Experience: Having it and Knowing it

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Before The Analysis of Mind

The Sense-Datum Theory

Prior to embracing neutral monism Russell had an elegant account of experience. It involved only three elements:

- The things that can be experienced. These are the sensibilia, which are called "sense-data" if actually sensed/experienced.
- The things that can experience. These are subjects, selves, minds, or the "I", together with the mental acts—e.g., sensing—that they can perform.
- The relation that a mind can have to a sense-datum. This is the relation of acquaintance or awareness.

For me to have an experience of red is for me to be acquainted with a red sensibile (which now counts as a sense-datum). Here are some comments about this concise analysis of experience.

- The redness involved in this experience belongs to the sensibile that is currently my sense-datum. The nature and existence of this redness is independent of my being acquainted with it—it would continue to exist, even if I were to "leave my body".[1]
- My experience of red—its visually being/feeling like this for me at this moment—consists in my being acquainted with the red sense-datum. Neither the object—the sense-datum--nor the subject—I myself—change.[2] My having this experience is simply a matter of my entering into an acquaintance relation with the red sense-datum.
- To have a red experience is to know something by acquaintance: "so far as concerns the knowledge of the colour itself, as opposed to knowledge of truths about it, I know the colour perfectly and completely when I see it, and no further knowledge of it itself is even theoretically possible." (Problems, ch. 5)

This analysis of experience—simple, elegant and astonishingly powerful--fell apart once Russell adopted neutral monism. The subject and its mental acts, as well as the (two-place) relation of acquaintance all dropped out of the picture. Only the sensibilia may have survived. Therefore much work is required to rebuilt an account of experience. *The Analysis of Mind* contains some pertinent material. But Russell later judged it to be quite insufficient. In *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* Russell presented a new and—to his mind—more satisfactory account of experience.

In the remainder of this paper I'll present and compare the theories contained in *The Analysis of Mind* and in the *Inquiry* and ask how well they do the job that acquaintance was supposed to do. I'll suggest that the view proposed in the *Inquiry* is, perhaps, not quite as satisfactory as might be hoped. And I'll also raise the question whether Russell's earlier acquaintance account of experience is as illuminating as it is often taken to be. Finally, I'll return to *The Analysis of Mind* and propose that it may, after all, contain promising materials for a somewhat promising account of experience.

Three Questions

When looking at *The Analysis of Mind* and at the *Inquiry,* I shall ask the follow three questions—question that the old theory apparently answered in a most satisfactory manner. For a given red experience of mine, these are the three questions:

(1) Do I learn where in the world the quality of redness is?
(2) Do I learn what my experience of red is, what it consists of?

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[1] Here are two quotes which suggest as much:
"If--PER IMPOSSIBILE--there were a complete human body with no mind inside it, all those sensibilia would exist, in relation to that body, which would be sense-data if there were a mind in the body. What the mind adds to sensibilia, in fact, is merely awareness: everything else is physical or physiological." ("The Relation of Sense-Data to Physics, 144)
"If my body could remain in exactly the same state in which it is, although my mind had ceased to exist, precisely that object which I now see when I see the flash [of lightning] would exist, although of course I should not see it, since my seeing is mental." ("The Ultimate Constituents of Matter, 128)

[2] "Knowledge of an object is a direct relation between the mind and the object: there is no corresponding change in the mind, but only a relation; in other words, knowing is not having an idea of what is known." ("Analytic Realism", 134)

(3) Do I learn how I attain immediate knowledge of my red experience--that I have this experience and what it is like?

The Analysis of Mind

Color Patch = Sensation

In *The Analysis of Mind*—and before that in "On Propositions"—Russell abandoned the subject—the *subject or act,* as he often puts it (141, 163, "On Propositions" 305). And without a subject there is no acquaintance—no (two place) relation between subject and sense-datum.

> If we are to avoid a perfectly gratuitous assumption, we must dispense with the subject as one of the actual ingredients of the world…the possibility of distinguishing the sensation from the sense-datum vanishes…Accordingly THE SENSATION THAT WE HAVE WHEN WE SEE A PATCH OF COLOUR SIMPLY *IS* THAT PATCH OF COLOUR…and we may say that THE PATCH OF COLOUR AND OUR SENSATION IN SEEING IT ARE IDENTICAL." (141-143)

It would appear that Russell has thrown out just about every single piece of the machinery that he previously used to explain experience. The subject together with its mental acts of sensing is gone. So there no longer is anything that might be acquainted with something. And that, in turn, means that there no longer are sense-data. For sense-data are those things (roughly) that someone is acquainted with. And Russell's positive claim that sensations are color patches sounds paradoxical.

Perhaps we can understand the situation as follows.

First, what are the color patches? We can try to think of them as (the old) sensibilia—but even that turns out to be problematical.[3] In the new story these items/these patches can no longer occupy the status of sense-datum, for there no longer exists anybody who might acquaint themselves with the sensibile. So the name "sensibilia" is misleading. But the items that were called that in the old story continue to exist, even if they never can be sense-data. The red sense-datum that you would have enjoyed—on the old story—when looking at a ripe tomato, *is* the red patch of the new story. The old story and the new story talk about the very same red patch somewhere in your head. The only difference is that—in the old story—YOU acquainted yourself with his red patch, and in the new story you don't, because YOU—in this particular sense of the term—do not exist. (Obviously much more needs to be said here!).

Second, what about *the unlikely identification of patches with sensations?* We must recall that Russell uses the word "sensation" to mean two quite different things: "The word

[3] I say more about this in the next paragraph. But see also the thought that Russell expresses in the following paragraph. Sensibilia are potential objects for subjects who can sense them. And that means that if the subject has to go, so has the object. Accordingly, the new account of experience has no room for sensibilia, given that they are objects in this sense. "But William James and Professor Dewey, as well as the great majority of American realists, reject wholly the relational view of presentations: what has hitherto been the object remains alone, and ought no longer to be called by the name "object", since this term suggests a relation to a subject. It has gradually come to seem to me possible that this view may be the correct one. The question is of almost boundless importance, since the whole problem of the relation of mind and matter turns upon it." ("On Sensations and Ideas", CP 8, 252)

"sensation", as opposed to "sense-datum", may be used either for the act alone, or for the complex act-acquainted-with-object." ("The Nature of Sense-Data, 77) The identification Russell proposes is between the colored patch and the complex act-acquainted-with-object. Speaking more precisely, we should say that Russell identifies the colored patch with the "thing" that he previously had mistakenly analyzed as a complex consisting of a subject or act, the relation of acquaintance, and an object—a sense-datum. He now rejects this analysis. But the (wrongly analyzed) *thing* is, of course, still there: it is the experience we undergo when seeing the ripe tomato. And, on the new story, it turns out that this thing/this experience is quite simple—it simply is the red patch, and it always was nothing more than the red patch. All the additional structure was merely bad philosophy. Here is a nice passage that suggests something along these lines:

> There are those who will maintain that they can discern introspectively an event consisting in awareness of a noise, and that they can be certain by inspection that this event is not identical with the mere noise…I FORMERLY BELIEVED THAT MY OWN INSPECTION SHOWED ME THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN A NOISE AND MY HEARING OF A NOISE, AND I AM NOW CONVINCED THAT IT SHOWS ME NO SUCH THING, AND NEVER DID… IT SEEMS TO ME NOW, LOOKING BACK UPON MY FORMER BELIEF THAT I COULD DISTINGUISH A NOISE FROM THE HEARING OF IT, THAT THE WHOLE BELIEF WAS BASED ON THEORY AND BIAS, AS INDEED PHILOSOPHICAL BELIEFS ALMOST ALWAYS ARE. I was anxious to rescue the physical world from the clutches of idealism, and I thought it undeniable that there is an exclusively mental event called "hearing the noise". Therefore I made the noise itself as distinct as possible from the hearing of it, in order that the noise might be physical. ("On Sensations and Ideas", 255)

Answer to Question (1): Where is the color?

So, at this point, we have an answer to one of our questions: Where does the redness of your red experience go? Well, it is the very same patch of redness that, in the old story, was called a sensibile, and since it was sensed, a sense-datum. On this count then the new story is on a par with the old story.

Answer to Question (2): What is my experience of red?

The second question: What is the nature of my red experience? This is a more difficult question. In part the difficulty arises because Russell does not seem to share our preoccupation with experience in the "what it's like" sense of the term. Most of comments pertaining to experience (in this sense of the term) show up when he discusses perception and sensation.[4] Here are two examples:

[4] His "OFFICIAL" USE OF THE TERM "EXPERIENCE" (especially in *The Analysis of Mind*) has a very different flavor, with no hint of the "what it's like": "It is only mnemic phenomena that embody experience. We may say that an animal "experiences" an occurrence when this occurrence modifies the animal's subsequent behaviour, i.e. when it is the mnemic portion of the cause of future occurrences in the animal's life. The burnt child that fears the fire has "experienced" the fire, whereas a stick that has been thrown on and taken off again has not "experienced" anything, since it offers no more resistance than before to being thrown on. THE ESSENCE OF "EXPERIENCE" IS THE

> *(d) Non-sensational Elements in* ***PERCEPTION.***—When we perceive any object of a familiar kind, much of WHAT APPEARS SUBJECTIVELY TO BE IMMEDIATELY GIVEN is really derived from past experience…THE VISUAL APPEARANCE IS FILLED OUT WITH FEELING OF WHAT THE OBJECT WOULD BE LIKE TO TOUCH, and so on." (81)
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> When…we try to decide what elements in our experience are of the nature of sensations, we find more difficulty than might have been expected. *Prima facie,* everything is sensation that comes to us through the senses: THE SIGHTS WE SEE, THE SOUNDS WE HEAR, THE SMELLS WE SMELL, AND SO ON; ALSO SUCH THINGS AS HEADACHE OR THE FEELING OF MUSCULAR STRAIN… (139)

Assuming that this connection between perception and experience (in the "what it's like" sense) is correct, we can look to his definition of perception to tell us something about the nature of experience. What we find is that in the place of the simple "self acquainted with sense-datum" account of the old story, we get a complex account involving both physiology and psychology:

> Adhering, for the moment, to the standpoint of physics, we may define a "perception" of an object as the appearance of the object from a place where there is a brain (or, in lower animals, some suitable nervous structure), with sense-organs and nerves forming part of the intervening medium. Such appearances of objects are distinguished from appearances in other places by certain peculiarities, namely:
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> (1) They give rise to mnemic phenomena;
> (2) They are themselves affected by mnemic phenomena.
>
> That is to say, they may be remembered and associated or influence our habits, or give rise to images, etc., and they are themselves different from what they would have been if our past experience had been different… (131)

MODIFICATION OF BEHAVIOUR PRODUCED BY WHAT IS EXPERIENCED. We might, in fact, define one chain of experience, or one biography, as a series of occurrences linked by mnemic causation. I think it is this characteristic, more than any other, that distinguishes sciences dealing with living organisms from physics." (82-3)

Also relevant are Russell's critical remarks about expressions such as "THE INTRINSIC NATURE OF CONSCIOUS EXPERIENCE", "THE PERVADING QUALITY OF PSYCHIC PHENOMENA", and "the character diffused throughout our mental life". About the first of these he says that the expression "conscious experience" is often used to refer to the (alleged) fact that "an…experience has SOME INTRINSIC NATURE characteristic of what is called "consciousness". But his comment on this sense of "experience" makes it clear that he understands it quite differently from the way in which Nagel might understand it. He says: "That is to say, a "conscious experience" is characterized…by being composed of a certain peculiar stuff, the stuff of "consciousness." And he adds: "I do not believe that there is any "stuff" of consciousness, so that there is no intrinsic character by which a "conscious" experience could be distinguished from any other." (112-3) So far as I can tell, he would be inclined to dismiss the phrases "PERVADING QUALITY OF PSYCHIC PHENOMENA" and "CHARACTER DIFFUSED THROUGHOUT OUR MENTAL LIFE" in the same way—by treating them as baseless "stuff-claims".

If this is the right way to think about my red experience, then the simple formula that "the sensation that we have when we see a patch of colour simply *is* that patch of colour" won't do. What we have to say instead is that this sensation/experience is that color patch *embedded in a rich physiological and psychological causal network.* That is to say, that if this red patch were to occur "in the void"—which is not, I believe, impossible—then it would *not* be a sensation/experience of red.[5]

Answer to Question (3): Immediate Knowledge of my Experiences (?)

On to the third question. Acquaintance yielded a special kind of knowledge: knowledge by acquaintance. Can this kind of knowledge be preserved within the framework of *The Analysis of Mind?* Looking back at his earlier work, Russell admits that "problems, of which at first I was not fully conscious, arise as a consequence of the abandonment of 'sense-data'. Such words as 'awareness', acquaintance', and 'experience' had to be re-defined…". (*Development* 101) And he continues to say that "at the time when I wrote *The Analysis of Mind* I was not fully aware of the need for re-interpreting what common sense calls 'the evidence of the senses'." (*Development* 102) Though he grants that behaviorist methods—methods that loom large in *The Analysis of Mind*—can make sense of a great deal of what counts as "'knowledge derived from experience'" (*Development* 103), he maintains that there is much that cannot be captured in this way.

> Everybody who is not a philosopher addicted to Behaviourism is persuaded that things happen in us which do not happen in any machine. IF YOU HAVE A TOOTHACHE, YOU KNOW THAT YOU ARE FEELING PAIN. YOU COULD MAKE A MACHINE WHICH WOULD GROAN AND EVEN SAY, 'THIS IS UNENDURABLE', BUT YOU WOULD STILL NOT BELIEVE THAT THE MACHINE WAS UNDERGOING WHAT YOU UNDERGO WHEN YOU FEEL TOOTHACHE. (*Development* 103)

Acquaintance with the toothache, or the red patch, makes you know these qualities. And acquaintance with your feeling the toothache, or seeing the red patch, makes you know that you are feeling the toothache, or seeing the red patch. How can we know these kinds of things without relying on acquaintance? In *The Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* Russell made an attempt to come to terms with this problem. But before turning to his later work, we must take a look at how he addressed these questions in *The Analysis of Mind.*

Once the attempt to construe sensations as relational occurrences—self acquainted with red sense-datum—is abandoned and we do instead take them to be simple—simple in the way in which a red patch is simple—sensations cease to be cognitive: "A patch of colour is certainly not knowledge, and therefore we cannot say that pure sensation is cognitive." (142)[6] Having a red sensation imparts no knowledge to you: no knowledge about the nature of the quality that constitutes the sensation, and no knowledge to the effect that you are having a red sensation.

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[5] And that makes the whole story sound suspiciously *functionalist*. This may not be a welcome development.

[6] Perception, according to our definition in Lecture VII, is no more a form of knowledge than sensation is, except in so far as it involves expectations. (158)

In *The Analysis of Mind* Russell argues that sensations are known by being remembered with the help of images:

> When a sensation is followed by an image which is a "copy" of it, I think it may be said that the existence of the image constitutes consciousness of the sensation, provided it is accompanied by that sort of belief which, when we reflect upon it, makes us feel that the image is a "sign" of something other than itself. This is the sort of belief which, in the case of memory, we expressed in the words "this occurred"… (288-9)

Russell cannot discover intrinsic differences between sensations and images. (110, 117, 121, 154, 156, 287, 297) I.e., a red image is the same sort of thing as a red sensation, viz., a red patch. The remarkable thing about an image—an image that has a prototype—is that it is a *copy* of the sensation that is its prototype. And being a copy means that *the sensation and its image-copy have the same intrinsic qualities.*

> [A] "very important point concerning images …[is]…their resemblance to previous sensations. They are said to be "COPIES" OF SENSATIONS, ALWAYS AS REGARDS THE SIMPLE QUALITIES THAT ENTER INTO THEM, though not always as regards the manner in which these are put together." (154)

This *qualitative resemblance* between sensation and image is the crucial feature on which our knowledge of our sensations rests. This is how we know which kind of sensation we are having—a red sensation, say, rather than a green sensation:

> It is this fact, that images resemble antecedent sensations, which enable us to call them images "of" this or that. For the understanding of memory, and of knowledge generally, the recognizable resemblance of images and sensations is of fundamental importance. (155)

What justifies the belief that memory images are copies of earlier sensations? He argues that "images must have two characteristics by which we can arrange them in two series, of which one corresponds to the more or less remote period in the past to which they refer, and the other to our greater or less confidence in their accuracy." (161) And, after some discussion he reaches the following conclusion about this matter:

> We may say, then, that images are regarded by us as more or less accurate copies of past occurrences because they come to us with two sorts of feelings: (1) Those that may be called FEELINGS OF FAMILIARITY; (2) Those that may be collected together as FEELINGS GIVING A SENSE OF PASTNESS. The first lead us to trust our memories, the second to assign places to them in the time-order. (163)[7]

[7] Feelings of various sorts do a lot of work in *The Analysis of Mind,* but they remain unanalyzed. "Note.—When I speak of a *feeling* of belief, I use the word "feeling" in a popular sense, to cover a sensation or an image or a

When these kinds of feelings accompany an image, you recognize it as a memory image—as a copy of an earlier sensation of yours. And this, in turn, will give rise to a certain kind of belief-feeling—the belief-feeling that is characteristic of memory, as contrasted with the belief feelings that characterize expectation or bare assent—and this kind of belief feeling "may be expressed by the words "this happened". (176) And that is how you *know* that your experience was a red experience, not a green experience.

Two Features of the Memory Account of our Knowledge of Our Experience

I'll flag two features of this account of our knowledge of our experiences.

Immediacy/Directness?

The first has to do with how direct our *knowledge* of our experiences is. Directness or immediacy was a signature feature of the sense-datum story. Immediacy enters into the definition of "sense-data":

> Let us give the name of "sense-data" to the things that are immediately known in sensation: such things as colours, sounds, smells, hardnesses, roughnesses, and so on. (*Problems* 17)

And it also features crucially in the notion of acquaintance:

> We shall say that we have *acquaintance* with anything of which we are directly aware, without the intermediary of any process of inference or any knowledge of truths. (*Problems* 73)

There is here no inference, no representations/ideas, no causal relation, no time-lag. The account of our *knowledge* of our experiences that Russell presents in *The Analysis of Mind* seems to be indirect in all of these ways: it involves inference, representations/ideas that are caused by their prototypes, and an accompanying time-lag.

The case seems perfectly clear. Nevertheless, we find Russell attributing a certain kind of immediacy to our memory:

> some of our knowledge of the past comes to us without effort, in the same sort of immediate way in which we acquire knowledge of occurrences, in our present environment. (165)

> memory resembles the knowledge derived from the senses. It is immediate, not inferred, not abstract; it differs from perception mainly by being referred to the past. (173)

But the immediacy that Russell flags in these two passages is not the sort of immediacy that he has in mind when talking about the acquaintance with sense-data. Perception and memory feel immediate only in comparison with the sort explicitly inferential knowledge we have about the future, or about those parts of the present that are currently outside the reach of our senses.

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complex of sensations or images or both; I use this word because I do not wish to commit myself to any special analysis of the belief-feeling. (187)

But the felt immediacy of perception (and memory) is misleading. The table you see and the breakfast that you recall are the results of inference. What is immediately given are items that are located in your brain. Here is how Russell puts this in the *Outline:*

> It may be said that we do not in fact proceed to infer the physical world from our perceptions, but that we begin at once with a rough-and-ready knowledge of the physical world, and only at a late stage of sophistication compel ourselves to regard our knowledge of the physical world as an inference. What is valid in this statement is the fact that OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE PHYSICAL WORLD IS NOT AT FIRST INFERENTIAL, BUT THAT IS ONLY BECAUSE WE TAKE OUR PERCEPTS TO BE THE PHYSICAL WORLD. Sophistication and philosophy come in at the stage at which we realise that the physical world cannot be identified with our percepts. (*Outline* 136)

So the original claim concerning the indirectness of our knowledge of our own sensations via memory images stands. Russell makes this abundantly clear in his reply to C.A. Strong, whom he takes to defend the view that we have immediate knowledge of our sensations. This was written only one year after the publication of *The Analysis of Mind:*

> WE DO NOT IMMEDIATELY KNOW EITHER OUR OWN SENSATIONS OR ANYTHING ELSE…We are thus left with nothing immediate except the core of sensation, which is not knowledge, and is not itself immediately known. ("Physics and Perception", CP9, 128-9)

I will, however, return to the question of directness or immediacy toward the end of the paper. There I'll try to show that it is possible to find something like the directness/immediacy of acquaintance in the account that Russell has presented in *The Analysis of Mind.*

Qualitative vs. Structural Similarity

The second striking feature of *The Analysis of Mind* account of how we know our experiences concerns Russell's structuralism, or rather, an apparent exception to his structuralism. The similarity between a sensation and its corresponding idea is not merely structural. We may assume that the sensation and the idea do share a structure. But the crucial point is that they also share their qualities: the sensation is a red patch and the idea of that sensation is a red patch as well. And it is only because of this qualitative similarity between sensation and idea that the idea can make us know what the sensation is like. Of course there are other ways of knowing your sensations. Thinking the words "I just had a red sensation" may well, given the right circumstances, give you the knowledge that you just had a red sensation. But only the relevant memory image, with its intrinsic quality, can reveal to you the intrinsic quality of your earlier sensation. This qualitative similarity between sensation and idea is the reason that we can have more then merely structural knowledge about our own minds—the sort of knowledge of which "philosopher addicted to Behaviourism" knows nothing.

After The Analysis of Mind: An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth

Most of the material presented in the previous section was taken from two chapters of *The Analysis of Mind*—the chapter "Sensations and Images" and the chapter "Memory". Russell had his doubts about the memory chapter. He closes it with the words: "this analysis of memory is probably extremely faulty, but I do not know how to improve it." (187) And when he looks back at *The Analysis of Mind* in 1959*,* it is primarily the material in the chapter on "Sensations and Images" that concerns him. The consequences of giving up the relational analysis of sensation—subject-acquainted-with-sense-datum—were more serious than he appreciated at the time. To repeat the relevant lines from *My Philosophical Development:* "But new problems, of which at first I was not fully conscious, arose as a consequence of the abandonment of 'sense-data''. (*Development* 101) The nonrelational—and therefore non-cognitive—analysis of sensation requires a new understanding of "what common sense calls 'the evidence of the senses' (*Development* 102)…"Very difficult questions as to what is meant by 'empirical evidence'" (*Development* 104) arise.

Noticing

In *My Philosophical Development* Russell tells us that he proposes to address the epistemic problems that were caused by the non-relational (monistic) analysis of sensation by reintroducing some sort of relationality/duality into the proceedings: "THE DUALITY [of the sense-datum and its being sensed by a subject], AFTER IT HAS BEEN BANISHED FROM SENSATION, HAS TO BE SOMEHOW RE-INTRODUCED." (*Development* 104) And this is what Russell does in the *Inquiry* by introducing the concept of *noticing:* "I replaced 'acquaintance' [of the original sense-datum story] by 'NOTICING', which I accepted as an undefined term." (*Development* 104)

Russell introduces the (undefined) notion of noticing by way of an examples:

> If somebody says to you "are you now seeing yellow?" or "do you hear a noise?" you can answer with perfect confidence, even if, until you were asked, you were not noticing the yellow or the noise." (*Inquiry* 51)

Russell thinks that "as a rule, we do not know our present experiences" (*Inquiry* 50, and the final footnote of this paper). Had nobody asked you about the yellow or the noise, you would, in all likelihood, have never known your experience of yellow or of the noise. But the questions made you *notice*—and thereby know—your experiences.

What does noticing consist in? It is difficult to say precisely. Here is what Russell has to offer:

> "noticing" is a matter of degree, and very hard to define; it seems to consist mainly in ISOLATING FROM THE SENSIBLE ENVIRONMENT…In one sense, it may be said that you "know" a present experience if it ROUSES IN YOU ANY EMOTION, however faint— if it pleases or displeases you, or interests or bores you, or surprises you or is just what you were expecting. (*Inquiry* 50)

> It seems, then, that THE MOST IMMEDIATE KNOWING OF WHICH WE HAVE EXPERIENCE involves sensible presence *plus* something more, but that any very exact definition of the more that is needed is likely to mislead by its very exactness, since the matter is essentially vague and one of degree. What is wanted may be called "ATTENTION"; this is partly A SHARPENING OF THE APPROPRIATE SENSE-ORGANS, PARTLY AN EMOTIONAL REACTION. A sudden loud noise is almost sure to command attention, but so does a very faint sound that has emotional significance. (*Inquiry* 51)

Noticing performs a cognitive function similar to that of acquaintance: it provides you with "THE MOST IMMEDIATE KNOWING OF WHICH WE HAVE EXPERIENCE." (*Inquiry* 51) Noticing an experience is not the only way of knowing it:

> WHAT MUST BE DONE WITH AN EXPERIENCE IN ORDER THAT WE MAY KNOW IT? Various things are possible. We may use words describing it, we may remember it either in words or in images, OR we may merely "NOTICE" it. (*Inquiry* 50)

Only experiences that are noticed can play the crucial epistemic role of serving as the basis for empirical propositions:

> Every empirical proposition is based upon one or more SENSIBLE OCCURRENCES that were noticed when they occurred, or immediately after, while they still formed part of the specious present. SUCH OCCURRENCES, WE SHALL SAY, ARE "KNOWN" WHEN THEY ARE NOTICED. (*Inquiry* 51)

What have we learned about noticing? Noticing an experience is not the same as remembering this experience, whether with words or with images, nor is it a matter of describing the experience. And the knowledge we gain of our experience by noticing it is not the same kind of knowledge that a memory of this experience imparts. It is akin to knowledge by acquaintance. Perhaps it should be called "KNOWLEDGE BY NOTICING". Moreover, there is good reason to think that *only* the knowledge of experiences that stems from noticing them can do the relevant epistemic work. If that is correct, all the detailed work in *The Analysis of Mind* about how we can know our experiences through memory images is unsatisfactory: knowing our experiences with memory images that are accompanied by the relevant memory beliefs is insufficiently direct to do the epistemic work that acquaintance and noticing are designed to do.

We know that the epistemic role of noticing is the same (or similar) to that of acquaintance: it lets us know our experiences in a particularly intimate way. But, on the other hand, it seems clear that noticing must differ greatly from acquaintance.

Questions about Noticing

It's not a mental act (?)

Noticing should not be construed as a mental act. Mental acts were banished in 1919 and, they never came back. Russell's talk of "the most immediate knowing of which we have experience

involves sensible presence *PLUS* SOMETHING MORE" (*Inquiry* 51) may suggest that this additional factor is something of which we are aware and that it is the mental act of noticing—after all, what else could it be?

But perhaps the additional factor manifests itself as a set of features belonging to the object. This could have to do with the manner in which certain parts of the object/the experience stand out, with the way they occupy the center of the sensory field, the way in which the strictly sensory parts of the experience give rise to various non-sensory components of the experience as a whole.

It's directed at different kinds of objects

In *My Philosophical Development* Russell reports that he got rid of sense-data in *The Analysis of Mind.* On page 101 he tells us that he "explicitly abandoned" them in that book; and on page 181 he says that he "emphatically abandoned" them in 1921. So sense-data—the objects of acquaintance—cannot be the objects of noticing. What we notice are things like patches of color, i.e., experiences, or sensations, or percepts.[8] These are the things that, in the old regime, were analyzed (mistakenly) as self-acquainted-with-object.

It's not a two-place relation: No Subject (?)

There are the things that are noticed, but there is no subject—at least no simple subject—to do the noticing. The subject and its mental acts were exiled together and were never allowed to come back in. But like the two-place *relation* of acquaintance, noticing has the virtue that that which is noticed must exist: you cannot notice what is not there:

> Occurrences may be noticed or not noticed, but they cannot be noticed if they do not occur; therefore, so far as mere noticing is concerned, truth and falsehood do not come in. (*Inquiry* 52)

But perhaps there is a way of construing noticing as a genuine relation after all. The subject or self of *The Problems of Philosophy* no longer exists. But there is, of course, the bundle of experiences that is you. We could try to revive something very much like the traditional acquaintance relation by proposing that noticing is a relation that holds not between a simple self and an object, but between the object and the whole bundle that you are. For a simple self to be acquainted with a sense-datum, the self had to undertake a mental act—it had to sense the sensibile (thereby making it into a sense-datum). Does the bundle-self have to undertake a similar mental act in order to notice the red patch? Mental acts, in the old sense, are problematical. But inasmuch as these acts can be understood along the lines of neutral monism, they should pose no decisive obstacle to the attempt of understanding noticing as a relation. (This is a view that I find rather appealing.)

Noticing and the Principle of Acquaintance—What Does It Require?

I have mentioned the strictly epistemic problems brought on by the abandonment of acquaintance. But there is also a more general question concerning the limits of our understanding as specified in the principle of acquaintance. In *The Problems of Philosophy,* it is

[8] Recall that the red patch of color IS the sensation—that is what we learned in *The Analysis of Mind.*

stated as follows: "*Every proposition which we can understand must be composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted."* (91) With the switch from acquaintance to noticing, the principle should, presumably, have been renamed to "the principle of noticing." However that may be, Russell never abandoned the idea behind this principle. In *My Philosophical Development* he says:

> I have maintained a principle, which still seems to me completely valid, to the effect that, if we can understand what a sentence means, it must be composed entirely of words denoting things with which we are acquainted or definable in terms of such words. (*Development* 125)

Given the fact that the principle survived the switch from acquaintance to noticing, one may wonder whether it might not survive an additional transformation. Perhaps we can discover some elements in the machinery of *The Analysis of Mind* that can be construed as a version of noticing? This process would have to do the job that acquaintance and noticing are enlisted to do: (i) it would have to serve up materials that can function as the foundation of (at least some) empirical propositions and (ii) it would have to provide us with the constituents of the propositions that we can understand as demanded by the principle of acquaintance/noticing.

Noticing and the Three Questions

In the *Inquiry* the color patches of *The Analysis of Mind* have changed into events (or, possibly, already into complete bundles of compresent qualities—see *Human Knowledge* 83), but that does not change the way in which questions (1) and (2) are answered. The redness is exemplified in your brain, and when it plays the right kind of physiological and psychological role, it is your experience of red. And how do you know this experience in the right kind of way? You simply notice it. That's what noticing does: it makes you know your experience directly.

Acquaintance and Noticing: What Do They Explain?

Why seek alternatives to Russell's accounts of our direct knowledge of our experiences via acquaintance and noticing by digging around in *The Analysis of Mind?* Well, we are here to celebrate *The Analysis of Mind,* so it only seems proper to dig around in it. But there are other reasons too.

Especially the noticing account strikes me as explanatorily thin. An undefined (and apparently undefinable) notion is introduced. We learn that it does the important job that acquaintance used to do, but it is also clear that it must differ greatly from acquaintance. So we can't just rest content with thinking: oh, it all works just like acquaintance used to work. To my mind, noticing is a bit of a *deus ex machina*—it swoops in and all problems are supposed to simply go away.

Acquaintance seems to be in better shape: there are many more moving parts to this story. There is the subject with its mental acts, there are the sense-data, and there is the two-place relation of acquaintance. This promises a deeper understanding how we manage to know our experiences. But, in the end, it all boils down to the claim that we (subjects, selves, minds) are just to sorts of things that can do these sorts of things:

> THE FACULTY OF BEING ACQUAINTED WITH THINGS OTHER THAN ITSELF IS THE MAIN CHARACTERISTIC OF A MIND. Acquaintance with objects essentially consists in a relation between the mind and something other than the mind; it is this that constitutes THE MIND'S POWER OF KNOWING THINGS. (*Problems* 66-7)

Perhaps this is all that can be said about these deep issues. When asked, "but how does "the mind" mange do achieve such a feat?", a famous colleague of mine would simple beatifically and say: "There is no how about it". He could not see a real question here. But those of us who do not share this happy disposition must continue to ask "how does the mind do it ?". And perhaps *The Analysis of Mind* can help us a little bit in this project.

Back to The Analysis of Mind

I find two ideas in the "Memory" chapter of *The Analysis of Mind* that might be exploited to yield something like noticing.

Memory Images

The first idea we have already encountered. It is Russell's explanation of why we regard certain images as copies of earlier sensations: these images have the following two characteristics: (i) they feel familiar; (ii) they come with a feeling of pastness. Now one might argue as follows: That images with these two characteristics are copies of earlier sensations is not something we need to infer; it is something that we apprehend directly, i.e., something that we understand "without the intermediary of any process of inference or any knowledge of truths." (*Problems* 73). And that a given memory image is, say, a memory image of a red sensation, rather than a blue sensation, is given in the same immediate way. That is just what experiencing a memory image as a *copy* of an earlier sensation amounts to: we understand that the memory image and the earlier sensation share their intrinsic quality. In this way my earlier red sensation gets to be "before the mind" when a memory image of it pops up in my mind.

How plausible is this proposal? I am not sure, mainly because I do not know how to meet the objection that there is an inference—most likely unconscious—involved from the memory image to the existence of the prior sensation. If there is this kind of inferential mediation, it might be argued that the alleged analogy between this process, on the one hand, and acquaintance/noticing, on the other, breaks down.

Immediate Memory

The second way of constructing something like noticing from the materials provided in *The Analysis of Mind* is more promising. This idea is contained in Russell's discussion of IMMEDIATE MEMORY.

> Between memory-image and sensation there is an INTERMEDIATE EXPERIENCE CONCERNING THE IMMEDIATE PAST. For example, A SOUND THAT WE HAVE JUST HEARD IS PRESENT TO US IN A WAY WHICH DIFFERS BOTH FROM THE SENSATION WHILE WE ARE HEARING THE SOUND AND FROM THE MEMORY-IMAGE OF SOMETHING HEARD DAYS OR WEEKS AGO…Everyone knows the experience of NOTICING (say) that the clock *has been*

> striking, when we did not notice it while it was striking… A sensation fades gradually, passing by continuous gradations to the status of an image. THIS RETENTION OF THE IMMEDIATE PAST IN A CONDITION INTERMEDIATE BETWEEN SENSATION AND IMAGE may be called "IMMEDIATE MEMORY." (174-5)

The first thing that is striking about this passage is that it contains the term "noticing" and the term "noticing" is used in much the same way in which it later will be used in the *Inquiry.*

Immediate memory, as described in this passage, is very different from (true) memory. Immediate memory involves no memory image (with the attendant feelings of familiarity and pastness) and no memory belief. It is rather less clear what is involved in immediate memory. During the brief period in which the sensation fades, we are in a "condition" intermediate between a sensation and a memory image, and in this condition the earlier sensation is *"present to us."* And all this is something that we are supposed to be able to witness introspectively. It would appear then that the immediate memory of *The Analysis of Mind* gives us something that works, in some ways, like the acquaintance relation of Russell's old story and the noticing of the *Inquiry.* It provides us with a direct/immediate grasp of our own sensations of the immediate past in a way that is more primitive than our later consciousness of/knowledge of our earlier sensations.

Unlike acquaintance, this way of knowing the past is limited to the immediate past. But this drawback it seems to share with noticing. Immediate memory is also limited in its reach—the fading of the sensation "happens very quickly". (175) Acquaintance—maybe also noticing, I am not sure—can be sustained for longer periods of time. Immediate memory, on the other hand, fades within seconds. Notwithstanding these limitations, it does appear that immediate memory provides us with direct access to the world. And perhaps this kind of direct access can do the epistemic job of acquaintance/noticing and also allow us grasp the subject matter of (some of?) our thoughts. If this is so, *The Analysis of Mind* may actually be a bit better than Russell judged it to be, and we might get by without the introduction of the undefined notion of noticing.[9]

[9] One may wonder whether Russell's search for a replacement of the acquaintance relation could be avoided altogether. Russell himself considers one way of doing that: it is the proposal that having an experience is, *eo ipso,* to know the experience—the having is the knowing, as Galen Strawson likes to say. Russell rejects the proposal, but tells us nothing about why he chooses to do so: "On the whole, I prefer to use the word "know" in a sense which implies that the knowing is different from what is known, and to accept the consequence that, as a rule, we do not know our present experiences." (*Inquiry* 50).

Another proposal, externalist in spirit, has it that that experiences, taken just as such, is sufficient to justify empirical propositions and to tether our propositions/thoughts to the world. To do that, our experiences need not be known, be it in a special or the regular way.