ACQUAINTANCE AND NAMING: A RUSSELLIAN THEME IN EPISTEMOLOGY

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Russell's distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description has been recently re-examined in frequently controversial epistemological contributions. The present essay reflects upon the pertinent papers by D. F. Pears, J. Hintikka, R. Chisholm, W. Sellars, A. J. Ayer, and others, but is primarily founded on Russell's significant formulations from his writings published between 1910 and 1918. By employing an auxiliary device of a late-Wittgensteinian language game, I explore at first the situation in which human subject is "experiencing" and naming particular objects (Russell's sense-data and sensibilia) and later the subject's acquaintance with universals. The reconstruction of such situations shows that, contrary to Russell's assumptions, even the "purest" acquaintance cannot function without knowledge by description, i.e. without stating propositions about the object of acquaintance (whatever its nature). Then the only "descriptionless" alternative would be a kind of intuitive knowledge of such objects which is difficult to reconcile with the position held by Russell in the 1910s. Whatever the consequences, this topic retains its fundamental epistemological significance.

There have been recent signs of a renewed interest in Russell's old distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description. As known, Russell formulated his basic position on these issues in his works published between 1910 and 1918.[1] Recent re-examinations of this epistemological theme – which is related to many other topics, such as particulars and universals, singular and general expressions, logically proper names and demonstratives, etc. – frequently introduce the background of logically possible worlds and with it also the problem of re-identification of particulars.[2] D. F. Pears, in his excellent article on Russell's Logical Atomism,[3] suggests

[1] First in "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 1910 – 11 (reprinted in *Mysticism and Logic*, 1918, chapter x); then in *The Problems of Philosophy*, 1912, chapter v; "On the Nature of Acquaintance," 1914 (reprinted in *Logic and Knowledge*, ed. R.C. Marsh, New York, 1956, 127 – 174); and in "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism," in *Logic and Knowledge*, 177 – 281.

[2] This is the approach adopted by J. Hintikka in his "Knowledge by Acquaintance – Individuation by Acquaintance," in *Bertrand Russell*, ed D.F. Pears, Doubleday, 1972, 52 – 79.

[3] "Russell's Logical Atomism," *ibid*, 23 – 51.

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that Russell, unlike Wittgenstein, was more interested in the actual world. If so, acquaintance, naming, and other related issues should preferably be treated in the conceptual framework of the actual world. This is the approach adopted in the present essay, although the techniques employed will have to resort to the hypothetical device of a late-Wittgensteinian language game.

The outcome of my essay is, I think, in agreement with some theses of D. F. Pears concerning the lack of descriptive content in the logically proper names, and also concerning the zero-essences of simple particulars.[4] Like Pears, I also think that acquaintance with a particular involves descriptions.[5] On the other hand, in the context of Russell's relevant works I could not find support for Ayer's claim that one's acquaintance with a particular object would imply "both that the object really existed and that it had the properties which it appeared to have."[6] I realize that my conclusions about the vulnerability of Russell's epistemological position in the 1910s might go beyond what Pears or Chisholm, for example, would be willing to accept. Readers of the polemic discussion between P. Hayner and R. G. Meyers on Russell's knowledge by acquaintance may notice that my position is closer to that of R. G. Meyers.[7] I do not think that Russell's treatment of acquaintance, as documented in his writings from the above period, can be salvaged without regarding knowledge by acquaintance as a kind of intuitive, inarticulate knowledge of things. But Russell himself admits only intuitive knowledge of self-evident truths[8] expressed in propositions, and not an intuitive knowledge of things. As Wilfrid Sellars points out, Russell was "trapped in the myth of the given."[9] However, epistemologists in general tend to fall into this trap.

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[4] D. F. Pears, *op. cit.*, 36, 41, 49.

[5] D. F. Pears, *op. cit.*, 50. Also noticed by R. Chisholm, "On the Nature of Acquaintance: A Discussion of Russell's Theory of Knowledge," in *Bertrand Russell's Philosophy*, ed. G. Nakhnikian, Barnes and Noble, 1974, 47 – 56, especially 56.

[6] See A. J. Ayer, "An Appraisal of B. Russell's Philosophy," in *Bertrand Russell*, ed. D.F. Pears, 14.

[7] P. Hayner, "Knowledge by Acquaintance," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 29/1969, 423 – 431; R.G. Meyers, "Knowledge by Acquaintance: A Reply to Hayner," *ibid.* vol. 31/1971, 293 – 296, and Hayner's Rejoinder, 297 – 298.

[8] *The Problems of Philosophy*, 109 – 118.

[9] W. Sellars, "Ontology and the Philosophy of Mind in Russell," in *Bertrand Russell's Philosophy*, ed. G. Nakhnikian, 100.

I

As expressed by Russell in his works from the 1910s, an *acquaintance* with an object is a relational fact which can be symbolized by:

(R1) A(S, O)

Here "S" stands for the knowing, experiencing person, i.e. for the subject; "O" stands for objects of experience; and "A" symbolizes the relation of acquaintance to be specified.

According to Russell's distinction between mental and physical facts,[10] this acquaintance relation is a mental fact. It is a mental fact because the domain of the relation is "made out" of subjects (knowing human persons). On the other hand, the converse domain of (R1) is made out of objects of experience, which need not be mental. At this stage of Russell's philosophical development, while he was still critically re-examining the neutral monism of Ernst Mach and William James, the question of human subject, intertwined with the meaning of the ambiguous proper name – personal pronoun "I" – has not yet been settled in a manner that would resolutely eliminate the last vestiges of the old notion of substance. At any rate, it is an object, i.e. the second member of (R1), that is the center of our attention in examining the acquaintance relation.

When S experiences O, he/she need not pay attention at the same time to the fact that he/she is experiencing O. Such a more complex fact of experiencing the person's own experiencing[11] might then be symbolized by:

(R2) E[S', A(S, O)],

where "E" stands for "experiencing" and "S'" for "experiencing subjects." Russell warns us that S and S' need not be numerically the same, since "the one 'self' or 'mind' which embraces both may be a construction."[12] But, hopefully, S' will sometimes be identical with S, for otherwise the subject would always have to "step out of his boundaries," metaphorically speaking, in order to observe himself, or, rather, his own mental facts.

However, in the acquaintance relation the subject seems to pay full attention to the object of acquaintance and the complex relation (R2) might be put into the background. Now, what are the objects which might be the

[10] This conception was modified in his period of neutral monism; see e.g. *An Outline of Philosophy*, The New American Library, New York 1974 (originally 1927), 147 – 148.

[11] Russell introduced terms "direct awareness" and "acquaintance" as more precise in meaning than the ambiguous "experience."

[12] *Logic and Knowledge*, ed. R.C. Marsh, 166.

members of the converse domain of (R1), and how are they "revealed" to S? First of all, these objects are *particulars*. The trouble is that Russell admits that other simple entities may become objects of acquaintance as well, notably simple qualities and relations, i.e. instances of universals.[13] This was the debt to be paid to his Platonic concessions toward the subsistence of universals, although by 1914 he had already stopped talking about such subsistence, thus bringing his campaign against the Meinongian underworld close to its end.

Let us examine, first, the acquaintance with particulars, which gets preferential treatment in Russell's exposition. In the 1910s Russell identified particulars with sense-data and sensibilia (as potential or possible sense-data). This phenomenalistic basis of knowledge and world contains particulars as logical atoms – the ultimate constituents of facts. Quine and other commentators on Russell's logical atomism have rightly noticed that, although his ontology declared atomic facts to be the basic units of the world, sense-data (his particulars) became "logical atoms for the construction of the rest of the world."[14] The early Wittgenstein seemed to be more consistent while speaking about the world as a collection of facts, or as being divided into facts.[15] Later, as witnessed by his note in 1955,[16] Russell abandoned his early theories of particulars, but more for the technical reasons of logical simplicity. He became more favorably inclined to *percepts* instead of sense-data (perhaps under the influence of *Gestalt* psychology), though he did not make it quite to the acceptance of a thorough physicalistic position.

Let us forget for a while all the passionate discussions on the nature of sense-data in contemporary philosophy,[17] and take Russell's sense-data (his particulars) for granted. If we do that Russell surprises us with statements concerning the nature of acquaintance, such as the one in which he claims that when I am acquainted with an object, "the object is known to me without the need of any reflection on my part as to its properties or relations."[18] To be insured against the danger of quoting out of context, one may search for and find additional evidence, such as Russell's further claims to the ef-

[13] See W.V. Quine, "Russell's Ontological Development," in *Bertrand Russell*, ed. D.F. Pears, 290 – 304; also J. Vuillemin, "Platonism in Russell's Early Philosophy ...", *ibid.*, 305 – 324.

[14] W. V. Quine, *op. cit.* 302.

[15] *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 1.1, 1.2, etc.

[16] See *Logic and Knowledge*, ed. R.C. Marsh, 124.

[17] See numerous contributions of G. E. Moore and, in particular, the classical work of J. L. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia*, Oxford Univ. Press, 1962.

[18] *Logic and Knowledge*, ed. R.C. Marsh, 167.

fect that each particular stands entirely alone and is completely self-subsistent,[19] or that particulars do not in any way logically depend upon each other,[20] etc.

After reading such statements, one begins to suspect that *knowledge by acquaintance*, which is the result of any instance of our (R1), does not depend on knowledge of facts relevant to O. If *knowledge by description* (knowledge about) is the complementary alternative, then this alternative is practically excluded, for there is no need whatsoever to reflect upon the properties of O or relations in which O is entangled. But then there is no need for using any propositions either; at least not the standard Russellian propositions, whether atomic or molecular. No doubt, a fact that a quality Q belongs to O, or that parts of O stand in a certain relation, requires for its expression (reflection) an atomic proposition composed of words of the language employed. An external observer might notice, for example, that while (R1) holds for a subject in question, a more complex relation

A(S, <O, Q>),

where <O, Q> is an atomic fact expressible by "O is Q", might not. Certainly, acquaintance with facts (which can be, as Russell sometimes says, 'perceived') is of different "order" than the acquaintance with particulars.[21] But isn't <O, Q>, and other facts relevant to O, *presupposed* in the acquaintance of S with O? Or, to put it differently, what is it "in" O by virtue of which S recognizes O as such?

Let us give a lengthy quote from *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, which might suggest possible answers to the above questions:

> When you have acquaintance with a particular, you understand that particular itself quite fully, independently of the fact that there are a great many propositions about it that you do not know, but propositions concerning the particular are not necessary to be known in order that you may know *what the particular itself is*.[22]

The phrase *what the particular itself is* seems to provide a clue. Yet its meaning remains obscure, unless one traditionally alludes to a Kantian thing-in-itself, or to an Aristotelian essence that might be captured by a real definition. Another, and surprising, guess might be that, in this inarticulate,

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[19] *Ibid.*, 201.

[20] *Ibid.*, 202.

[21] B. Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, 136; also W. Sellars, "Ontology and the Philosophy of Mind in Russell," 68.

[22] *Logic and Knowledge*, ed. R.C. Marsh, 204 (italics mine).

propositionless manner, S is acquainted with O via some kind of mystical union, or perhaps through a Bergsonian or another kind of intuition.[23]

II

Whatever the nature of acquaintance, a highly significant symptom of it seems to be a correct recognition of O by calling on its proper *name* whenever O is present (i.e. given here and now in the experiential field of S). Russell frequently talks about the ambiguous demonstrative word "this" as the only logically proper name that would apply to particulars. Of course, the use of the word "this"should be contextually determined, say, by S's pointing towards O while uttering the word. All the troubles with ostensive definitions and ostentation in general might appear on the scene.[24] However, if there is no distinguished quality of O or a relation between the parts of O to which S might be pointing, the demonstrative "this" would just be assigned to O "as a whole" (in the style of a Parmenidian one, homogeneous Being). Russell also likes to bring in the story of Adam who had to baptize animals brought in front of him, one after another. In this vein, let us simulate a late-Wittgensteinian language game, combined with the idea of a baptizing automaton, which might reveal what is going on in such a naming procedure.

Suppose that all the particulars in the world[25] are being demonstrated to S so that each 'here and now' would be completely filled with one O. While each O is thus presented to S, one after another, S shouts loudly its proper name N. Now, how does S know which proper name he is to assign to the present O? There are three basic possibilities: (i) Each O has its proper name N, as it were, engraved on itself so that S just reads the name; (ii) S has to make, create names as he goes along (a possibility that he makes just one, say, "this", and uses it for all Os not excluded); (iii) S has prepared a set of different names beforehand and is now ready to assign one and only one N to every O. Of course, there is also another possibility, (iv), based on a kind of a pre-established harmony: assume that the Unveiler of the objects put a

[23] Because of his merciless criticism of Bergson's philosophy Russell would apparently violently oppose such a suggestion; compare his *An Outline of Philosophy*, 135.

[24] For ostensive definitions, see B. Russell, *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1948, 63 – 72. In contrast, J. Wisdom uses the term "ostentation" for a species of substitution of one sentence for another; see his "Ostentation", in *Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis* B. Blackwell, Oxford, 1953..

[25] In Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* there is a talk about *all* the facts and not about all objects. As he claims, "it is nonsensical to speak of the *total number of objects*." (4.1272)

programmed sequence of N into S, such that N coordinated with the present O would come through the speech apparatus of S in a neatly synchronized way. S operating within the possibility (iv) would be a baptizing automaton in a strict sense: he would not at all be regarded as being acquainted with O.

In the case (i) S would be involved in reading exercises and even if the name-sign were simple,[26] the attention of S would have to be split between experiencing O and reading its name. Instead of just shouting the name, S may use a proposition schema:

(1) "This is N",

in which "is" should represent identity of two proper names ("this" and "N") and the ambiguity of "this" is to be removed by the context of its use. However, since N also looks like a property of O (uniquely characterizing O), it may be predicated to "this" as well, distorting thus the purity of acquaintance (unless "to know what the particular itself is" means the same as "to know the name of it"[27]). Otherwise, (i) expresses a linguistic fact.

In the case (ii) S could not operate without an extensive *memory*, for he would have to remember whether he used the name before or not. However, if S is not governed by the ideal of a logically perfect language (in which a one-one correspondence between names and objects should be a requirement), it would not really matter whether he repeats the names, if only he utters the name during the presence of O so that no object parading through S's attention remains without a name. Of course, here the problem lies in the way how S produces the names. The baptizing formula may be:

(2) "Let this be N!"

and its instances are not declarative sentences, and thus not propositions (they are neither true nor false). Again, S's experiencing seems to be split between getting himself acquainted with O and naming O. But the charge against predicating N to O will be dismissed due to the logical status of (2). Otherwise, S will be a passive spectator of Os and his activity will be used exclusively for christening purposes.

The case (iii) is interesting, for it is assumed that the entire set of proper names is ready for use before the first O is being unveiled to S. Here either S would create all the names (who should tell him how many he will need to avoid repetitions?) – which would bring about a modification of the case (ii) – or the entire set would be given to him in a sequence of acquaintance re-

[26] As required of a proper name for a particular in the logically perfect language.

[27] The importance of proper names in the mythological and taboo contexts is a very familiar fact (what a causal efficacy they have!).

lations the converse domain of which is to be made out by names as *linguistic particulars*. (The problem of naming these linguistic particulars while getting acquainted with them may lead to an infinite regress, or it may be satisfactorily solved by using standard quotation mark techniques.) Now, let the set of names {N} be the ordered set of the proper names for positive integers, commencing with "1". Then, whether S realizes it or not, by correctly assigning these names, in their proper order, to the unveiled objects, the members of {O} would get not only their proper names but also their ordinal names (let us call them so), showing their position in the sequence of the presentation.[28] Evidently, S might do it automatically, increasing the numerals by one (by the successor operation), without noticing that O_{n-1} just preceded the present O_n (the fact expressed by the proposition "O_{n-1} is before O_n" brings into the acquaintance with O_n a relation going even beyond the present object).[29] Formulas (1) and (2) could have similar applications as in the previous cases.

A natural, common sense objection against this simulated language game can destroy the whole enterprise: this is just not the way how we get acquainted with the furniture of the world and how we normally name particulars. Indeed, Russell's particulars are *not* ordinary objects which we selectively choose from our environment and give them proper names for the sake of our orientation and communication with other people. In the period of Russell's flirtation with Watson's behaviorism, he seemed to realize it well when he conceded that we have no names for fleeting particular occurrences which make up an appearance of an object, say, a human person called "Peter".[30]

In spite of that, let us continue our language game with a slight modification of possibility (i). Imagine that instead of proper names engraved onto the particulars O, each O possesses a striking unique quality and the Unveiler motivates our S to the effect that S notices that unique quality and uses its name as the proper name of O. Let these qualities Q be different shades of color and no shade is ever repeated. It is expected of S that he possesses a superhuman discriminatory power as to the shades of color – a feat admissible only in this kind of language game. These color shade reading exercises will be governed by the schema:

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[28] This seems to be the idea behind Carnap's positional (coordinate) languages; see his *Meaning and Necessity*, The University of Chicago Press, 1956, 74f.

[29] This is an external relation in the traditional sense. But, according to Wittgenstein, it might be an internal relation (see his *Tractatus*, 4.1252).

[30] B. Russell, *An Outline of Philosophy*, 56.

(3) "This is Q",

where "Q" stands for different shades of color, represented by color shade quality expressions. Here it seems that "is" has a predicative use and "Q" is a variable standing for *general* quality-expressions. Perhaps, in combination with the case (iii), S has learned these expressions as general expressions,[31] which "refer" to *universals* ("collectively") and to their particular instances ("distributively"). Also, if "Q" is treated as a class-expression, then it shares the fate of *incomplete symbols*[32] and these are positively descriptive, context-dependent and eliminable. But, as it happens, each instance of Q is here unique and unrepeatable, and, taken together, each possible shade of color is represented. So the instances of "Q" may very well serve as proper names of the objects unveiled. At the same time, S needs for his acquaintance with O a proposition (an instance of (3)) which reflects upon a quality of O, however unique and distinctive. Is it now due to this proposition that S knows *what the particular itself is*? A positive answer appears to conflict with Russell's statements from which we have extracted this key phrase.

III

Even if we suppose that in these simulated naming procedures S does not make mistakes (such as confusing shades of color or skipping an ordinal name), each name once used would be irretrievably lost, together with the fleeting particulars. If S is doing nothing but chronicling the particulars of the world, with the last O unveiled to him and the last name used, his cumulatory enterprise would be finished. (By the way, how will S assure, outside the possibility (iv), that he has as many names as there will be objects presented to him?)

In order to discuss the question of recognition of objects by S, let us now assume that the Unveiler will now start a new cycle of presenting particulars to S's attention. Members of the set {O} will now be presented to S in a different order, perhaps at random. The task of S is not to baptize O, but to correctly assign to it the same name which he used in the first cycle. A successful assignment of the name will be regarded as a test for S's *recognition* of O: if S is doing it right, then he is *acquainted* with O and knows *what* O *it-*

[31] Russell claimed that learning proper names and general expressions was basically the same process: *ibid.*

[32] See Russell's characterization of incomplete symbols in *Logic and Knowledge*, 253; also A.N. Whitehead and B. Russell, *Principia Mathematica*, vol. I (1910), Introduction, chapter III, especially section 2.

self is. The real test comes, however, only in applying our naming procedure (ii), for this would be the only case with a conventional assignment of names. But even here one may suspect that S is recognizing merely linguistic facts – relations between the members of {N} and the members of {O}. Let us otherwise notice that a fact symbolized by

(R3) N(S, O),

(where "N" stands for "naming") which we could read "S is naming (assigning a name to) O", would also be a mental fact according to Russell's position in the 1910s. On the other hand, in the mere relation between N and O, S – the baptist – does not figure.

All things considered, a correct recognition of the proper name previously assigned to O is the only palpable sign of correct recognition of O itself. Yet, if S is frequently mistaken, can he still claim that he is acquainted with the culprit objects, after all? Of course, if each O is a private possession of S (and fleeting sense-data suggest this idea), only he can test his memory (with the exception of the fictitious Unveiler). Shouldn't one be inclined to think that S just *feels* the difference between correct and incorrect guesses?[33]

IV

The crucial question is how can S discern between the presence of a new object, say, O_n and the disappearance of the previous, O_{n-1}. For O_n cannot be entirely identical with O_{n-1} : if it is, then the question is shifted to O_{n-2} and by a destructive force of an infinite regress all previous objects might then merge into one. Imagine that this huge, homogeneous object cannot be presented to S instantaneously so that the object is being dragged through a slot resembling a TV screen, while the boundaries of the slot are identical to the boundaries of S's experiential field. Imagine also that the slot never appears empty to S, i.e. he does not get acquainted with the slot itself, as a kind of absolute location for S's experiential field 'here and now'. Because we operate in Russell's pluralistic world, it is assumed that the objects as members of {O} *do* differ. Now, these different objects will be presented in the manner of exhibiting slides: with a click, the old object suddenly disappears and the new objects appears, leaving no empty gap between them. S is an entirely passive spectator who does not have to select and focus on the objects of

[33] Compare M. Schlick's poetic descriptions of a "feeling of fulfillment" if the *Konstatierungen* or observation statements "have fulfilled their true mission" – "The Foundations of Knowledge", in *Logical Positivism*, ed. A.J. Ayer, The Free Press, New York, 1959, 222.

his choice: everything is arranged for him. Yet, while recognizing the present O_n, S must somehow recall an "image" of the same object experienced in the past and compare the "image" with O_n.[34] That would be the only similarity to be entertained by S, but the purity of his acquaintance would thus be spoiled by bringing in an external relation with regard to O. Carnap, in his attempt to constitute the world out of sense-data (his *Erlebs*) on a strict logical basis, realized the importance of the similarity-relation and introduced it into his project as a basic one.[35] By drawing a line between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description, Russell apparently prefers to keep relations of similarity and difference out of the realm of knowledge by acquaintance with particulars, at the price of extending this realm by accepting the *acquaintance with universals* (simple qualities, such as 'redness', and simple relations, e.g. 'to be before').[36]

V

Let us now examine how knowledge by acquaintance with universals (general ideas) may affect S's acquaintance with particulars as the ultimate constituents of facts. A mental fact symbolized by

(R4) A(S, U)

will be similar to (R1), with "U" standing for universals of all kinds. Russell warns us that many universals are known to us by description only. In spite of it, knowledge by description is ultimately reducible to knowledge by acquaintance.[37]

Suppose now that our former Qs – the shades of color – are such universals with which S is directly acquainted.[38] When does this acquaintance take place: simultaneously with experiencing the particulars O, or prior to this? If prior, then S must have possessed a Platonic or other kind of inborn ideas, and among them the general ideas of shades of color. If the experienced ob-

[34] A standard procedure in the late-Wittgensteinian language games. See his *Philosophical Investigations*, Macmillan, 1953.

[35] R. Carnap, *Der logische Aufbau der Welt*, Berlin 1928, section 78, etc.; see also N. Goodman, *The Structure of Appearance*, 2nd ed., The Bobbs-Merrill Comp., Indianapolis, 1966, chapter V. Russell himself stresses occasionally that similarity is the only basic universal (relation); see e.g. *Logic and Knowledge*, 111.

[36] B. Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, 51f.

[37] *Ibid.*, 58.

[38] Some philosophers, for instance John Wisdom, question the very idea of a simple or ultimate quality and therefore the possibility of a direct acquaintance with it as well.

ject displays, say, a specific shade of red, S might mentally go through the (relevant) set of universals with which he has been acquainted, until he stops at the one that matches the specific shade of red color. Here we again face a situation similar to those analyzed by later Wittgenstein. At any rate, S recognizes the presence of a universal in a similar way as he recognized the second and later presence of particulars in our previous examples.

Now, imagine that, while experiencing an O, S uses an instance of (1) "This is N", and also an instance of (3) "This is Q" (or substituting "N" for "this", "N is Q"). Whereas "N" is the unique proper name assigned to O once for ever, "Q" is now substituted by a general expression standing for the universal in question (our specific shade of red color, say, Red_k, where "k" ranges over positive integers). Perhaps, in accord with our previous example, there will be no other occurrence of Red_k displayed by the other objects O. Nevertheless, even in the unique occurrence of Red_k, S recognizes a universal, the acquaintance with which is somehow stored in his memory. Indeed, one wonders whether this recognition of the universal has anything to do with the recognition of the O as well. If we do accept this double recognition, as well as the priority of the acquaintance with U, it will be "Q" which is emphasized in the atomic proposition – an instance of (3) – i.e. the predicate, and not the subject "this" (or "N"). So S's knowledge by acquaintance with O will be mediated by a (descriptive) proposition – something which was not supposed to happen according to Russell's statements quoted above. On the other hand, if both acts of recognition revealing S's acquaintance with O as well as with U are just concomitant happenings and nothing more, S's knowledge of *what the particular itself is* remains again a deep mystery.

A strict empiricist interpretation of this example requires a familiar rejection of the inborn ideas. As applied to our illustrations, S would get acquainted with an U simultaneously with getting acquainted with a particular O which exemplifies that U as its quality. Yet we must account for the differences as well. Here Platonic realism gives way to a nominalistic position toward which Russell occasionally inclined. However, why is O posited as a unique, singular entity, while the quality which O displays is viewed as an exemplification of a universal? It is through O that S is encountering U, let us assume, for the first time in his cognitive history. It appears that the acquaintance with O blends with grasping the U which is exhibited by O, and that the distinction between them is obliterated. Of course, when S repeatedly encounters the same U (as being exhibited by different Os), he may impress it into his memory and assign to it the same general expression "Q".

This situation resembles the recognition of particulars and the correct assignment of their proper names. The familiar difficulty reappears again: does not S recognize the particulars only by virtue of the universals which they exhibit?. If the answer is yes, then it is not the particular itself with which S is acquainted but the pertinent universals, or, to be more precise, the singular exemplifications of the universals.[39]

VI

Remarks on Russell's particulars. Due to his empiricist spirit, Russell became more and more sympathetic to the idea of replacing old substances by bundles of qualities and relations. Well, then the particular must be an abstraction – a *logical fiction* or construction.[40] The standard use of individual variables (usually symbolized by "x", "y", etc.) in logically clarified languages may support this claim, though the values of individual variables depend upon the choice of the universe of discourse, i.e. upon the choice of the individuals (which may or may not be particular objects). At any rate, the particulars considered as logical fictions would delimit bundles of qualities and relations, providing thus for the unity of entities that are made out of such bundles. But these entities would not be identical to the particulars – perhaps it would be better to call them "strings of events" or "relatively isolated systems".[41] Thus particulars, whether they are sense-data, percepts, or whatnot, which were supposed to guarantee our contact with the world would fulfill only the job of "unifiers and limitators". "To be acquainted with a particular" might then mean nothing more than "to be aware of the totality and limitation of the present experience." This would not suffice, however, for knowing *what the particular itself is*. If so, then the outcome would be either agnostic skepticism (perhaps combined with the postulation of a Kantian thing-in-itself), or, as it has been noticed, some sort of a Bergsonian or other

[39] An interesting insight into the intricacies of this problem is to be found in G. E. Moore, "Are the Characteristics of Particular Things Universal or Particular?", in *Philosophical Papers*, Collier Books, New York, 1959, 17 – 31.

[40] This is one of the most central concepts in the entire Russell's philosophy, permeating most of his technical works. See for instance his important article "The Relation of Sense-data to Physics," in *Mysticism and Logic*, chapter viii; also *Logic and Knowledge*, 265, 271f.

[41] Russell fully recognized the category of events, perhaps under Whitehead's influence, and started to use it very heavily in his later philosophical period. The phrase "relatively isolated systems" is taken from his article "On the Notion of Cause," in *Mysticism and Logic*, chapter ix, 186f.

intuition, the results of which may be "unutterable" (for their expression requires the use of propositions, i.e. articulation and description).

VII

Via positiva. If knowledge by description ultimately depends upon knowledge by acquaintance in which the particulars play the key role, human knowledge could proceed in a synthetic way. By virtue of numerous instantiations of the schemata (R1) and (R4), human subject might build solid foundations of empirical knowledge – under the provision that Russell's program discussed above would work. Such a program could have worked if S really acquired indubitable knowledge of *what the particular itself is*, and, by analogy, *what the universal itself is*. Had this been the case, knowledge of facts would have been safely rooted in the strange bedrock of a "Platonic phenomenalism." Russell's brilliant mastery of logical techniques could have further secured that everything should be well with all sorts of complex facts composed ultimately of the atomic facts – the early Wittgensteinian building stones of the world. The failure of the phenomenalistic interpretation of the philosophy of logical atomism foreshadowed the future troubles of the logical empiricists in their search for a secure basis of the empirical knowledge (and, thus, our science). The broken-down protocol sentences or basic statements like "here-now-red patch" share, I think, Russell's difficulties with knowledge by acquaintance. In fact, these difficulties would be there even on a physicalistic basis, due to the claim that S, while being acquainted with a particular, knows *what the particular itself is* independently of knowing anything about its properties, relations, structure, etc. Or does it mean that S recognizes the need for starting with something "primitive", "undefined" that need not (cannot?) be further articulated? But then we are back in some form of knowledge by *intuition* (mystical union).

VIII

Via negativa. Considering our previous remarks, it appears that the other way around – the analytic – is more promising. This is the method which Russell, and other analytic philosophers, actually adopted. Accordingly, our knowledge starts with complex entities – facts and would-be facts – and, with the help of complex propositions expressing them, attempts to arrive at

the foundations: at the ultimate, simple entities,[42] beyond which we do not (cannot?) go. Then knowledge of facts (by description) is actually the point of departure of the cognitive process and knowledge by acquaintance its terminus. Indeed, the simple particulars (and perhaps the simple universals too) might be reached in this process relatively late, as those skeletal entities that are left after the whole flesh was eaten. Through a thorough and systematic analysis of all kinds of complexities, and finally of the atomic facts, we might eventually squeeze their ultimate constituents and components, yet at the high price of losing intelligibility. Is this the ultimate fate of every "superrationalism"? It also seems that while the early Wittgenstein landed on a mystical plane in testing how much language can bear, his teacher and fellow-traveler tacitly established the mystical at the alleged tentacles which were to touch reality

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[42] Russell recognized the relativity of simplicity and thus he was well aware of the problems connected with the notion 'absolutely simple'. See *Logic and Knowledge*, 202, 270, etc.

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