



Russell and American Realism

Matthias Neuber¹

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Abstract

American philosophical realism developed in two forms: “new” and “critical” realism. While the new realists sought to ‘emancipate’ ontology from epistemology and defended a direct theory of perception, the critical realists promoted a representationalist account of perception and thus argued for an epistemological dualism. Bertrand Russell’s early philosophical writings figured prominently in both of these American realist camps. However, while the new realists quite enthusiastically embraced the Russellian analytic style of reasoning (and Russell himself appreciated the American new realists as anti-idealist allies), the critical realists were significantly more reserved toward Russell’s point of view. In the present paper, I identify the reasons for this difference in reception. In particular, I will show that the critical realists’ reservations pertained primarily to a more traditionalist—‘continental’—account of philosophy, whereas the neo-realists proved instrumental in setting the stage for later full-blown analytic philosophy in the United States.

Keywords Russell · American realism · Analytic-continental divide

Bertrand Russell’s relationship to the American philosophical realism of the early twentieth century is both highly interesting and little explored. In the present paper, I shall shed some light on this under-investigated chapter in the history of twentieth-century philosophy. My principal thesis is that Russell’s attitude toward American realism was ambiguous: on the one hand he heartily welcomed the movement of so-called *new* or *neo*-realism; on the other hand, he—quite offensively—distanced himself from the movement called *critical* realism that emerged somewhat later. In doing so, I argue, Russell was instrumental in preparing an analytic-continental divide *within* American philosophy itself.¹

I will proceed as follows. In Sect. 1, I shall briefly introduce the two main varieties of early twentieth-century American realism, that is, new and critical realism. Section 2 is devoted to Russell’s engagement with the new realists, while Sect. 3 deals with his position on critical realism. The concluding Sect. 4 draws some consequences regarding the analytic-continental divide within early twentieth-century American philosophy.

1 Two Varieties of Early Twentieth-Century American Realism

To begin with, American philosophical realism of the early twentieth century developed in two distinct varieties. Historically, the new or neo-realism came first. Emerged as a more or less direct reaction to the “absolute idealism” of Josiah Royce (for details see Neuber, forthcoming a), the neo-realist movement partook at what W. H. Werkmeister, in his classic *A History of Philosophical Ideas in America*, called “the new spirit of science” (1949, p. 370). Indeed, the new realists were impressed by the developments in contemporary psychology and evolutionary biology, but also by the advent of modern, symbolic logic. All these disciplines fed into their philosophical agenda and served as the basis for their writings, which revolved primarily around the topics

¹ To prevent misunderstandings from the outset, it should be noted that the analytic/continental division as such is anything but self-evident. Its postulation might be contested since there is no clear definition for either ‘analytic’ or ‘continental.’ At the very least, giving such a definition is not an easy task, and there is risk of oversimplification and overgeneralization. However, both analytic and continental philosophy can be characterized by bundles of *family resemblances* that range across disparate philosophical views (see Glock (2008)). Moreover, it should be borne in mind that continental philosophy in particular is a family of philosophical traditions (such as Hegelianism, phenomenology, or existentialism) rather than a geographical distinction. Therefore, its application in the given context is, I claim, appropriate. More on this in the final section of this paper.

✉ Matthias Neuber
maneuber@uni-mainz.de

¹ Johannes-Gutenberg Universität Mainz, Mainz, Germany

of consciousness and perception. In short, the American neo-realists saw themselves as representatives of a *scientific* philosophy.

To be more concrete, this first realist wave in early twentieth-century American philosophy took its start with the manifesto “The Program and First Platform of Six Realists”, published in 1910 in *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*. This was followed in 1912 by a nearly 500-page collaborative volume entitled *The New Realism: Coöperative Studies in Philosophy*. Contributors to this volume were Harvard psychologist Edwin B. Holt (1873–1946), William Pepperell Montague (1873–1953) and Ralph Barton Perry (1876–1957), both also of Harvard, Walter T. Marvin (1872–1944) of Rutgers, the psychologist Walter B. Pitkin (1876–1957) of Columbia University, and Edward Gleason Spaulding (1873–1940) of Princeton University. The outlook of these six realists was *realistic* in that it asserted the independence of the objects of perception, urged an emancipation of metaphysics from epistemology, and argued for the externality of relations. What was *new* was that it explicitly distinguished itself from indirect, representational realism in the sense of René Descartes and especially John Locke.

The second realist wave in early twentieth-century American philosophy culminated with the volume *Essays in Critical Realism: A Co-Operative Study of the Problem of Knowledge*, published in (1920). The authors of the volume were Durant Drake (1878–1933) of Columbia University, Arthur O. Lovejoy (1873–1962) of Johns Hopkins University, James Bissett Pratt (1875–1944) of Williams College, Arthur K. Rogers (1868–1936) of Yale University, George Santayana (1863–1952), formerly of Columbia University, but then as a freelance writer in Rome, and the philosopher-psychologist C. A. Strong (1862–1940), who also had taught at Columbia but, from 1906 on, just like Santayana preferred to spend his life in Italy (more concretely as the spouse of Bessie Rockefeller in Fiesole, near Florence). The outlook of this particular group of realists was *realistic* in that, like neo-realism, it asserted the independence of the objects of perception; but unlike neo-realism, it assumed a kind of indirect, representational account of mediation in the perceptual process. It was *critical* in that it rejected the alleged naïve—direct or straight presentational—approach of the neo-realists to perception and argued in terms of what Lovejoy and Sellars liked to call “epistemological dualism”. Sellars, for example, pointed out as early as 1918:

The very gist of the difference between neo-realism and critical realism is that the knowledge-content, or object of awareness, is [...] numerically distinct from the existent or object of knowledge. The only justification of the phrase epistemological dualism resides in this fact. The existent acknowledged, but not given,

is the object, while the mental content given is the material and content of knowledge, but not the object. (Sellars 1918, p. 507)

Lovejoy, in his later—quite famous—*The Revolt Against Dualism* (1930), emphatically justified and strongly defended what he saw as the unbridgeable gulf between the epistemological dualism of the critical realists, on the one hand, and the epistemological monism of the rivaling neo-realists, on the other. I will come back to this point later.

2 Russell and New Realism

Turning now to Russell’s relationship to this dual movement inside American realism, the first thing to realize is that he, in 1911, immediately reacted to the American neo-realists’ manifesto from 1910. In a short article entitled “The Basis of Realism”, Russell made it clear that the neo-realist manifesto “gives expression to a growing movement in philosophy in a way which deserves the gratitude of all who are in sympathy with that movement” (1911, p. 158). And he continued: “I find myself in almost complete agreement with the six realists” (ibid.). Indeed, the views of Russell and the neo-realists overlapped in many respects: both argued for the externality of relations, both strived to maintain close contact with common sense and science, and both rejected any form of a priori construction.

As for the reception of Russell’s writings by the neo-realists, it is striking that these writings were massively invoked in the *New Realism* volume from 1912. Perry and especially Spaulding repeatedly referred to Russell to bolster their respective cases, that is, Perry the independence of the objects of perception and Spaulding the method of analysis (see Perry (1912, p. 137); Spaulding (1912, pp. 166, 169, 170, 176, 182, 185, 187, 190, 202, 206, 210); see further Spaulding (1918) and the reconstruction in Neuber (2022)). What is more, in his 1914 *The Concept of Consciousness*, Holt celebrated Russell as the messiah of modern logic. The first four chapters of Holt’s book are devoted to what he called the “renaissance of logic” (1914, p. 1), and Russell is seen as the crucial figure in this development. More generally, Holt declares: “The subject of formal logic, which for many years had progressed very little if indeed at all, has been taken up once more, and this time by investigators whose first interest is mathematics rather than philosophy” (ibid.).² Moreover, Holt, like the other neo-realists, agreed

² Already in the Introduction to the *New Realism* volume, one can read the following: “Logic is at the present time in a state of extraordinary activity, and able both to stimulate and to enrich philosophy. The principal contribution which modern logic is prepared to make to philosophy concerns the form of exact knowledge” (Holt et al. 1912, p. 25). To be precise, when the authors’ collective speaks of logical “form” pertaining to exact knowledge, it refers here to the modern

with Russell in rejecting idealism and deflating the concept of consciousness (although regarding the latter, the neo-realists were even more inspired by William James).

In 1914, Russell visited Harvard University as a guest professor. He had been in correspondence with Perry since 1910, who invited him to come to Harvard. Russell gave two lecture courses during the three-month spring term of 1914, an introductory lecture on the “Theory of Knowledge” and an advanced lecture on “Logic” (See Willis (1989, p. 9)). Particularly regarding logic, Russell wrote in a letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell dated May 26, 1914: “I have persuaded Perry, and he has persuaded the other ‘six realists,’ that logic is *the* important thing, and they all are going to try and learn it. That is one of the things I hoped to achieve here, so I am glad it has happened” (Griffin 1992, p. 508). Interestingly, there were at Harvard at that time Henry M. Scheffer and C. I. Lewis, two students of Perry (and Royce, who in fact taught the Harvard logic courses) who later became important, if not famous, logicians. Also, in 1919/1920 Perry published a volume together with Scheffer entitled *Logic Cases for Philosophy C* (see Perry and Scheffer (1919–1920)).

From what has been said so far, it is not difficult to see that Russell and the American neo-realists considered themselves allies. In his 1921 *The Analysis of Mind*, Russell again refers to American neo-realism and states:

The interests of this school are in general philosophy and the philosophy of the sciences, rather than in psychology; they have derived a strong impulsion from James but have more interest than he had in logic and mathematics and the abstract part of philosophy. (Russell 1921, p. 9)

This is entirely correct. One should be aware, however, that Russell qualifies his statement by claiming that “the American realists are partly right, though not wholly, in considering that both mind and matter are composed of a neutral stuff which, in isolation, is neither mental nor material” (ibid.). This comment undoubtedly pertains to the neo-realists’ indebtedness to James’ ‘neutral monism,’ according to which mind and matter are indeed composed of the same stuff, differing only by the perspective of research (see James (1912); further Mach (1886, ch. 1)).³ To be specific, it was

Footnote 2 (continued)

logic of *relations* influentially advanced by Russell (and, as such, opposed to elementary—Aristotelian—subject-predicate logic).

³ As Russell reports in his *History of Western Philosophy*, he *himself* got converted by James regarding neutral monism. In his own words: “For my part, I am convinced that James was right on this matter, and would, on this ground alone, deserve a high place among philosophers. I had thought otherwise until he, and those who agreed with him, persuaded me of the truth of his doctrine” (Russell 1945, p. 812). Detailed information about the complex interrelationship of Mach’s, James’, and Russell’s respective accounts of neutral monism

primarily Holt who, in his *The Concept of Consciousness*, combined this Jamesian viewpoint with a more rigid and thus more ‘logical’ approach to the mind–body problem.⁴ More importantly, in chapter XII of his book, Holt criticizes Russell’s conception of mental images at length and attempts to strip mental imagery of its autonomy. Russell, for his part, thinks that the neo-realists go too far at this point; but that is a topic in itself.

3 Russell and Critical Realism

The relationship between Russell and American *critical* realism is more intricate. Note that the first of the critical realists to comment on Russell’s work was Santayana. Thus, in a review of Russell’s *Philosophical Essays* (1910), Santayana highlights Russell’s view of mathematics, identifying mathematics itself with a particular “realm of essences” (1911, p. 60), while completely rejecting Russell’s ethical views. Strong, in a review of Russell’s *The Analysis of Mind*, explicitly agrees with what he calls Russell’s “sensualistic psychology” (1922, p. 307), but at the same time expresses reservations about Russell’s *theory of knowledge*, especially in emphasizing that meanings or essences, and not, as Russell thinks, pure sensational data, are crucial to perception. Lovejoy, in his aforementioned *The Revolt Against Dualism*, devotes two whole chapters to criticizing Russell’s epistemological views, which he sees in partial—and fatal—proximity to the idealist viz. fictionalist positions of George Berkeley and Hans Vaihinger (see Lovejoy (1930, ch.s VI and VII)). On the other hand, Lovejoy regards the position advocated in Russell’s *The Analysis of Mind* as “a curious mixture of phenomenalist and *realist* prejudices” (1930, p. 203; emphasis added).

Be that as it may, a more coherent critical realist critique of both Russell and American neo-realism came from Roy Wood Sellars. In an article entitled “Current Realism in Great Britain and United States”, published in 1927, Sellars points out: “In his theory of knowledge, Russell has moved from a position akin to that of Brentano and Meinong to one which approaches American neo-realism” (1927, p. 509). Sellars goes on to emphasize that the new realists around Perry rely on the Russellian “logic of analysis” as giving “their epistemology its foundation” (513). And he

Footnote 3 (continued)

can be found in Banks (2016). For the neo-realists’ version (especially Holt and Perry), see Stubenberg (2023).

⁴ For example, in one place he writes: “If the terms and propositions of logic must be substantialized, they are all strictly of one substance, for which perhaps the last dangerous name is neutral-stuff. The relation of neutral-stuff to matter and mind we shall have presently to consider at considerable length” (Holt 1914, p. 52).

immediately adds: “It may be that they were deceived in this belief, but it cannot be denied that it helped to bring about that efflorescence of mathematical logic so characteristic of Harvard, as it is of Cambridge” (ibid.).⁵ Notably, in his *The Philosophy of Physical Realism* of 1932, Sellars again comments on Russell and the American neo-realists, claiming that the view defended in Russell’s *The Analysis of Mind* is quite close to the “perspective of American neo-realism” (1932/1966, p. 113). Similar to Strong, Sellars insists on a strict demarcation of perception and mere percepts, which he equates with sense data, from *perceiving*, which according to him is interpretatively directed toward external things. While, Sellars maintains, for Russell and the American neo-realists sense data are terminal, from the perspective of critical realism they are merely functional in that they “guide” the perceptual process that enables us to refer to *things* transcending the purely sensory realm (for further details see Neuber (2020, Sects. 4 and 5)). It is precisely this difference in perspective that Sellars points to in the following passage from his 1962 article “American Critical Realism and British Theories of Sense-Perception:”

Several times in meeting him [Russell] at Ann Arbor, I tried to get him interested in my analysis of perceiving as involving an integration of stimulus with response in which sensations play a guiding and deciphering role but he was too dominated by the traditional idea that *percepts* are sensations plus images to get my point. But, surely, perceiving things is not having percepts. Reference, transcendence and claims, or verdicts, are left out in such a translation. The subjectivist curtain has come down. (1962/1966, p. 483)

What Sellars spent a lifetime trying to establish was a view of perception or, better, perceiving according to which it is both direct and mediated. But that, again, is a topic in itself.⁶

4 Russell and the US-Realists: Prelude to an Intra-American Analytic-Continental Divide?

In this final section of my paper, I want to draw some conclusions for our understanding of what happened in early twentieth-century American philosophy. The conventional wisdom is that various forms of idealism dominated American philosophy until the beginning of the twentieth century, and that then the *pragmatists* gained the upper hand.

This view of things is distorting and reductive, and to that extent historically incorrect. True, there was an anti-idealist ‘revolt’ around 1900. But the driving force in this context was the neo-realist movement, rather than the pragmatists. Thus, both Perry and Montague expressed explicit criticism of the absolute idealism of their teacher Royce as early as 1902 (see Perry (1902) and Montague (1902)). At that time, pragmatism was still in the background. One researcher even goes so far as to claim that “there never was a period of Pragmatic dominance in American academic philosophy” (Campbell 2007, p. 3) and that “Realism [...] was the primary perspective in American philosophy after about 1900” (7). Similarly, as early as 1950, in an article entitled “The Emergence of American Philosophy”, May Brodbeck contrasted two rival currents of early twentieth-century anti-idealist philosophy in the United States, namely the “analytic school” and the “pragmatist school”, with the former being largely identical to the neo-realist movement around Perry, Montague, and Holt (see Brodbeck (1950, pp. 39–40)). According to Brodbeck, neo-realism and the analytic school were quite obviously distinguished from the pragmatist movement around James and Dewey by their “use of logical tools” (51).⁷ Neo-realism thus proved to be an early American, as it were proto-analytic, “technical approach to the problems of philosophy” (Brodbeck (1950, p. 51); for similar assessments, see Kuklick (1977, pp. 349–350), Misak (2013, pp. 122–123), Soames (2014, p. 5)). Indeed, modern—Russellian—logic was considered by the neo-realists as a central methodological device. Relatedly, another feature that prepared later full-fledged American analytic philosophy was the neorealists’ appeal to clearness, exactitude, and a science-oriented cooperative attitude. Thus, the beginning of the 1910 neo-realist manifesto reads as follows:

Philosophy is famous for its disagreements, which have contributed not a little towards bringing it into disrepute as being unscientific, subjective, or temperamental. These disagreements are due in part, no doubt, to the subject-matter of philosophy, but chiefly to the lack of precision and uniformity in the use of words and to the lack of deliberate cooperation in research. In having these failings philosophy still differs widely from such sciences as physics and chemistry. They tend to make it seem mere opinion; for through the appearance of many figurative or loose expressions in the writings of isolated theorists, the impression is given that philosophical problems and their solutions are essentially personal. This impression is strengthened by the fact that philosophy concerns itself with

⁵ Remember what was said about Scheffer and Lewis before: their status as logicians.

⁶ For an extended discussion, see James O’Shea’s contribution to this volume.

⁷ The philosophical work of Charles Sanders Peirce was largely unknown at that time.

emotions, temperaments, and taste. A conspicuous result of this lack of cooperation, common terminology, and a working agreement as to fundamental presuppositions is that genuine philosophical problems have been obscured, and real philosophical progress has been seriously hindered. (Holt et al. 1910, p. 393)

This reads like an anticipation of the Vienna Circle's manifesto "Wissenschaftliche Weltauffassung – Der Wiener Kreis" from 1929. Yet, as a matter of fact, the neo-realist movement disintegrated already in the further course of the 1910s, not least because of the Great War. Its legacy was resumed, however, after the European logical empiricists immigrated to the United States in the 1930s and made the analytic 'style of reasoning' respectable again.⁸

So, the first conclusion to be drawn is that the American neo-realists proved to be instrumental in setting the stage for analytic philosophy in the United States and that their relationship to Russell played a decisive role in this connection. I leave it at this assessment since I recently tried to justify it in detail elsewhere (see Neuber forthcoming b).⁹

My second conclusion relates to the relationship between Russell and the *critical* realists. Here I would like to suggest the following: Since the respective approaches of Russell and the American critical realists are largely incompatible, they can serve—via the juxtaposition of critical and

neo-realism—as evidence of an 'analytic-continental divide' within early twentieth-century American philosophy that is indeed worthy of closer examination. While neo-realism, with its (Russell-inspired) emphasis on logic and formal analysis, may seem downright 'progressive,' critical realism, with its emphasis on epistemology and (anti-Russellian) representationalism, appears rather 'regressive.' To be sure, this should be taken with a grain of salt. But there are indeed indications that such a divide existed.¹⁰

To begin with, in contrast to his rather enthusiastic attitude toward the neo-realist movement, Russell was sort of repulsed by the critical realists' enterprise. Regarding Santayana, for example, Russell retrospectively mocked as follows:

He could admit into the realms of his admirations the ancient Greeks and the modern Italians, even Mussolini. But he could feel no sincere respect for anyone who came from north of the Alps. [...] Towards me, as towards other northern philosophers, his attitude was one of gentle pity for having attempted too high for us. (1956, p. 87)

Russell further states: "For my part, I was never able to take Santayana very seriously as a technical philosopher [...]. The American dress in which his writing appeared somewhat concealed the extremely reactionary character of his thinking" (88). And Russell continues: "much of what he says, particularly as regards essence, ignores much work which most modern philosophers would consider relevant. He completely ignored modern logic" (89).

Conceded, Santayana—perhaps being more a poet than a philosopher and a born Spaniard and no US-American at that—might be too easy a victim to postulate an analytic-continental divide within early twentieth-century American philosophy. However, further evidence for such a divide can be collected by taking a look at certain statements by Roy Wood Sellars (who, it must be admitted, was also not born in the United States, but in Canada—but this is not of any

⁸ Interestingly, Herbert Feigl frequently refers to Perry and his "The Ego-Centric Predicament" (1910). See Feigl (1981, pp. 10, 54, 90, 221). What is more, Willard van Orman Quine started in 1934 a campaign to get Rudolf Carnap a position at Harvard (where Quine himself took up a fellowship at the newly founded Society of Fellows). C. I. Lewis, then professor at Harvard, discussed Carnap's situation with his academic teacher Perry, who at that time was already the chair of Harvard's philosophy department. Perry, in turn, wrote a letter to the dean of the faculty in which he described Carnap as "an extremely stimulating person to have at Harvard" (Perry to Murdock, April 11, 1934; quoted from Verhaegh (2020, p. 14)). As is well known, Carnap eventually ended up at the University of Chicago, later moved to Princeton, and finally settled in Los Angeles at the UCLA. At any rate, it is noteworthy that the former neo-realist Perry did his best to support the case of the logical empiricist Carnap. For further details, see Verhaegh (2020, pp. 14–17).

⁹ However, it should at least be noted that Werkmeister—rightly—posits the following thesis of independence from British influences for the emergence of the neo-realist movement in the United States: "English influence upon American realism was exerted primarily through G. E. Moore's article, 'The Refutation of Idealism' (*Mind*, 1903) and Bertrand Russell's book, *Principles of Mathematics* (1903). But this influence became effective only after American realists had already formulated their basic theses, and it was never sufficiently strong during the early formative years to veil or modify the essentially American features of the new realism. English and American realism may be considered as parallel phenomena which have many points in common and which therefore mutually support each other, but which are, in the last analysis independent of each other as specific cultural movements and which must be evaluated as independent" (1949, p. 372).

¹⁰ Interestingly enough, it was Russell himself who, in some sense, anticipated the more recent understanding of the analytic/continental division. Thus, in his *History of Western Philosophy* he distinguished between the continental and the British types of philosophy by, among other things, opposing—in terms of method—the deductive system-building approach of the former with the piecemeal induction approach of the latter (see Russell (1945, pp. 643–647)). As is sufficiently known, Russell's own approach was driven by the rejection of idealism and by laying the focus on the logical analysis of language. Admittedly, Glock is entirely correct when he states that "the rehabilitation of metaphysics and the reversal of the linguistic turn within analytic philosophy from the 1960s onwards removed the most fundamental doctrinal conflicts with traditional philosophy" (2008, p. 86). However, the orientation of *early* analytic philosophy both in Europe and in the U.S. around 1910 justifies the clear juxtaposition with the continental tradition.

importance). For example, Sellars confesses at one point that “I belong to traditional philosophy and, I hope, to its growing point to the present” (1962/1966, p. 486).¹¹ Moreover, and rather revealingly, he declares: “Quine sought to ground ontology on the techniques of mathematical logic. But I do not believe that the problem of perceiving can be thus side-stepped” (503). Perhaps the most explicit dissociation from the analytic school in American philosophy is found in Sellars’ retrospective *Reflections on American Philosophy from Within*, where he reports that

since I could not agree with either Russell or Moore on fundamental points [...] it seemed to me that the so-called *analytic philosophy* which got quite a vogue was ambivalent. In one sense, I liked its emphasis. In another sense, it did not seem to me very creative in either epistemology or ontology. American addiction to it and disregard of its own momentum struck me as a form of neo-colonialism. (1969, p. 5)

Of course, Sellars quite blatantly ignores the fact that critical realism was not invented by himself, but had its origins in Europe as well, particularly in the writings of thinkers such as Alois Riehl, Oswald Külpe, and the early Moritz Schlick (see, in this connection, Neuber (2014)). Be that as it may, Sellars basically wanted realism to replace idealism, but at the same time retain some of the insights of traditional idealism, especially the importance of mediation in knowledge.¹² Ultimately, then, Sellars’ break with idealism was incomplete, and thus another sign of his attachment to tradition.¹³

At this point, a somewhat daring assumption may be allowed. It was Roy Wood Sellars’ son Wilfrid who attempted in a very influential way to *bridge* the intra-American analytic-continental divide expressed, among other things, in the two varieties of early twentieth-century

American realism discussed here in connection with Russell. The so-called Pittsburgh School around Robert Brandom and John McDowell is evidence of the continuing vitality of this endeavor; to go into it, however, would require another paper.¹⁴

The *present* paper, though, should not be concluded without some comment on the relations to the discussions in current philosophy of mind. To be sure, representationalist approaches in the vein of American *critical* realism prevailed for a long time in twentieth century philosophy of mind. With the turn to the twenty-first century, however, the neo-realists’ approach enjoyed a kind of unexpected renaissance. Representationalism had exhausted its resources to the point of “Olympic-level mental gymnastics” (Chemero 2009, p. 127), and conceptions emerged according to which perception, including illusions and hallucinations, is to be described in terms of organism-environment dynamics, rather than in representational (or computational) terms (see, for example, Campbell (2002), Martin (2002), Travis (2004), Brewer (2011); further the overview in Wilson and Locatelli (2017)).¹⁵ It seems, then, that a *new* new realism is on the way.

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Declarations

Conflict of interest I have no conflict of interest to disclose.

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¹¹ It is interesting to note that the early Sellars spent the academic year of 1909–1910 in Europe (see Warren (1975, p. 23)). In Paris he discussed with Henri Bergson and Émile Boutroux, among others, and in Heidelberg with Hans Driesch and Wilhelm Windelband. His orientation toward “traditional philosophy” may have been partly related to these encounters. (However, neither Bergson nor the other European philosophers mentioned saw themselves as “traditionalists”, but rather as innovators. From the perspective of their analytic contemporaries, however, they certainly did not appear to be on the cutting edge. See in this context also Vrahimis (2022)).

¹² For example, in his 1922 *Evolutionary Naturalism*, he pointed out: “The justified function of idealism [...] is a war against the simplicity of common sense, its ignorance of processes, its belief in an abrupt presentation of physical things to the apprehending subject-self” (1922, p. 27).

¹³ Again, in *Evolutionary Naturalism*, Sellars declares: “We can be realists and yet appreciate what idealism felt to be a truth, the part played by mind in knowledge” (1922, p. 73). Similarly, in *The Philosophy of Physical Realism*, Sellars claims that idealism “was an almost necessary interlude” (1932, p. 27).

¹⁴ As is well known, Kant was a key figure for Wilfrid Sellars, and Kant, but even more so Hegel, are for Brandom and McDowell. For further details, see Maher (2012).

¹⁵ Especially Holt’s variety of neo-realism has experienced thorough reconsideration in this context (see especially Tonneau (2004, 2013)).

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