I. “An Ambiguity in Sense-Datum Theories” (#s 1-7)

A. The idea of the *given* is the central concept in Sellars’ essay. To begin with, Sellars clarifies a sense of the *given* that he has no objection to in terms of the contrast between inferring something to be the case and seeing something to be the case. What does this contrast mount to? (#1, 127)

B. What is Sellars getting at when he says “the point of the epistemological category of the given is, presumably, to explicate the idea that empirical knowledge rests on a ‘foundation’ of non-inferential knowledge of matters of fact . . .”? (#3, 128)

C. What is the contrast Sellars draws between sense contents as particulars and knowledge as always concerned with facts, rather than particulars? Why does he believe this creates a problem for thinking of the mere possession of sense data as constituting a form of knowledge? (#3, 128-129)

D. What are the two ideas that Sellars believes the idea of sense data melds together? (#7, 132-134)

II. Does Empirical Knowledge Have a Foundation? (#s 32 & 35-38)

A. Note the distinction he makes in the first paragraph of # 32 between the foundations for empirical knowledge, on an empiricist account, being both 1) non-inferential and 2) presupposing no other knowledge. Can you have non-inferential knowledge that does presuppose other knowledge?

B. Sellars’ Account of the ‘Foundations’ of Empirical Knowledge

1. Why does Sellars believe an observation report (or, as he sometimes writes, a *Konstatierung*) such as, “this is green,” only expresses observational knowledge if it is “a manifestation of a tendency to produce overt or covert tokens of ‘This is green’ . . . if and only if a green object is being looked at in standard conditions?” (167) (#35)

   Why does Sellars believe we need to construe the observation report as something more than a sign or symptom of (in this case) the presence of a green object? What is that something more? (#35)

2. Why does Sellars believe that if this account of observation reports is true, then “it follows, as a matter of simple logic, that one couldn’t have observational knowledge of any fact unless one knew many other things as
3. What is the “obvious regress” Sellars sketches as an apparent implication of his understanding of observation reports? (#36, 168-169)

4. What does Sellars mean when he asserts that “in characterizing an episode or a state as that of knowing, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says”? (#36, 169)

5. How does Sellars propose to resolve the apparent “obvious regress” inherent in his position in #37?

6. Why does Sellars believe the idea of ‘foundations’ of empirical knowledge is “misleading” despite the fact that he accepts that inferential empirical knowledge rests on observation reports? (#38, 170)

7. Why does Sellars insist 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”? (#38, 170)