of nominalism, an argument which is developed in 'Naming and Saying' and in *Naturalism and Ontology*, chapter IV. For a detailed criticism of Sellars's argument see Hochberg 1978, 318-323, Hochberg 1981, Hochberg 2001, 108-109, Hochberg 2003, 158-159. For an overall assessment of the entire question, see Bonino 2012.