The Philosophy of Wilfrid Sellars

Winter 2004

*** Syllabus ***

Instructors:

Michael Kremer, James Conant

Offices: Kremer – 119 Wieboldt; Conant – 124 Wieboldt
Office Phones: Kremer – 834-9884; Conant – 702-6146
Office Hours: Kremer – M 9:00-11:00 a.m. and by appointment; Conant – by appointment.
E-mail: Kremer – kremer@uchicago.edu; Conant – jconant@uchicago.edu

Texts

All of the following textbooks have been ordered through the Seminary Co-op. The first four are required texts for the course:

1. Wilfrid Sellars, Science and Metaphysics: Variations on Kantian Themes
2. Wilfrid Sellars, Science, Perception and Reality (below, SPR)
3. Wilfrid Sellars, Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind (with a study guide by Robert Brandom)
4. Willem deVries and Timm Triplett, Knowledge, Mind and the Given
5. C. I. Lewis, Mind and the World Order
7. Wilfrid Sellars, Naturalism and Ontology
8. Wilfrid Sellars, Philosophical Perspectives: History of Philosophy
9. Wilfrid Sellars, Philosophical Perspectives: Metaphysics and Epistemology (below, PPME)
10. Wilfrid Sellars, Pure Pragmatics and Possible Worlds (below, PPPW)
11. Wilfrid Sellars, Kant and Pre-Kantian Themes: Lectures by Wilfrid Sellars, edited by Pedro Amaral
12. Wilfrid Sellars, Kant's Transcendental Metaphysics: Sellars' Cassirer Lectures, Notes and Other Essays, edited by Jeffrey Sicha (below, KTM)

5-12 above are recommended texts; students may want to buy one or more of these depending on their interests.
Most but not all of the readings assigned for the course are in one of the twelve texts above. Other readings will be made available through electronic reserve, or through the library’s electronic resources (e.g. JSTOR), as will also any readings that are contained in texts 5-12.

The Sellars website at www.ditext.com/sellars/ is worth a visit and has links to various texts both by and about Sellars that are available in electronic form.

If you ever encounter any problem obtaining an assigned reading for the course, you should immediately contact both instructors by e-mail and let them know about the problem.

Structure of the course

Announcements: There is a chalk website for this course (chalk.uchicago.edu). Announcements (modifications to the syllabus, etc) will periodically be posted there. Students are expected to keep abreast of these.

Format: Mixed lecture and discussion.

Work of the course: All students are expected to attend class regularly, be conversant with the required readings, and participate in discussion. All students taking the course for credit will write a term paper at the end of the quarter (around 20-30 pages).

Schedule of topics and readings

Week 1 (Monday, January 5): Organizational meeting

Week 2 (Monday, January 12): Background – Introducing “the Given”

Required reading:

1. Russell, The Problems of Philosophy, chapters 1, 2, 4 and 5 (online at http://www.ditext.com/russell/russell.html)
2. Schlick, “The Foundations of Knowledge” (e-reserve)
3. Schlick, “The Nature of Knowledge” (e-reserve)
4. C.I. Lewis, Mind and the World Order, chapters 1 and 2 (e-reserve)
5. C.I. Lewis, “Reply to Firth” (e-reserve)

Recommended reading:

C.I. Lewis, Mind and the World Order, chapter 3 (e-reserve)
**Week 3 (Monday, January 19): Introducing “the Myth of the Given”**

**Required reading:**

1. Sellars, “Realism and the New Way of Words,” sections 1-2. (e-reserve; in PPPW)

After you read the assigned sections of “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind,” also read the following:

    Brandom, “Study Guide”, Parts I, II

**Important Note:** From here through week 9, the relevant sections of Brandom’s “Study Guide” and of deVries and Triplett can be taken as required reading each week without explicit mention on the syllabus.

**Recommended Reading:**

    Sellars, “Objects of Knowledge”, *The Metaphysics of Epistemology*, Lecture 1 (e-reserve)

**Week 4 (Monday, January 26): Appearances**

**Required reading:**

1. Sellars, “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind,” III, IV (§§10-23)
2. Brandom, “The Centrality of Sellars’ Two-Ply Account of Observation to the Arguments of ‘Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind’,” in *Tales of the Mighty Dead*. (e-reserve)
3. McDowell, “Transcendental Empiricism” (e-reserve)

**Recommended reading:**

Week 5 (Monday, February 2): Impressions and Ideas

Required reading:

1. Sellars, “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind,” V, VI (§§24-29)
3. Sellars, Kant and Pre-Kantian Themes, chapter 6, sections 1-12 (pp.33-6); chapter 11, sections 45-7 (p.84) (e-reserve)

Recommended reading:

1. Sellars, Kant and Pre-Kantian Themes, chapter on Locke, pp. 215-226 (e-reserve)

Week 6 (Monday, February 9): Meaning

Required reading:

1. Sellars, “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind,” VII (§§30-31)
2. Sellars, “Naming and Saying” (in SPR)

Recommended reading:

1. Carnap, The Logical Syntax of Language, §§72-75 (e-reserve)
2. Sellars, “Being and Being Known” (in SPR)
3. Sellars, “Truth as Correspondence” (in SPR)
4. McDowell, “Sellars’ Thomism” (e-reserve)

Week 7 (Monday, February 16): Knowledge and foundations

Required reading:

1. Sellars, “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind,” VIII (§§32-38)
2. Otto Neurath, “Protocol Sentences” (e-reserve)
Recommended reading:

3. Michael Williams, “Knowledge, Reasons and Causes: Sellars and Skepticism” (e-reserve)

**Week 8 (Monday, February 23): Scientific and manifest images**

Required reading:

2. Sellars, “Some Reflections on Language-Games” (in SPR)
3. Sellars, “Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man” (in SPR)

Recommended reading:

3. McDowell, “Brandom’s Inferentialism” (e-reserve)

**Week 9 (Monday, March 1): Private episodes**

Required reading:

1. Sellars, “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind,” XV-XVI (§§56-63)
2. Sellars, “Phenomenalism” (in SPR)

Recommended reading:

Week 10 (Monday, March 8): Sellars’ later Kantianism

Required reading:

1. Sellars, Science and Metaphysics, chapter 1

Recommended reading:

3. Sellars, Kant and Pre-Kantian Themes, chapters 7, 11 & 12 (E-reserve)
4. Sellars, “...this I or he or it (the thing) which thinks...” Proceedings of the American Philosophical Association 44 (1972): 5-31. (E-reserve) (in KTM)

Week 11 (Monday, March 15): McDowell on later Sellars

Required reading:

2. McDowell: “Autonomous Subjectivity and External Constraint” (e-reserve)

Recommended reading:

1. McDowell, “Hegel’s Radicalization of Kant” (e-reserve)
Appendix 1: Selected works of Sellars not explicitly listed on the syllabus but of related interest

(A complete bibliography is available at www.ditext.com/sellars/)

11. “The Language of Theories” (in SPR)
18. “Particulars” (in SPR)


21. “Is There a Synthetic A Priori?” (in SPR)


Appendix 2: Some selected secondary literature on Sellars (and Sellars-influenced work) not listed on the syllabus

(A much more complete bibliography can be found at www.ditext.com/sellars/.)

(1) Good overviews:


(2) Critical discussions:


(3) Sympathetic interpretations:


(4) Works influenced by Sellars:

7. _______: “Knowledge and the Internal Revisited,” Philosophy and Phenomenological Research