CONSCIOUSNESS AND REFERENCE

BY JOHN CAMPBELL

1. Acquaintance vs. Knowledge of Truths

Suppose your conscious life were surgically excised, but everything else left intact, what would you miss? In this situation you would not have the slightest idea what was going on. You would have no idea what there is in the world around you; what the grounds are of the potentialities and threats are that you are negotiating. Experience of your surroundings provides you with knowledge of what is there: with your initial base of knowledge of what the things are that you are thinking and talking about. But this connection between consciousness of the objects and properties around you, and knowledge of the references of the basic terms you use, has proven difficult to articulate. The connection cannot be recognized so long as you think of consciousness as a kind of glow with which representations are accompanied or enlivened. It is, though, also possible to think of perceptual experience as fundamentally a relation between the subject and the things experienced; and given such a conception, we can make visible the link between consciousness and reference.

Russell was the first to articulate the connection between consciousness and a recognizably modern conception of reference, using his notion of acquaintance. The idea of 'acquaintance' is the idea of a kind of epistemic contact with a thing or property. Many theorists would agree that reference to something requires a particular kind of

epistemic contact with it. Yet you might agree that the notion of 'epistemic contact with a particular' is needed to characterize reference, while arguing that epistemic contact is to be explained as possession of a body of propositional knowledge. Minimally, you might say that what it takes to have epistemic contact with b is this: you must have a piece of propositional knowledge whose content can be specified using a term referring to b, such as 'b'. There are many ways in which to pursue the program of explaining 'epistemic contact with b' in terms of propositional knowledge relating to b. For instance, you might introduce the notion of a 'dossier', as follows. Suppose you have two pieces of knowledge whose contents are given by: 'b is F', and 'c is G'. On the face of it, you are not yet in a position to argue that anything is both F and G, even if b and c are in fact identical. To draw that conclusion, you need a further premise, the identity statement 'b is identical to c'. Suppose, in contrast, that you have two pieces of knowledge, 'b is F', and 'b is G'. Here it looks as though you are in a position immediately to draw the conclusion, 'b is both F and G'. As we might put it, in the second case, but not in the first, you are in a position to trade on the identity of the object referred to in those two pieces of knowledge. You might have a body of information relating to the same object b, and be in a position to trade on the identity of the object referred to in any two of the pieces of knowledge in that body. In such a case, we can say that you have a 'dossier' on the object. So you could expand on the initial characterization of 'epistemic contact with an object' by saying that it requires a dossier of information on it, rather than just a single piece of propositional knowledge. There are a number of conditions you might think it important to impose on the body of information in the dossier. For example, Evans held that the sheer volume of detail is important, as are the reasons why you are interested in

the referent in the first place. Kaplan suggested that a dossier should constitute a major part in a narrative concerning those 'who fill major roles in that *inner story* which consists of all those sentences which [the subject] believes.' There are other distinctions we might apply. The important point about all these variations and refinements is that they are variations and refinements internal to the project of explaining the notion of epistemic contact with an object or property in terms of possession of propositional knowledge about it.

Russell had a dramatic alternative to any such approach. Russell argued that our knowledge of things cannot, in general, be explained in terms of our knowledge of truths. Russell thought that there were two sorts of knowledge: knowledge of truths, and knowledge of things. Knowledge of truths depended on knowledge of things. In particular, it depended on the kind of knowledge of things he called acquaintance:

> Knowledge of things, when it is of the kind we call knowledge by *acquaintance*, is essentially simpler than any knowledge of truths, and logically independent of knowledge of truths, though it would be rash to assume that human beings ever, in fact, have acquaintance with things without at the same time knowing some truth about them.
>
> (Russell 1912, 25)

Knowledge of truths depends on acquaintance with objects. For it is acquaintance with objects or properties that provides our knowledge of reference:

> it is scarcely conceivable that we can make a judgement or entertain a supposition without knowing what it is that we are judging or supposing about. We must attach *some* meaning to the words we use, if we are to speak significantly and not utter mere noise; and the meaning we attach to our words must be something with which we are acquainted.
>
> (Russell 1912, 25)

What the subject is acquainted with fixes the references of simple referring terms, and that reference-fixer is also the basis of the subject's knowledge of truths.

You might try to interpret these remarks in terms of causal chains that fix reference to physical objects. Perhaps those very causal chains are the source of knowledge of truths about the objects. The 'right kind' of causal chain to fix reference would be what Sainsbury (1979), for example, called an 'epistemic chain'. When we ask what an epistemic chain is, the natural answer is that it is one which produces knowledge of truths concerning the object referred to. So the relevant notion of a causal chain is being explained in terms of propositional knowledge. This loses Russell's idea of acquaintance as a knowledge of things that is more fundamental than knowledge of truths.

One way of trying to sustain a causal approach here is to shift away from the focus on proper names, and emphasize the arguably more basic case of demonstratives referring to currently perceived objects. And we could think of epistemic causation not as:

(a) a relation between the object and a body of propositional knowledge,

but rather as:

(b) a relation between the object and a body of non-conceptual contents, of the kind appealed to in scientific analyses of vision.

Since these non-conceptual, perceptual contents will be more basic than propositional knowledge, this approach might seem to give us a way of sustaining the idea of a knowledge of things more basic than knowledge of truths. The first and still the most sustained development of this approach is Evans' *Varieties of Reference*.

This approach deviates from Russell, however, in giving no role to consciousness in providing acquaintance with objects. For Russell, awareness of the object is central to acquaintance. His opening explanation of the notion, in *The Problems of Philosophy*, is this:

> 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 truth.
>
> (Russell 1912, 25)

This idea is lost by an explanation of acquaintance as epistemic causation, where the relata of the causal relation are the thing referred to and a body of non-conceptual

information. There is no reason in principle why non-conceptual information should be conscious; in fact the information-processing contents appealed to by vision scientists are typically remote from consciousness. The point is quite explicit in Evans's development of this line of thought. Consciousness is seen as a epiphenomenon that emerges once the whole apparatus of thought and reference has been imposed on a more primitive information-processing system:

> we arrive at conscious perceptual experience when sensory input is not only connected to behavioural dispositions in the way I have been describing – perhaps in some phylogenetically more ancient part of the brain – but also serves as the input to a thinking, concept-applying and reasoning system; so that the subject's thoughts, plans and deliberations are also systematically dependent on the informational properties of the input. When there is such a further link, we can say that the person, rather than just some part of his brain, receives and possesses the information.
>
> (Evans 1982, 158)

The experiential character of perception plays no role in an account of perception-based reference to objects and properties, on this account. What has been retained from Russell is the idea that the relation that fixes reference is also the ground of knowledge of truths about the object. What has been lost is the idea that it is experience of the object that explains how the thinker knows which thing is in question.

2. Radical Transparency

Philosophers sometimes characterize perceptual experience as if it is a kind of propositional thinking. Just as you characterize the contents of someone's beliefs by specifying a particular collection of propositions they understand, so, on this view, you characterize the contents of someone's visual experiences by specifying a range of propositions they understand, towards which the relevant attitude is not 'believes that …' but now 'has a visual experience as of …'. If you think of visual experience in this way it is hard to see how it could be what provides knowledge of the references of the terms you use. First, experience now seems to presuppose, rather than explaining, your knowledge of reference. To understand those propositions you have to know the references of their constituents. Secondly, it is hard to see how we can hold on to the idea that experience is even relevant to providing knowledge of reference. One can grasp propositions in many ways: by believing them, by desiring that they be true, and so on. Visual experience has now simply been added to the list, as one among many ways in which one can take an attitude towards a proposition. Why vision should be particularly central among those ways seems now to defy explanation. And even if there is something special about vision, it is hard to see why it is specifically experience that is important; presumably one could in principle, on this approach, grasp a proposition as the content of non-conscious vision. Finally, these problems evidently arise because this approach abandons Russell's idea of finding a kind of acquaintance with things that is more fundamental than knowledge of truths.

How should we characterize this non-propositional consciousness of things? Philosophers often suppose that if there are non-propositional elements in perception, they must be 'sensations' caused by the objects around us, 'intrinsic features' of the sensations, 'mental paint' as Harman called it, features with themselves no inherent link to the object. Could we use the idea of non-propositional sensations to explain how experience provides acquaintance with the objects that cause those sensations? One possibility is that the sensation would enter here as the anchor of a definite description such as 'whatever (if anything) caused this sensation'. But this kind of reference could not be fundamental; it depends on a more basic naming of the sensation itself, as 'this sensation'. Moreover, this style of reference does not seem to depend particularly on the subject having experience of the object referred to. For if you are able to frame this kind of description, you presumably will also be able to frame such descriptions as 'whatever (if anything) this sensation causes me to buy', and so on indefinitely. The idea that it is experience of the object that inherently provides acquaintance with that very object has been lost. Finally, the idea anyway seems at odds with what Moore called the 'transparent' character of experience: that when we attend to our experiences, we attend not to what Harman called the 'mental paint' – some intrinsic characteristic of the experience – but rather, to the object itself. You might then say that there are intrinsic aspects of experience, and that they are of the object in virtue of being caused by the object, so that it is the fact of the causal link between the intrinsic aspect of the experience and the object that is important, rather than the subject having managed to frame a description in which reference is made to the intrinsic aspect of the experience. But now it is again hard to see why it should be experience that matters here: if a causal

link from the object to the experience is what is important, why would it not be good enough to have a causal link from the object to some non-conscious aspect of the perception?

Moore is trying to characterize a non-propositional notion of experience of things when he discusses the transparency of experience. He draws a distinction within our ordinary notion of 'having a sensation'. He says that the sensation of blue and the sensation of green are both sensations; yet they are different. What is it that the sensation of blue and the sensation of green have in common? And in what are they different? Moore said that we have to recognize there are two components bundled together in the ordinary notion of 'sensation'. There are:

> in every sensation two distinct terms, (1) 'consciousness,' in respect of which all sensations are alike; and (2) something else in respect of which one sensation differs from another. It will be convenient if I may be allowed to call this second term the 'object' of a sensation: this also without yet attempting to say what I mean by the word.
>
> We have then in every sensation two distinct elements, one which I call consciousness, and another which I call the object of consciousness.
>
> (Moore 1903)

The analysis here does not appeal to the idea of 'mental paint' at all, whether representational or sensational. The idea is that all experiences are the same so far as their intrinsic properties go; they are all acts of consciousness, and it is this aspect of the

experience that eludes introspection. It is for this reason that it is easy to be a materialist and deny the very existence of consciousness:

> [When] we refer to introspection and try to discover what the sensation of blue is, it is very easy to suppose that we have before us only a single term. The term "blue" is easy enough to distinguish, but the other element which I have called "consciousness" -- that which sensation of blue has in common with sensation of green -- is extremely difficult to fix. That many people fail to distinguish it at all is sufficiently shown by the fact that there are materialists. And, in general, that which makes the sensation of blue a mental fact seems to escape us: it seems, if I may use a metaphor, to be transparent -- we look through it and see nothing but the blue ….
>
> (Moore 1903)

In an intriguing discussion of Moore, Van Cleve (in press) puts it very strongly when he says that '*Moore denies that experiences have intrinsic features.* Instead, they owe everything they are to their relation to objects …. Moore's radical view … could perhaps be cited as the explanation of [transparency]: we are not aware of any intrinsic features of experience because there aren't any.' (van Cleve in press). As the above passage makes evident, Moore does think there is something elusive in consciousness: the relation of consciousness itself, which is common to all sensation, that materialists miss. But Moore emphatically does make the point that there is no reason to think there are intrinsic features of experience that differentiate the experience of blue from the

experience of green. There is no need to appeal to either the notion of a representation of color differentiating the experiences, or the notion of an intrinsic sensational feature of the experience differentiating the two color experiences. The objects, blue in one case, green in the other, adequately differentiate the experiences.

The concluding paragraph of Moore's 'Refutation of Idealism' bears is worth quoting quite fully, as it brings out that his case against the idealist uses the point that the objects of awareness are material objects:

> When, therefore, Berkeley supposed that the only thing of which I am directly aware is my own sensations and ideas, he supposed what was false; and when Kant supposed that the objectivity of things in space *consisted* in the fact that they were "Vorstellungen" having to one another different relations from those which the same "Vorstellungen" have to one another in subjective experience, he supposed what was equally false. I am as directly aware of the existence of material things in space as of my own sensations, and *what* I am aware of with regard to each is exactly the same -- namely that in one case the material thing, and in the other case my sensation does really exist. The question requiring to be asked about material things is thus not: What reason have we for supposing that anything exists *corresponding* to our sensations? but: What reason have we for supposing that material things do *not* exist, since *their* existence has precisely the same evidence as that of our sensations? That either exist *may* be false; but if it is a reason for doubting the existence of matter, that it is an inseparable aspect of our experience, the same reasoning will prove conclusively that our experience does

not exist either, since that must also be an inseparable aspect of our experience of *it*.

(Moore 1903)

This notion of Moore's, that we have non-propositional awareness of objects, which may be sensations or physical objects, provides exactly what we need to fill out the view that awareness of objects is what makes thought about them possible. The reason it has to be awareness is that awareness is a generic relation between the thinker and the object: there is no such thing as a particular type of awareness without the object being there to differentiate that exercise of awareness from any other. Since awareness has this relational character, there is no question of being able to substitute for it some other relation that would be 'just as good', which is the problem that comes up if we think of awareness as a kind of monadic glow with which the mental life is enlivened.

3. Partial Awareness

There is some sense in which we typically do not experience all aspects of an object we perceive: experience of the object is in some sense partial. To use Frege's example, you may be in a position to refer to Venus in virtue of awareness of it as you watch the sky towards morning. And you may be in a position to refer to Venus in virtue of awareness of it as you watch the sky in the evening. But you may not yet be in a position to recognize that it is the same thing you have referred to both times. That shows that there

is some sense in which your awareness of the object, on these two occasions, was partial. The point here is not simply that there is some broadly phenomenological difference in your experience on these two occasions. There certainly are broadly phenomenological differences in the way you are aware of the object on these occasions, but some of these differences do not matter for knowledge of reference. For example, as you are watching the sky cloud may brush briefly over the star. There is a phenomenological change, but there may be manifest sameness of object for all that. Similarly for what happens when you move your eyes or head. Indeed, there has to be this kind of object constancy for your experience to be an encounter with physical objects. If with every head turn or movement by an object you lost track of the thing, then you would not have the kind of experience that would sustain reference to a thing at all. But the manifest sameness of the object – our ability to keep track of things – has its limits. And it passes its limit in the case of the Morning Star and the Evening Star: it is not manifest that this is the same object. There is here a difference that is reflected in the inferential behavior of the sign. From 'The Morning Star is F' and 'The Evening Star is G', you cannot immediately infer the conclusion, 'The Morning Star is both F and G'. But given the premises, 'The Morning Star is F' and 'The Morning Star is G', you can immediately trade on identity to conclude, 'The Morning Star is both F and G'. This is a problem for Moore's radical transparency. If your experience of the object is fully characterized simply by saying that we have a generic relation of consciousness holding between you and that thing, then we do not seem to have the resources to explain how there could be different kinds of conscious experience of the thing.

Arguably the same point applies to properties, or at any rate some properties. To

experience the shape of a solid object, you must have some capacity to recognize manifest sameness of shape across movements by you or by the object. Otherwise it is hard to see how you could be said to be encountering the property of three-dimensional shape at all. But this capacity has its limits. Particularly if you consider a large object with a complex shape, it seems entirely possible that you could encounter the shape in one way from one angle, and then, coming upon the object from a quite different direction, be unable to recognize the sameness of shape. You have some ability to keep track of sameness of shape across variation in perceptual presentation, but it has its limits. And this variation in your experience of the property matters, in that it will affect the inferential behavior of the shape concepts you use to report the situation observed on the two encounters. It will affect, for example, whether you can immediately draw conclusions about whether the object has changed shape. Again, this is difficult to reconcile with Moore's radical transparency. If the full characterization of your experience of shape is given by saying that you bear the generic relation of consciousness to a particular three-dimensional shape, then it is not possible for there to be different experiences of the same shape.

This is a fundamental problem. The response usually given in the analytic tradition is to say that when an object is experienced in different ways, this is a matter of different representations being associated with the two ways of experiencing the object. It has proven quite difficult to think of an alternative to this approach. Following hints from Frege, the different representations are usually taken to be different descriptions, or clusters of descriptions. So for example, you might explain the difference between your two encounters with Venus by saying that in the one case, the associated description was,

'the brightest star in the morning sky', and in the second case, the associated description was, 'the brightest star in the evening sky'. The problem being addressed here is to characterize the difference between the consciousness of an object that provides your knowledge of the reference of 'the Morning Star', and the consciousness of an object that provides your knowledge of the reference of 'the Evening Star'. The strategy is to appeal to a difference in the descriptions associated with the consciousness of the object on those two occasions. And in particular, there is a difference in the general terms used in those descriptions: the difference between 'morning' and 'evening'.

As I said, this type of strategy, appealing to differences in the descriptions activated in different moments of awareness of the object, seems compelling to most writers in the analytic tradition who have addressed the problem of informativeness. But the approach cannot be correct. The first difficulty is that, as noted above, the problem also seems to arise for general terms. You can be aware of one and the same property in two quite different ways, so that it is not manifest to you that it is the same property. Suppose we now try to explain how it is that you can be aware of one and the same property in two quite different ways. We can give the answer again that the difference in the two moments of awareness is a matter of different descriptions of the property having been activated. But those descriptions will themselves use general terms. For each such general term, we can ask how awareness provides knowledge of the property for which it stands. But there will again be the possibility of different types of awareness of the property for which the general term stands. So these differences have to be characterized somehow. Somewhere this process will have to bottom out in a characterization of a way of being aware of an object that is not provided by specifying the descriptions activated

in that moment of awareness.

Moreover, this approach takes grasp of predicates to be more primitive than the awareness of objects that provides our knowledge of the references of singular terms. In particular, it supposes that the use of predicates in quantified expressions such as descriptions is more basic than the awareness of objects that provides knowledge of the references of singular terms. The argument of the logical atomists was that a grasp of quantified propositions depends on an understanding of atomic propositions: there must be singular terms as basic as predicates. Suppose we have two such basic singular terms: 'logically proper names'. Suppose these two singular terms refer to the same concrete object, and that you cannot in inference trade on their identity of reference. And suppose that in both cases it is awareness of the object that provides knowledge of reference of the term. There must then be a difference between the awareness that provided knowledge of the reference of the one term and the awareness that provided knowledge of the reference of the other term. But this difference cannot be explained by appealing to different predicates that characterize the two modes of awareness of the object. For we agreed that there are no predicates more primitive than those names. There must, then, be some other difference between the two different ways of experiencing the object.

Finally, we have to bear in mind that there can be differences in one's awareness of an object or property consistently with manifest sameness of the object or property: we do have a capacity to keep track of objects or properties across phenomenological variation in our experience of them. So some phenomenological variation is consistent with manifest sameness of the object. On a descriptivist approach to characterizing the awareness of the object that provides knowledge of the reference of a term, it is hard to

see how to draw the right distinctions here. There must be variation in the associated descriptions, to acknowledge the phenomenological variation associated with turns of the head or momentary occlusion of the object. There must be similarity or some systematic correspondence in the associated descriptions, to underpin the manifest sameness of the object across these variations. It is not easy to see how to specify which similarities of description matter for manifest sameness of reference.

Russell himself developed an alternative approach to the problem. Rather than appealing to a difference in type of representation associated with different ways of experiencing one and the same object, he held that ultimately reference is to objects that we can experience in only one way. So we keep the idea that we should characterize consciousness in Moore's terms, as the holding of a generic relation between the self and an object. But we should restrict the range of the relation. We should keep it restricted to objects of which the subject automatically has comprehensive knowledge. This in effect was the solution adopted by Russell and Moore, when they talked of direct awareness as a relation between the subject and a sense-datum. Even when Moore liberalized the notion to material objects, he tended to talk of such items as 'the front of a chair', of which the subject might be held to have comprehensive knowledge. This kind of solution has not been widely endorsed in the analytical tradition, but I think that it does, in effect, live on in the phenomenological tradition. When theorists talk about 'the ontology of the lived world' of a subject, I think that what they have in mind is an ontology of objects each of which is comprehensively given to the subject, so that issues about partial knowledge or the informativeness of identities simply do not arise within the ontology of the lived world.

The problems here have to do with the difficulty of explaining the relations between these comprehensively known objects and the partially known objects in terms of which we ordinarily think. The 'lived chair' of which we have comprehensive knowledge seems a quite different kind of object from the everyday chair, that has a history unknown to most of its users, and all kinds of forgotten objects under the cushions. The problems of explaining what the 'lived chair' and the ordinary chair have to do with one another are so great that you really may wind up embracing a kind of idealism, and abandoning the ordinary chair altogether.

4. Consciousness as a Three-Place Relation

Intuitively, our problem is that there can be different views of the same object, and this way of putting the problem suggests a solution. We have to factor in the standpoint from which the scene is being observed. We should think of consciousness of the object not as a two-place relation between a person and an object, but as a three-place relation between a person, a standpoint and an object. You always experience an object from a standpoint. And you can experience one and the same object from different standpoints.

You and I might have an argument about the best view to be had of San Francisco. You think the view of the whole peninsula from Twin Peaks can't be beat, I prefer the view from across the bay, of the town's tallest buildings floating above the fog. What notion of a 'view' are we using? What is a view? To characterize a 'view' you say what things are in the scene. And you say from where they are being viewed. This

characterization does not somehow miss out the crucial thing: the 'mental paint' that is induced in the spectator, or the 'representations' the spectator is supposed to form. You have told the whole story about the view when you have specified what is being seen and where it is being seen from. We can think of this kind of characterization as using the three-place relation of experiencing an object from a standpoint that we need in addressing the problem of partial awareness.

The notion of a standpoint must encompass more than merely the position of the observer, but to make explicit the conditions on an account of what is included we have to step back a little. Our aim is to characterize a notion of knowledge of things more fundamental than our knowledge of truths. When you have this knowledge of a thing, that constitutes your knowledge of the reference of a term referring to the thing. The notion of a standpoint comes in because you can have knowledge of one and the same thing from different standpoints. Earlier I remarked that Frege in effect proposed that the issues here could be structured around the notion of informativeness. In the basic cases we are considering, your understanding of two coreferential terms t1 and t2 is provided by your having knowledge of the thing referred to. Suppose your understanding of t1 is provided by your experience of the thing from standpoint X, and your understanding of t2 is also provided by your experience of the thing from standpoint X. That is constitutive of your understanding the identity statement, 't1 is identical to t2' as uninformative; as an instance of the logical law of identity. Understanding the terms in this way, you have the right to trade on identity in inferring from 't1 is F' and 't2 is G', to 'something is both F and G'. In contrast, suppose your experiencing the object from standpoint X provides your understanding of t1, and your experiencing the object from some quite different

standpoint Y provides your understanding of the coreferential term t2. This constitutes your understanding the identity statement, 't1 is identical to t2' as informative; it is not merely an instance of the logical law of identity. You do not have the right to trade on identity in an inference from 't1 is F' and 't2 is G' to 'Something is both F and G'. To reach that conclusion using those premises you have to add a further premise, 't1 is t2'. The points in this paragraph are all laid down in advance of any substantive description of the notion of a 'standpoint'. These points set out the basic conditions that have to be met when we do give a substantive characterization of what it takes to be observing an object from one standpoint or another.

The natural way to begin on a substantive characterization of the notion of a 'standpoint' is to proceed sensory modality by sensory modality. The 'standpoint' from which you are observing an object will in the first instance be given by specifying a particular time and place. But the significance of location for which identities are informative will depend on the specifics of the sensory modality being used. In particular, it will depend on the details of the phenomena of object constancy for the modality.

Suppose you want to characterize the view that someone currently has of the Taj Mahal. We say which thing it is and which person is in question. Then to describe the standpoint explicitly we have to say which sensory modality is involved; and that will determine what further factors we have to fill in. For example, suppose the modality is vision. Then we need, further, position, but also the relative orientations of the viewer and object, how close the viewer is to the object, whether there is anything obstructing the light between them, and so on. In the case of hearing, a rather different set of factors

would be relevant: not just which object was in question, but what sounds it was making, and the obstruction of light would not be to the point, though the obstruction of sound would be. We do not usually spell out all these conditions, though we are perfectly capable of articulating them when they are important in particular cases.

We will have to keep in mind the dynamics of the experience; that experience is typically temporally extended. We should not think of experience of an object over time, as it moves, or as you move around it, as a matter of having a series of momentary views of the thing from different standpoints. It may be that if you move from position S1 to position S2, keeping your eye on the thing, it is manifest in experience that this is one and the same thing: the visual demonstrative t1 that you use at S1 is manifestly referring to the same thing as the visual demonstrative t2 that you use at S2, and the identity, 't1 is t2' is uninformative. Nonetheless, it may also be that if you were placed initially at S1, and then a moment later at S2, you would not be able to formulate such an uninformative identity, because you had not kept your eye on the object in the meantime and so could reasonably wonder whether you were encountering the same object again. The dynamics of experience – which things you are keeping track of over time – have to enter into the characterization of your standpoint on a scene.

As I said, in practice we do not need to make all the relevant parameters here explicit, because we are able to imagine how things are from standpoints other than our current standpoint. In performing this exercise you can use the fact of the similarity of your visual system to the other person's visual system, without having to make explicit what all the relevant points of similarity are. So your knowledge of the other person's

interests and of the scene may be enough to allow you to determine, by imagining the other person's perception, the saliencies of the scene.

In carrying out this exercise of articulating the notion of a standpoint, we show how we can characterize a way of experiencing an object without appealing to either the idea that 'ways' are characterized by associated representations or the idea that 'ways' are characterized by the idiosyncracies of the mental paint involved. Rather than either the idea of an intervening level of mental representation or the idea of an intervening level of mental paint, we can simply appeal to the notion of experience as a three-place relation between an object, an experiencer and a standpoint. In this way we can do justice to Russell's notion of acquaintance as a knowledge of things more basic than knowledge of truths.

5. Revelation

Why should we pursue Russell's idea that consciousness, or experience of the world, has a role to play in explaining our knowledge of reference? Intuitively, experience of things provides us with grasp of what they are. Experience of the world reveals something to us, provides us with some understanding of what is there.

It is not difficult to make sense of the idea of an animal that can be said to represent its environment, even without ascribing consciousness to the animal – in the case of honeybees, for example, you might feel quite sure that they are representing the locations of targets to one another yet not confident about whether they are conscious.

Such an animal is certainly representing the affordances provided by the objects around it. Without consciousness, though, it is hard to see how the animal could have any grasp of the categorical objects and properties that ground those affordances (Campbell 2002). This intuitive idea seems naturally applicable to demonstratives referring to perceived concrete things, such as 'that woman' or 'that tree': experience of the things provides knowledge of what is being talked about. The idea also seems appealing when we consider the names of colors: knowledge of the references of color terms seems to be provided by experience of the colors.

Russell provided a canonical text that dominates current discussion of the idea that acquaintance reveals some aspect of the world to us. However he does not focus on the notion of a categorical property. I want to close by remarking that despite the frequency with which it is cited, this passage is currently quite misunderstood; and anyhow it does not provide the most promising way of pursuing the idea that acquaintance reveals what is out there. Russell said:

> The particular shade of colour that I am seeing … may have many things to be said about it…. But such statements, though they make me know truths about the colour, do not make me know the colour itself any better than I did before: so far as concerns 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 is even theoretically possible.
>
> (Russell 1912, 47)

This passage was given a brief but influential gloss by Johnston:

> Russell's view here is that one naturally does take and should take one's visual experience as of, e.g. a canary yellow surface, as completely revealing the intrinsic nature of canary yellow, so that canary yellow is counted as having just those essential and intrinsic features which are evident in an experience as of canary yellow.
>
> (Johnston 1997, 138-139)

The idea is now interpreted to be that experience reveals something of the nature or essence of the world to us. It is in this strong sense that experience provides us with knowledge of what we are referring to; it provides us with knowledge of the nature or essence of the thing. Most writers have taken it that the idea here is not just that if X is the nature, or essence, of the referent, then experience provides you with knowledge of X. Rather, experience has to provide you with knowledge that X is the nature, or essence, of the referent.

To review the situation. Russell argued that our knowledge of truths depends on something more fundamental, our knowledge of things. Knowledge of things is provided by acquaintance with – that is, direct awareness of – those things. Currently, many writers are trying to explain the intuitive notion of direct awareness here as a matter of the subject having propositional knowledge of the nature, or essence, of the referent. This way of explaining the idea immediately has far-reaching implications. For example, in a careful recent discussion, Byrne and Hilbert (in press) propose that the doctrine of

Revelation, as applied to color terms, should be regarded as the conjunction of two theses. First, that if it is in the nature of the colors that p, then after careful reflection on color experience it seems to be in the nature of the colors that p. Secondly, if, after careful reflection on color experience, it seems to be in the nature of the colors that p, then it is in the nature of the colors that p. As Byrne and Hilbert point out, this doctrine immediately threatens physicalism about the colors. If it is in the nature of the colors to be physical reflectance types, for instance, then by this doctrine of Revelation it should seem after careful reflection on color experience that colors are physical reflectance types. But no such thing is true; you could reflect on color experience as carefully as you liked for as long as you liked without it seeming that colors had any such physical nature. Similarly, Lewis considers formulating Revelation as a thesis about color experiences, or perhaps about the colors themselves. The idea here is that Revelation is the doctrine that each type of color experience has its own essence, E, and that having the experience provides you with propositional knowledge to the effect that this type of experience has the essence E:

> Some philosophers think that each sort of colour experience has a simple, ineffable unique essence that is instantly revealed to everyone who has that experience. When I was shown the crayon mark and told that it was magenta (and I believed what I was told, and it was true) straightway I knew all there is to know about experience of magenta. I knew that it was the experience with the simple, ineffable, unique essence E. And that is all there is to it. (Or perhaps it is the color magenta itself that has the simple, ineffable, unique essence that is instantly

> revealed to each beholder, or anyway to each beholder with normal visual capacities in normal light.)
>
> (Lewis 1997, 338).

And as Lewis remarks, this view is inconsistent with materialism, at any rate when materialism is formulated as the view that color experiences and colors (and, presumably, everything else) have physical essences (1997, 338).

The trouble with this whole exegetical line is that Russell's comment is being interpreted as a remark about the relation between experience and propositional knowledge of the essences or natures of colors. This misses the point that Russell's remark was about knowledge of things, rather than knowledge of truths. Acquaintance with the colors is not a matter of possessing propositional knowledge about them. It is a matter of having knowledge of the thing, not knowledge of truths about natures or essences. To say that knowledge of the thing is complete is not of itself to deny the possibility of there being further propositional knowledge to be had to the effect that this thing has certain essential features. These further essential features, of which we have propositional knowledge, may indeed be physical, or of some sort quite unsuspected by the naïve observer.

Russell's remark about completeness of knowledge should not be read as relating to propositional knowledge of essences; the remark is, rather, his response to the problem of partial awareness. The idea is that the colors are such that there is nothing partial about our awareness of them; so we can characterize acquaintance with them fully merely by saying which colors are being encountered. There are not, on Russell's view, different

ways of being acquainted with one and the same color. The point is rather that the knowledge of the thing is complete; there is no further, non-propositional knowledge of the thing to be had, once you have encountered it in experience. When put generally, this leads to the doctrine of special objects of awareness, which can be encountered in only one way. The advantage of this doctrine of special objects is that it lets us keep the idea of consciousness as a generic two-place relation, so the qualitative character of a conscious experience can be fully specified merely by specifying the object. But as we have seen, we do not need to hold on to the idea of consciousness as a two-place relation: we can keep the fundamental insight yet think of acquaintance as a three-place relation between a self, a standpoint, and the object.

REFERENCES

Byrne, Alex and David R. Hilbert. 2006. 'Color Primitivism', in Ralph Schumacher (ed.), *Perspectives on Color Perception* (Dordrecht: Kluwer).

Evans, Gareth. 1982. *The Varieties of Reference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Frege, Gottlob. 1952. 'On Sense and Reference'. In P.T. Geach and Max Black (eds.), *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*, 57-78. (Oxford: Blackwell).

Harman, Gilbert. 1990. 'The Intrinsic Quality of Experience'. In James Tomberlin (ed.), *Philosophical Perspectives* 4, *Action Theory and Philosophy of Mind*, 31-52. (Atascadero: Ridgeview).

Johnston, Mark. 1997. 'How to Speak of the Colors'. In Alex Byrne and David R. Hilbert (eds.), *Readings on Color. Volume 1: The Philosophy of Color*, 137-176.

Kaplan, David. 1971. 'Quantifying In'. In Leonard Linsky (ed.), *Reference and Modality* 112-144 (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Lewis, David. 1997. 'Naming the Colors', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 75, 325-

342.

Moore, G. E. 1903. 'The Refutation of Idealism'. *Mind* 12, 433-453.

Russell, Bertrand. 1912. *The Problems of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Sainsbury, Mark. 1979. *Russell*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul).

Van Cleve, James. In press. 'Troubles for Radical Transparency'.