Sellarsian "Oughts" and the Forms of Rationality

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In Sellars's theory, the concept of intentionality is understood by means of the concept of linguistic rule. Linguistic rules can be presented as so-called ought-to-do-rules, which the speaker, the agent, follows. An example of such a rule is "One ought to say 'this is red' in the presence of red objects in sunlight." For an ought-to-do-rule there is a corresponding ought-to-be-rule or a rule of criticism, say, "One ought to respond to red objects in sunlight by uttering or being disposed to utter 'this is red'." Sellars distinguishes between three types of pattern governed behaviour, language entry transitions, intralinguistic moves, and language departure transitions, and each of those types is related to ought-to-do- and ought-to-be-rules. The present paper pays special attention to the connections between Sellars's rules and the forms of rationality. Rationality can be understood in various ways, one of them being the ability to obey given commands or to follow given rules; it can be seen as the ability to recognize and to repeat a given form or pattern. That kind of rationality is essential to logical inference, for example, when one makes inferences by using axiom schemes. This paper deals with what Sellars calls intralinguistic moves, that is, the speaker's linguistic conceptual episodes, which tend to occur in patterns of valid theoretical and practical inference.

Human logical reasoning cannot be considered mechanical rule-following. If it were literally mechanical, we would not describe it by means of an ought-to-do-rule; instead, we would merely use Sellarsian rules of criticism. If reasoning were mechanical, we would think of the reasoner as a device that responds to inputs in a pattern-governed manner, in case it functions as it is meant to function. Instead of mechanical processing, in each move the agent reasons locally and seeks to recognize the pattern that she has to follow. Moreover, the expression "meant to function" used above is revealing, as it already suggests the next step taken by Sellars. As Sellars states, an ought-to-be-rule implies an ought-to-do-rule, which concerns other members of the community. An example of a new ought-to-do-rule is "One ought to bring it about that people respond to red objects in sunlight by uttering or being disposed to utter 'this is red' ", or "One ought to bring it about that a speaker's linguistic conceptual episodes follow the law of contradiction."

First, the paper will argue for the thesis that there is a step of local reasoning when one recognizes the pattern that one ought to follow and that the local reasoning that we find in processes that are regarded as instances of theoretical rationality is a form of practical reasoning. Second, the paper will defend the Sellarsian view that behind the processes of reasoning that appear mechanical there is the intentionality of the community, that is, its ought-to-do-rules, which are linked to practical rationality.

The form of rationality that we find in human logical reasoning and the connection between that form and normativity are also considered from a third perspective. The key idea in the present paper is to seek to employ theories of practical rationality in order to throw light on

the concept of theoretical rationality, and in that project it also relies on the distinction between procedural practical rationality and substantive practical rationality. Sellars's theory has not often been combined with those forms of practical rationality, despite its practical emphasis. The two doctrines that concern practical rationality are labeled as proceduralism and substantivism. Brad Hooker and Bart Streumer write in their contribution to *Handbook of Rationality* (2004) that the two doctrines, one that only approves of procedural rationality and the other that only approves of substantive rationality, can be characterized as views concerning rational criticism. On that characterization, proceduralism is the view that an agent can be open to rational criticism for lacking a desire only if she can rationally reach this desire from the beliefs and desires she has. Correspondingly, substantivism is the view that an agent can be open to rational criticism for lacking a desire whether or not she can rationally reach this desire from the beliefs and desires that she has. The present paper supports the view that the two doctrines propose different, but not necessarily competing perspectives on practical rationality, one being the understanding of the agent and the other being the critical evaluation of the agent's desires. The approach tied to the concept of procedural rationality seeks both for the agent's internal point of view, namely understanding, and for the external point of view, which is the point of view of critical evaluation. The substantivist's point of view is that of the outsider, hence, of the critical evaluator.

What will be discussed in the paper more extensively is the question concerning the understanding and the critical evaluation of the very rules of logic. The expression "can rationally reach" is used in the formulations of proceduralism and substantivism. One may ask what that concept of rationality is that is used, and not defined, in the two doctrines. That brings us back to logical rules. One needs to face the problem of the rationality of those very rules, that is, to ask for reasons for given rules or patterns.

The following question is then posed: What can we say of theoretical rationality, that is, the rationality of thought or the rationality of reasoning, if we take the two forms of practical rationality as our model? Such words as "ought", "being permitted", and "being prohibited" are quite naturally used when talking about inferences and argumentative chains within a given logical system. One may be happy with the reasoner's logic and consider the acceptability of the conclusions, when that very logic is given. Deontic vocabulary is also used when a whole logical system is supported or criticized; when one says, for example, that we ought to make inferences according to classical logic. This is what a member of a Sellarsian community might teach to its junior member. The proceduralist perspective allows a situation where we understand and can follow the agent's inferential or argumentative steps, but do not criticize her for not being rational, even if she relies on different logical rules from those we regard as the correct rules. In the paper the two doctrines concerning rationality, proceduralism and substantivism, will be discussed in the Sellarsian framework. An answer will be sought to the question concerning the nature of logical rules, that is, whether a community can take an outsider's point of view, from which it critically evaluates the rules of logic, including its own, or whether rational criticism is defined precisely in terms of those rules.