Received: 15 September 2020 | Revised: 7 November 2020 | Accepted: 8 December 2020

DOI: 10.1111/phc3.12727

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Acquaintance

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Abstract

To be acquainted with something (in the philosophical sense of "acquainted" discussed here) is to be directly aware of it. The idea that we are acquainted with certain things we experience has been discussed throughout the history of Western Philosophy, but in the early 20th century it gained especially focused attention among analytic philosophers who drew their inspiration from Bertrand Russell's work on acquaintance. Since then, many philosophers—particularly those working on self-knowledge or perception—have used the notion of acquaintance to explain various facts about human experience and knowledge. In this paper, I offer an overview of this work, with particular focus on the resurgent literature on acquaintance in contemporary analytic philosophy. After more fully explaining what acquaintance is (or is supposed to be), I describe some reasons for thinking that we are indeed acquainted with certain things we experience, and then I survey some of the facts about experience and knowledge that acquaintance may help explain.

1 | INTRODUCTION

This paper is about *acquaintance*—an especially direct mental relation that we (allegedly) bear to certain things we experience, such as colors, smells, tastes, pains, and itches. This philosophical notion has received renewed interest and use of late, but it has also invited misunderstanding and skepticism. My aim in this paper is to dispel some of that misunderstanding and, hopefully, some of the skepticism too.

Most contemporary philosophers who appeal to acquaintance draw their inspiration from Bertrand Russell (1911, 1912), who characterizes acquaintance as *direct awareness*. This differs from the ordinary sense of "acquaintance," as in "Hector and Paula are acquaintances" (or related knowledge attributions, such as "Hector knows Paula"). For one may be acquainted with something in that sense without being directly aware of it.

For example, my neighbor and I are acquaintances even at moments when I am not directly aware of her. So Russell's sense of "acquaintance" is best thought of as a philosophical term of art.

To get a better grip on this sense of "acquaintance," start by noticing that the way we are aware of certain things we experience—like redness that one might see or the dull pain of a headache—is different from other ways we might be said to be aware of things. For example, I might say that I am aware of the solution to some math problem; or, if I get pulled over by a cop, I might say that I am aware of my rights. But in these cases, unlike cases in which I experience redness or pain, it does not necessarily seem like something is *there*—"the solution" or "my rights"—present to my mind, that I am currently conscious of. So my "awareness" of these things seems different from my awareness of certain things I experience, like redness or pain.

And it is not *just* that in experience there is something of which I am aware. Suppose I see an actor on TV. In this case, I am aware of something—i.e., the actor—but there is something mediating my awareness of him—i.e., an image on a screen. So I am not *directly* aware of him. Which seems different from my awareness of, say, a headache. When I have a headache, it seems like I am directly aware of the pain itself.

You might even think that this difference extends further and distinguishes awareness of headaches and the like from awareness of any external, nonmental entity. You might think that even if I met the actor in person—saw him, shook his hand, talked to him, etc.—that would be different from the way I am aware of my headache. You might think, and more than a few philosophers have thought, that I am only indirectly aware of the actor in virtue of being aware of my experiences—my sensations—of him. If that is right, then my awareness of my experiences—such as my headache—really is different from my awareness of other things.

This apparent difference between direct awareness in experience and other cases of awareness gets at the core idea behind the philosophical notion of acquaintance. It also provides some intuitive motivation for introducing it. But there is a lot more to say about acquaintance—about what it is, why we should believe in it, its significance (in terms of generating knowledge, e.g.), and what it helps explain. In what follows, I will further elucidate the philosophical sense of "acquaintance" and survey its uses in philosophy with the aim of clarifying, demystifying, and perhaps also broadening the appeal of this polarizing notion.

2 | WHAT IS ACQUAINTANCE?

2.1 | Russellian acquaintance

The philosophical notion of acquaintance is old. It, or something very much like it, shows up throughout the history of Western Philosophy—going back at least to Plato.[1] However, as I said, most contemporary acquaintance theorists draw their inspiration from Russell (1911, 1912).[2] So his work is a good place to start.

Here is how Russell (1911) describes acquaintance:

> I say that I am *acquainted* with an object when I have a direct cognitive relation to that object, that is, when I am directly aware of the object itself. When I speak of a cognitive relation here, I do not mean the sort of relation which constitutes judgment, but the sort which constitutes presentation (p. 108).

A year later, Russell (1912) says something similar:

> 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 (p. 78).

For Russell, acquaintance is *direct awareness*—the direct "presentation" of objects and properties to one's mind (1911, p. 108).[3] He distinguishes acquaintance from "knowledge by description." We know things by description on

his view when we are aware of them as falling under some concept or description, such as "The King of Jordan," "the actor in that movie," or "that thing over there." According to Russell (1912, p. 73), knowledge by description requires some background knowledge of truths. For example, in order to know of an actor as "that actor," I must know certain truths (or propositions) about what actors are. Acquaintance, in contrast, does not require any background knowledge of truths. It is not itself constituted by beliefs or judgments, nor does it require belief, judgment, or conceptualization.

Consider an example. I am looking at the actor on TV—Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, let's say. He is wearing a skintight, army green T-shirt (as he does). I am aware of that color as "green"—as satisfying that description or concept. But I am also aware of the *very specific* color that I see (even "army green" is not specific enough), for which I have no concept. According to Russell, I am acquainted with that color. I have no concept for it, and my awareness of it does not require that I have beliefs about it. I am just directly aware of it.

But how could I be directly aware of the color of The Rock's shirt if I am only seeing his image on a screen? Well, according to Russell, I am not directly aware of The Rock or his shirt; in fact, I am not even acquainted with his image on the screen. According to Russell, what I am acquainted with when I see that greenness is a *sense datum*—an object that is generated by my mind due to its interaction with the world and that really is that specific shade of green. Russell claims that we are also acquainted with some other things—e.g., our awareness of sense data, memories, universals, and (perhaps) "the self." However, in the experiential cases that we are dealing with here and that motivate most of the recent interest in acquaintance, Russell holds that it is sense data that we are acquainted with.

And, for Russell, this acquaintance is not just some idle mental relation; it has real *epistemic* import. In fact, for Russell, acquaintance is, all by itself, a distinctive kind of knowledge. It does not just give rise to or justify knowledge. It does not require beliefs. It is nonpropositional. According to Russell, it is its own kind of knowledge.[4]

Important knowledge too. Russell attributes several key epistemic features to acquaintance. He says this knowledge is especially *complete*. When experiencing a color, for example, Russell (1912) says, "I know the color perfectly and completely when I see it, and no further knowledge of it itself is even theoretically possible" (p. 47).[5] He also says this knowledge is especially *secure*. He allows that we can (and sometimes do) make false *judgments* about objects of acquaintance, but he maintains that acquaintance with something provides knowledge *of* it that is indubitable. Finally, Russell holds that acquaintance plays a significant role in generating other knowledge. In fact, Russell (1912) says, "All our knowledge … rests upon acquaintance as its foundation" (p. 48).[6] Russell is commonly held to be a classical foundationalist who maintains that all knowledge ultimately rests on a foundation of noninferential knowledge—namely, knowledge by acquaintance.[7]

2.2 | Contemporary acquaintance

Most contemporary philosophers who appeal to acquaintance do so in the context of talking about either self-knowledge—that is, knowledge of our own mental states—or perceptual experience.[8] There is some variation in how these philosophers understand and use the notion of acquaintance (as we will see), but the core idea behind Russell's notion of acquaintance and the general uses to which he put it remain alive and well.[9]

Again, that core idea is one of *direct awareness*. That we are aware of certain things we experience in an especially immediate, especially direct way remains a starting point for recent thinking about acquaintance.

Some contemporary philosophers construe acquaintance as a *primitive*, *sui generis* relation that admits of no informative analysis or reduction.[10] But this is not the only way to understand it. Indeed, you might think of "direct awareness" as a potential analysis of "acquaintance." This analysis may not be fully satisfying, since "awareness" itself begs for further analysis.[11] However, unlike "acquaintance" (in our sense), "awareness" is an ordinary-language term. Also, nothing obviously *precludes* a further analysis of it.[12] So acquaintance may not be, or at least need not be, the occult, unexplained notion some allege it to be (more on this later).[13]

Still, even if we settle on "direct awareness," complications remain. For example, contemporary philosophers differ on what it takes for awareness to be *direct*. Some contend that we are directly aware of ordinary external objects that we perceive (e.g., chairs, rocks, and people), because, on their view, our awareness of them is not mediated by awareness of any other thing.[14] However, this is a less strict sense of "direct awareness" than what Russell and some recent acquaintance theorists have in mind. For our awareness of external objects, even if it does not involve awareness of other things, is clearly mediated by *something*—at least by the *causal processes* involved in perception (photons striking objects and retinas, nerves being excited, neurons firing, etc.). In contrast, acquaintance theorists about self-knowledge typically maintain that what is distinctive about our awareness of our *experiences*, and what yields some of the epistemic benefits that they and Russell talk about, is that this awareness is *completely unmediated*—that it involves direct awareness of those experiences *themselves*, not in virtue of awareness of any other thing, nor via any causal process, inference, other knowledge, or, indeed, any other intermediary.[15] According to these philosophers, while causal processes may give rise to or ground our experiences, nothing mediates our awareness of them.

So contemporary acquaintance theorists differ on what it takes to be directly aware of something. And so, as a result, they also differ on what we are acquainted with. Acquaintance theorists about self-knowledge say we are acquainted with our experiences, which they then variously elaborate as acquaintance with phenomenal properties, character, facts, states, or events. Direct realists about perception, on the other hand, claim that we are acquainted with ordinary external objects (e.g., chairs, rocks, and people) and/or their sensible qualities (e.g., shapes, colors, and textures).[16] So part of the variation in contemporary views on what we are acquainted with corresponds to how strictly "direct" is understood by those who use it.

But, at heart, this difference is not really about how philosophers understand a word. More substantive disagreement regarding the objects of acquaintance stems from disagreement regarding the metaphysics of experience. Russell was a sense-datum theorist. So he held that we are acquainted with sense data. But nowadays most philosophers reject the sense-datum theory. One alternative held by some acquaintance theorists is *naïve realism*. Naïve realists agree with Russell and other sense-datum theorists that experience is fundamentally a relation of awareness that subjects bear to objects, but they disagree on what those objects are—instead of saying they are sense data, naïve realists say experience (normal perceptual experience, at least) is fundamentally awareness of ordinary external objects. So they say that what we are most directly aware of are those objects and their properties, even if it is not in the strictest sense of "direct."[17]

Another view about the metaphysics of experience held by some acquaintance theorists is *intentionalism* (or representationalism).[18] Intentionalists say experience is fundamentally constituted, not by awareness of ordinary objects or sense data, but by our *representing* objects or properties. Some acquaintance-friendly intentionalists still say that in normal perceptual experience we are directly aware of ordinary external objects and properties.[19] But others deny that we are acquainted with such objects (or sense data) and instead say that perception acquaints us with *universals*—e.g., redness, roundness, and softness—that we represent.[20,21]

Acquaintance theorists about self-knowledge are not uniformly allied with any particular theory of the metaphysics of experience. However, they do construe the objects of acquaintance as features, not of the external world, but of our *experiences*. Phenomenal redness, the feeling of suede, smells, pains, itches, and the like—they say these are inner features of our experiences. So, on their view, acquaintance is achieved, not by *perceiving* external things, but by *introspecting* internal things—states, properties, events, or facts.[22]

These differences are also relevant to the purported *epistemic* significance of acquaintance. Acquaintance theorists about self-knowledge, who again maintain that we are directly aware of our experiences in a very strict sense of "direct," tend to follow Russell in arguing that our knowledge of our experiences is especially secure. Like Russell, they do not maintain that all of our judgments about our experiences are infallible. But they do tend to argue that, in some cases, our judgments about our experiences are especially secure—e.g., that they are certain or beyond doubt, more strongly justified than any (nonintrospective) empirical judgments, immune to skepticism, or even totally infallible in a limited range of cases.[23]

These lofty epistemic claims are arguably not applicable to our knowledge of external objects. For, given that our awareness of them is at least mediated by the causal processes involved in ordinary perception—processes which could possibly be tampered with by evil demons, brain envatters, or what have you—our judgments about them are not immune to skepticism, beyond doubt, infallible, or as epistemically secure as possible.[24] Thus, it is no surprise that those in the philosophy of perception who appeal to acquaintance typically refrain from making the lofty epistemic claims commonly found in the self-knowledge literature.

Which is not to say that they make *no* substantial epistemic claims. Acquaintance theorists across subfields defend various Russellian theses about the epistemic role of acquaintance—including the foundationalist thesis that our knowledge (at least much of it) rests on a foundation of noninferential knowledge by acquaintance.[25]

With that said, contemporary takes on this (and related) claims differ to varying extents from Russell's take on them. For example, as we saw, Russell holds acquaintance to be a kind of knowledge all on its own. So, on his view, the ultimate foundation for all knowledge is acquaintance *itself*. There has been some renewed interest in and defense of the claim that acquaintance is itself a kind of knowledge.[26] However, the dominant approach to the epistemic significance of acquaintance in the last several decades is one whereby foundational knowledge is constituted by *beliefs* derived from and/or justified by acquaintance.

Contemporary acquaintance theorists also tend to part company with Russell regarding his claim that acquaintance yields knowledge that is *complete* or *comprehensive*. Some do claim that acquaintance affords us direct access to the *essence* or *intrinsic features* of phenomenal properties.[27] But they typically do not claim that the resulting knowledge is complete or that no further knowledge of those properties is possible.

This illustrates a broader point, which is that accepting the core thesis of acquaintance—i.e., that we are directly aware of certain things we experience—does not require commitment to various controversial theses that Russell held or that are sometimes associated with acquaintance. Another illustration of this point concerns the sense-datum theory—as we saw, acquaintance theorists need not accept that view. The same goes for the view that acquaintance is primitive and sui generis, as well as another view often associated with acquaintance: mind-body dualism. Russell was a dualist, and some others do appeal to acquaintance in defense of dualism.[28] But others appeal to acquaintance to defend physicalism *against* dualist arguments.[29]

Accepting the core thesis of acquaintance also does not entail commitment to various of Russell's epistemological views. It is true that acquaintance is strongly associated with certain views, such as foundationalism. But one need not commit to foundationalism to appeal to acquaintance. It is also true that acquaintance theorists about self-knowledge often claim that our knowledge of our own experiences is especially secure. But these claims—even the most extreme among them—should not be conflated (as they sometimes are) with claims such as that *all* of our beliefs about our experiences are infallible, that we are *omniscient* about our minds, or that we can be certain about *nonexperiential* mental states. These views are sometimes associated with the acquaintance theory—often as entryways to criticism. But, not only are they separable from the core thesis of acquaintance, few (if any) contemporary acquaintance theorists accept them.

Now, you might think that while, yes, these views may be logically independent of the core thesis of acquaintance, without them, there is not much to the acquaintance theory. You might think that while separating acquaintance from primitivity, the sense-datum theory, or dualism does make it more palatable, it also makes it more bland—it ceases to have the flavor and sustain the views that acquaintance theorists want it to.

There is something to this thought. After all, if one is not using the notion of acquaintance to defend *any* of the above (or related) theses, then why use it? Certainly many of the recent philosophical debates and controversies about acquaintance center on claims that go beyond the core thesis that we are directly aware of certain things we experience. But just keep in mind that there are many potential uses for the notion of acquaintance, and one need not put it to *all* of those uses, or accept how it is used in *every* instance, to get something out of it. Indeed, as we will see later (§4), the core thesis of acquaintance, by itself, does a lot of important philosophical work.

3 | DOES ACQUAINTANCE EXIST?

Now that we know what acquaintance *is* (or is supposed to be), we might ask: Does it *exist*? In other words, are we actually acquainted with anything? In this section, I will survey some reasons for thinking that we are.

One important justification for appealing to acquaintance that I will not discuss in this section—that I will save for the next section—is that doing so is theoretically fruitful because it helps explain certain facts about human experience and/or knowledge. The notion of acquaintance features in various theories that many find attractive. And if any one of those theories is vindicated, so too is acquaintance. But, again, I will save this consideration for the next section and focus now on more direct arguments for acquaintance.

Some philosophers argue that acquaintance exists—and even that it is a type of knowledge—by appealing to ordinary language. For example, Matthew Benton (2017) argues that semantic differences between "S knows NP" (where "NP" is a noun phrase, like "Paula" or "The Windy City") and "S knows that φ" suggest that there is a nonpropositional, acquaintance-like kind of knowledge (p. 2). He also points out that many languages have a distinct sense of "know" that refers to something like acquaintance.[30] However, other philosophers point out that this sense of "know" does not line up very well with Russell's sense of "acquaintance."[31] And, indeed, if I am right that our Russellian sense of "acquaintance" is best thought of as a philosophical term of art, then considerations from ordinary language are unlikely to be very useful in defense of acquaintance.

Another argument for acquaintance that is unlikely to move its critics is based on *introspection*. Some report finding it obvious when they introspect that they are directly aware of certain things they experience. In fact, to some, this is a powerful consideration.[32] However, others are skeptical of introspective evidence.[33] And, even if they are not, critics of acquaintance presumably do not find it introspectively obvious that they are acquainted with things they experience.[34] So, again, this point is unlikely to move many to the acquaintance camp.

So we need to look elsewhere. One argument for acquaintance can be found in Russell (1912), though its lineage goes back at least to Descartes (1641/1993). It involves a *test* for acquaintance—what I have called "The Doubt Test" (Duncan, 2015, 2017). Russell (1912) introduces this test by considering a table in front of him (p. 74). He says he can doubt that this table exists, but he cannot doubt that the *appearance* of it (sense data, on his view) exists. So he says he is acquainted with this appearance, but not the table. This suggests a test: If one cannot doubt the existence of something that one seems to be aware of, then one is acquainted with it. [Correction added on March 10, 2021, after first online publication: Text error in the sentence "It involves a test for acquaintance—what I have called "The Doubt Test" (Duncan, 2015, 2017)." has been corrected.]

Many acquaintance-friendly philosophers use this test.[35] I take its rationale to be something like this. If I am aware of some x, but only indirectly—by way of some distinct y that indicates x's existence—then I can doubt that y is a faithful witness (so to speak) to x's existence. For example, if I see an actor on TV, I can doubt that he exists by noting that he might have died in a freak gym accident since filming. I can even doubt that the external objects around me exist by supposing that an evil demon is intervening in the causal processes that give rise to my perceptual experiences. So if I *cannot* doubt that x exists, then I must be *directly* aware of x itself rather than some potentially false or misleading presentation of x.

There is plenty more to say about this test.[36] But, for now, just note that if The Doubt Test *is* in fact a good test for acquaintance, and if anything *does* pass it—i.e., if there is any item of awareness that one cannot doubt exists—then one is acquainted with something. So this is one potential argument for acquaintance.

A second Russellian argument for acquaintance is a *regress argument* (Russell, 1911, pp. 119–120; 127).[37] It goes roughly like this. If I am not directly aware of anything, then when I am aware of some x, it is in virtue of being aware of some distinct y. And since I am not directly aware of y either, and presumably not aware of y in virtue of being aware of x, there must be some distinct z in virtue of which I am aware of y. But then there has to be something else in virtue of which I am aware of z … and so on. Thus, if I am not directly aware of anything, then, whenever I am aware of something, I am the subject of infinite awarenesses of infinitely many things. But that is

absurd—I am not aware of infinitely many things. So I must be directly aware of something.[38] And, thus, we have a second potential argument for acquaintance.

More recently, Adam Pautz (2017) defends what he calls "The Significance Argument" against reductive theories of consciousness and for the claim that we bear an irreducible acquaintance relation to sensible qualities. Pautz introduces several cases in which conscious subjects bear various reductive "tracking" relations to external features of their environment, and he argues that these relations cannot account for the significance of consciousness—for how consciousness and nonconsciousness are different, and the way in which subjects have thoughts and reasons to believe certain things about what they experience. Pautz concludes that, to explain these ways in which consciousness is significant, we must posit an irreducible acquaintance relation.

Those are some reasons to believe in acquaintance. As for reasons *against* believing in it, resistance typically comes in one of two forms. The first is resistance to believing in acquaintance conceived of as a primitive, irreducible, sui generis, and/or nonphysical relation. But, as I have said, these conceptions of acquaintance are optional.[39] The second kind of resistance to acquaintance comes in the form of denying that it can explain what it is supposed to explain within specific theories about experience or knowledge.[40] This naturally raises the question: What is acquaintance supposed to explain? So that is where I will turn now.

4 | WHAT DOES ACQUAINTANCE EXPLAIN?

Some are wary of acquaintance because they doubt it has explanatory value. That is, they think acquaintance is a worthwhile posit only if it helps explain something, and they doubt that it does. So it is worth taking a closer look at the explanatory potential of acquaintance. Here are some things that it may help explain.

Differences in awareness. Acquaintance may help explain how our awareness of our experiences is different from our awareness of legal rights, actors on TV, and maybe even external objects around us. Acquaintance is necessarily awareness of some entity. This makes it different from awareness of legal rights (at least sometimes). Acquaintance is also direct. This makes it different from awareness of someone on TV or perhaps even in person.[41] So if we are indeed acquainted with our experiences but not these other things, then this may help explain how our awareness of our experiences differs from our awareness of these other things.

Self-knowledge. Acquaintance may help explain how we know about our experiences without, say, getting an MRI or observing our own behavior. Many acquaintance theorists hold that our first-personal knowledge of our experiences (at least some of it) derives from introspective acquaintance with them.[42] Many also hold that this explains why our epistemic access to our experiences is, as many philosophers accept, *privileged* and *peculiar*—*privileged* in that our beliefs about our own experiences are especially likely to amount to knowledge and/or are often especially strongly justified, and *peculiar* in that we can come to know about our own experiences in a way that is different from how we come to know about other things.[43] Direct awareness of a thing *itself* rather than via some potentially misleading intermediary is, all else being equal, a good thing, epistemically. Indeed, if various acquaintance theorists are right, then it is a *very* good thing—it can ground very secure self-knowledge. And if we are not acquainted with other things like we are acquainted with our own experiences, as you might think, then this route to self-knowledge is indeed unique.

Foundational knowledge. Foundationalists, who believe that our knowledge and justification must ultimately bottom out with some bedrock foundational knowledge,[44] often appeal to acquaintance to explain where that foundation is. On one view, it is constituted by knowledge derived from our acquaintance with (i) experiential facts, (ii) our thoughts about those facts, and (iii) the correspondence between the two.[45] On another view, acquaintance with phenomenal properties allows us to form foundational beliefs that contain demonstrative phenomenal concepts that refer directly to those phenomenal properties.[46] On yet another view—Russell's view—acquaintance is *itself* foundational knowledge. These views potentially explain where, and how, our knowledge bottoms out.[47,48]

Two of the most prominent objections to the acquaintance theory—the problem of the speckled hen and Sellars' dilemma—are usually construed as challenges to the claim that we have foundational, noninferential

knowledge based on acquaintance. The first of these objections stems from an imaginary case in which someone sees 48 speckles on a hen. This person is acquainted with all 48 of those speckles (or so the case is described), and yet she does not know, and would not be justified in believing, that she sees exactly 48 speckles. If that is right, then acquaintance with a fact, by itself, is insufficient to justify believing it. And if that is right, then, according to various objectors, acquaintance cannot serve as a true foundation for our knowledge.[49] The second objection—Sellars' dilemma—goes like this: Acquaintance either requires prior thought/conceptualization, or it does not. If it does, then it is not foundational. If it does not, then it cannot justify beliefs. Either way, acquaintance cannot serve as the foundation for our knowledge.[50] There have been many responses to these two objections.[51] But the debates they have engendered are ongoing.

Subjectivity. Acquaintance may also help explain the *subjectivity* of experience. We each experience things from a perspective or point of view; there is something it is like *for a subject* to undergo an experience. According to many philosophers, this fact is manifest in consciousness itself—in its phenomenology. This is sometimes called the "for-me-ness," "mineness," or "subjectivity" of consciousness. And some philosophers appeal to acquaintance to explain it. Some explain it by arguing that consciousness always (perhaps necessarily) includes acquaintance with the self; others explain it in terms of experiences (not selves) being self-acquainted.[52] These views potentially explain the phenomenological manifestation of an experiential subject or owner—someone (or something) that is undergoing each experience.

Other facts. The above are some facts that acquaintance may help explain. Clearly, the core thesis of acquaintance—that we are directly aware of certain things we experience—has the potential to be explanatorily fruitful by itself. But now if one goes *beyond* the core thesis of acquaintance, and adds further claims about the nature of acquaintance—about what acquaintance is—endorsed by Russell or other acquaintance theorists, then there are other facts that acquaintance may also help explain. For example, Pautz (2017), who accepts that acquaintance is a primitive, sui generis relation, argues that this further claim about acquaintance helps explain why consciousness is significant in certain ways.[53] Or if one accepts Russell's view that acquaintance is itself a kind of knowledge, then acquaintance has the potential to help explain further facts about the epistemic significance of experience, interpersonal knowledge, reasoning with perceptual experiences, and more (see Duncan, 2020). So while the core thesis of acquaintance is explanatorily fruitful all on its own, yet more explanatory potential resides with extensions of this thesis.

Of course, each of the above explanations is controversial. You might think that some of them fail. Maybe even all of them. But just note that to argue that acquaintance fails to explain what it is supposed to explain requires engaging in a substantive, first-order debate. And to conclude that acquaintance fails to explain what it is supposed to explain is not to conclude—and does not imply—that the notion of acquaintance is inherently defective, anti-explanatory, or problematic in some other entry-level way. Acquaintance has an extensive job description. And, as such, it deserves the continued employment that it has been getting.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to Brie Gertler, Chris Hill, Harold Langsam, Colin McLear, Adam Pautz, Tomoji Shogenji, and Donovan Wishon for very helpful feedback on this paper.

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ENDNOTES

[1] For discussion of how acquaintance appears in Plato's *Theaetetus*, see Bluck (1963), Burnyeat (1990, p. 75, 161), and Chappell (2019). For discussion of acquaintance in Plato's *Republic*, see Smith (1979). The notion of acquaintance may also be found in the work of the Cyrenaics (see O'Keefe, 2011), Leibniz (see Sosa, 2003a, 2003b), Descartes (see Fumerton, 2019), Berkeley (see Brewer, 2011), Reid (see Van Cleve, 2015), Kant (see Gomes, 2017; McLear, 2016),

Husserl (see Smith, 2019), Brentano (see Kriegel, 2018), James (see Milkov, 2001; Raleigh, 2019), Meinong (see Milkov, 2001), and Frege (see Makin, 2000). Milkov (2001) contends that Russell's notion of acquaintance was especially strongly influenced by Grote (1865), James (1890), and Meinong (1902). Raleigh (2019), on the other hand, points to the influence of Russell's advisor, James Ward, who in turn was influenced by Kant. At any rate, after Russell, the notion of acquaintance was taken up by a variety of analytic philosophers, such as Lewis (1946), Price (1932), and Chisholm (1957). For brief historical overviews, see Milkov (2001) and Raleigh (2019).

[2] All references to Russell in what follows are to Russell (1911, 1912). So I will drop the dates unless I am referring to some specific passage.

[3] Some philosophers emphasize that acquaintance (both for Russell and others) is a "genuine" or "real" relation, meaning that it cannot obtain without both of its relata—i.e., the subject and the object of acquaintance—existing (see, e.g., Fumerton, 2019, p. 247; Hasan, 2013a; Hasan & Fumerton, 2019; Raleigh, 2019; Martin, 2020). On the other hand, BonJour (2003a, p. 75) seems to think of acquaintance as an *intrinsic* feature of mental states (also see Chisholm, 1989).

[4] Actually, Russell makes two distinctions here. He first distinguishes between two general kinds of knowledge: knowledge of *truths* and knowledge of *things*. Knowledge of *truths* is propositional knowledge—the kind of knowledge that contemporary philosophers tend to focus on. Knowledge of *things*, on the other hand, comes in two forms (as described above): knowledge by *acquaintance* and knowledge by *description*.

[5] For recent discussions of what exactly Russell means by this, see Proops (2014) and Wishon (2017, 2018).

[6] He even goes so far as to say that we can only *understand* propositions if they are wholly made up of constituents that we are acquainted with (see Russell, 1912, p. 58). Although I will not discuss this claim at length in what follows, some version of it remains influential today (see fn. 8).

[7] For further exegesis of Russell's views about acquaintance, see Eames (1969), Baldwin (2003), Proops (2014), Wishon (2017, 2018), and Wishon and Linsky (2015).

[8] There is also an ongoing debate about whether singular reference (especially in thought) requires acquaintance with the objects of reference (see, e.g., Brewer, 1999; Campbell, 2002; Dickie, 2015; Evans, 1982, p. 65; Jeshion, 2010; Lewis, 1983; Manley & Hawthorne, 2012; McDowell, 1986). This idea does have a Russellian heritage. However, the way "acquaintance" is typically used in contemporary debates—as a relation whose extension includes various kinds of indirect causal or informational links with a thing (see, e.g., Jeshion, 2010, p. 109)—is not of a piece with the stricter "direct awareness" notion of acquaintance introduced above, which is the notion used by contemporary philosophers discussing self-knowledge or perception.

[9] Contemporary acquaintance theorists—i.e., those who appeal to the philosophical notion of acquaintance in a substantial and positive way—include Balog (2012, 2019), Bigelow and Pargetter (1990, 2006), BonJour (2001, 2003a), Brewer (2004, 2011, 2019), Campbell (2002, 2009), Chalmers (1996, 2003, 2007, 2010), Coleman (2019), DePoe (2011, 2012, 2018), Dickie (2010), Dickinson (2019), Duncan (2015, 2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2020, forthcoming), Fales (1996), Fish (2009), Fumerton (1995, 2001, 2005, 2019), Gertler (2001, 2011, 2012), Giustina (forthcoming), Goff (2015), Graham and Horgan (2000), Hasan (2011, 2013a, 2013b), Hellie (2007, 2010), Howell (2013), Levine (2006, 2008, 2010, 2019a, 2019b), Lund (1994, 2005, 2014), McDowell (1986), McGinn (1996, 2008), McGrew (1995, 1999), Moser (1989, 2009), Nida-Rümelin (1995, 1998, 2007), Pautz (2007, 2017), Pitt (2004, 2011, forthcoming), Smith (1989, 2019), Stoutenburg (forthcoming), Strawson (2009, 2017), Taylor (2015), Travis (2013), Tye (2009), Williford (2015, 2019), and Wishon (2012). Some other philosophers do not use the term "acquaintance" (at least not much) but substantially and positively appeal to a notion of awareness or experience in ways that are very similar to how others appeal to acquaintance. They include Alston (1986, 1991), Bourget (2010, 2019), Feldman (2004), Hopp (2011), Horgan and Kriegel (2007), Johnston (2004), Langsam (1997, 2002, 2011, 2017), Logue (2012a, 2012b), Martin (2002, 2004, 2006), Pryor (2005), Putnam (1999), Robinson (1994), Speaks (2015), and Woodling (2016).

[10] See, for example, Brewer (2011, p. 94), Fales (1996, p. 147–148), Fish (2009, p. 14–15, fn. 19), Fumerton (1995, 2001, 2019), Goff (2015), Levine (2019a, 2019b), and Pautz (2017).

[11] You might think "direct" also requires further analysis. Some even argue that, in this context, the term "direct" is so fraught that it ought to be abandoned (see, e.g., Martin, 2007). For what it's worth, while I agree that further elucidation of "direct" is needed—elucidation that will depend on, among other things, one's view of the metaphysics of experience (more on this below)—I also think that the idea of direct awareness is a pretty intuitive starting point for talking about acquaintance, as illustrated by the kind of cases I introduced in the introduction. I also think it is a plausible way to characterize the gravitational center point around which recent appeals to acquaintance in the self-knowledge and philosophy of perception literatures revolve.

[12] Gertler (2001) chooses "attention" as her primitive, thus leaving room for an analysis of "acquaintance" partly in terms of "attention" (also see Campbell, 2019; Dickie, 2010; Pitt, 2004, p. 9; Taylor, 2015). Others attempt to reduce "awareness" or "consciousness" to a kind of *tracking* relation (see, e.g., Dretske, 1995; Tye, 1995). However, Pautz (2017) argues that "acquaintance" cannot be analyzed or reduced in this way (also see Chalmers, 2010, Ch. 11; Levine, 2019b).

[13] For proposals on how to "naturalize" acquaintance, see Balog (2012) and Coleman (2019). For discussions (and criticisms) of the prospects of naturalizing acquaintance, see Frankish (2019), Hill (forthcoming, p. 3), Levine (2019b), and Pautz (2017).

[14] See, for example, Brewer (2004, 2011, 2019), Campbell (2002), Dickie (2010), Fiocco (2017), Fish (2009), Hellie (2010), Johnston (2004, 2006), Langsam (2011, 2017), Logue (2012a, 2012b), Maloney (2018), Martin (2002, 2004, 2006), McDowell (1986, 1994), Noë (2004, 2012), and Smith (1989, 2019).

[15] Acquaintance theorists about self-knowledge include Balog (2012, 2019), BonJour (2001, 2003a), Chalmers (1996, 2003, 2007, 2010), Coleman (2019), Duncan (2015, 2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2020, forthcoming), Fales (1996), Fumerton (1995, 2001, 2019), Gertler (2001, 2011, 2012), Giustina (forthcoming), Goff (2015), Hasan (2011, 2013a, 2013b), Howell (2013), Levine (2006, 2008, 2010, 2019a, 2019b), McGrew (1995, 1999), Moser (1989, 2009), Nida-Rümelin (1995, 1998, 2007), Pitt (2004, 2011), Stoutenburg (forthcoming), Strawson (2009, 2017), Taylor (2015), and Wishon (2012, 2018).

[16] As you may recall, Russell claims that we are also acquainted with universals, memories, and (perhaps) the self. The main focus of this paper is acquaintance with items of experience in self-knowledge or perception, since that is what most contemporary acquaintance theorists focus on. However, there has been some recent interest in other potential objects of acquaintance. For example, Billon (2017), Duncan (2015, 2018a), Kripke (2011), Lund (2005, 2014), and Strawson (2017) argue that we are acquainted with the self (also see Williford (2015, 2019) and Zahavi (2006) for related views). Gallagher and Zahavi (2012, ch. 9) discuss the view, held by some phenomenologists, that we are acquainted with others' minds (also see Kremer, 2015). Martin (2001, 2015, 2019) and Faria (2010) discuss acquaintance with memories. Some intentionalists argue that acquaintance in self-knowledge and/or perception is acquaintance with universals (more on this below). And Bengson (2015) argues that we are immediately aware of intuitions.

[17] Contemporary naïve realists who appeal to acquaintance (or something like it) include Brewer (2004, 2011, 2019), Campbell (2002, 2009), Fiocco (2017), Hellie (2010, 2013), Langsam (2011, 2017), Logue (2012a, 2012b), Martin (2002, 2004, 2006), McDowell (1986, 1994), Smith (1989, 2019), and Travis (2013).

[18] Some acquaintance theorists insist that acquaintance is not, and indeed could not be—perhaps even by definition—intentional or representational (see, e.g., BonJour, 2003a; Brewer, 2019; Campbell, 2014; Fumerton, 1995, p. 74; Hasan & Fumerton, 2019; also see Raleigh, 2019, pp. 8–9, for discussion). Nonetheless, the acquaintance theory is increasingly popular among intentionalists and intentionalism is increasingly popular among acquaintance theorists. For discussion of how intentionalists can square their view with the acquaintance theory, see Pautz (2017; forthcoming, §5.4).

[19] See, for example, Cutter (2018), Dretske (2003, p. 73), Maloney (2018), and Tye (2009).

[20] This includes Chalmers (2013) and Pautz (2007). Dretske (2003), Forrest (2005), Foster (2000), and Johnston (2004) also say that perceptual experience involves awareness of universals (at least sometimes), but Foster (2000), Forrest (2005), and Johnston (2004) are not intentionalists, and I am not sure that I would call Dretske (2003) "acquaintance-friendly." One challenge for the view that experience is constituted by acquaintance with universals is explaining why, in perceptual experience, things seem *present*. Unlike mental representation in thought or belief, perceptual representations (even hallucinations) come with a sense of object presence—things really seem to be *there*, present to the senses, available for attention and demonstration. But it is hard to make sense of this if perceptual representation is just acquaintance with universals, rather than actually instantiated properties. See Johnston (2004) and Pautz (2007) for some discussion.

[21] In addition to the aforementioned views about the metaphysics of experience, some point out that the acquaintance theory is compatible with a version of *adverbialism* whereby we are acquainted with *ways of experiencing*—e.g., experiencing redly, experiencing painfully, etc. (see, e.g., Fumerton, 1985; McGrew, 1995; Chalmers, 2010).

[22] Chalmers' (2013) and Wishon's (2012) views are a bit more complicated. Chalmers (2013) holds that we are acquainted with phenomenal property instances (in introspection) *and also* universals (in perception). Wishon (2012) holds that we are acquainted with both our experiences and ordinary external objects.

[23] For the claim that some of our judgments about our experiences are certain or beyond doubt, see Duncan (2015, 2017), Gertler (2001, 2012), Goff (2015), and McGrew (1995, 1999). For the claim that some are more strongly justified than any nonintrospective empirical judgments, see Gertler (2012). For the claim that some are immune to skepticism, see Chalmers (1996, 2003, 2010), Duncan (2015, 2017), and Goff (2015). For the claim that some are totally infallible, see Balog (2012), Chalmers (2003), Coleman (2019), Duncan (2018b), Fumerton (1995, 2001), McGrew (1995, 1999), and Stoutenburg (forthcoming). On the other hand, some acquaintance theorists maintain that even some foundational beliefs may be fallible (see, e.g., Bonjour, 2003a, 2003b; Fales, 1996; Fumerton, 1995; Moser, 1989).

[24] This point is made by, among others, Chalmers (1996, 2010), Duncan (2017), Gertler (2012), and Goff (2015).

[25] Acquaintance theorists who defend some version of foundationalism include Bonjour (2001, 2003a), Chalmers (2003, 2010), Duncan (2018b), Fales (1996), Feldman (2004), Fumerton (1995, 2001, 2019), Gertler (2012), Hasan (2011, 2013a, 2013b), Horgan and Kriegel (2007), Langsam (2002, 2011), McGrew (1995, 1999), Moser (1989), Stoutenburg (forthcoming), and Taylor (2015).

[26] This includes Alston (1986), Campbell (2014, p. 13–14), Coleman (2019), Conee (1994), Duncan (2020, forthcoming), McGinn (2008), Pitt (forthcoming), Strawson (2017), Tye (2009), and Grzankowski and Tye (2019). For criticism of this view, see Crane (2012) and Farkas (2019). Some other philosophers defend something that is at least similar to the view that acquaintance is a kind of knowledge. For example, Eleanor Stump (2010) and Lorraine Keller (2018) talk about "Franciscan knowledge," which is similar to knowledge by acquaintance. M. Oreste Fiocco (2017) defends a Brentano-inspired account of something like knowledge by acquaintance. Matthew Benton (2017) talks about interpersonal knowledge, which is nonpropositional and may be a species of knowledge by acquaintance. And Frank Hofmann (2014) argues that perceptual experience is "non-conceptual knowledge," which is nondoxastic (though propositional).

[27] For the claim that acquaintance gives us direct access to the essence of phenomenal properties, see Balog (2012, 2019), Chalmers (1996, 2003, 2007), Gertler (2007), Goff (2015), and Nida-Rümelin (2007). For the claim that it gives us direct access to the intrinsic features of phenomenal properties, see BonJour (2001) and Chalmers (1996, 2010).

[28] They include Chalmers (1996, 2003, 2004, 2010), Fumerton (2013), Gertler (1999, 2019), Goff (2015), Langsam (2011), Nida-Rümelin (1995, 1998), and Pautz (2017).

[29] Specifically, Frank Jackson's (1982) knowledge argument. Philosophers who appeal to acquaintance to resist this argument include Balog (2012), Bigelow and Pargetter (1990, 2006), Churchland (1985, 1989), Conee (1994), Grzankowski and Tye (2019), Howell (2013), McGinn (2008, fn. 5), and Tye (2009). For some other acquaintance-friendly discussions of this debate, see Graham and Horgan (2000) and Livingston (2013).

[30] McGinn (2008) and Tye (2009) also point this out. Iaquinto and Spolaore (2019) appeal to similar ordinary-language considerations to motivate introducing a "logic of knowledge of acquaintance." However, these philosophers run the risk—and, I think, sometimes fall prey to the risk—of conflating "acquaintance" in the ordinary sense of the term (e.g., "Hector and Paula are acquaintances") with Russell's technical sense of "acquaintance."

[31] See, for example, Crane (2012) and Farkas (2019).

[32] Though there is disagreement about what introspection acquaints us with. Acquaintance theorists about self-knowledge think it is features of experience itself; direct realists think it is sensible qualities of external objects. For arguments for acquaintance based on introspection (whether it is acquaintance with experiences or external objects), see Chalmers (1996), Gertler (2012), Goff (2015), Langsam (2000, 2011), Martin (2002, 2004), and Strawson (2017). An argument that is related to (if not a more nuanced version of) the argument from introspection comes from Chalmers (2010), who argues that we may *infer* an acquaintance relation "to give a unified account of the distinctive conceptual and epistemic character that we have reason to believe is present in the phenomenal domain" (p. 287; also see Goff [2015]).

[33] A lot of this skepticism is driven by empirical work that purportedly casts doubt on the reliability of introspection (for representative discussions of this work, see Carruthers (2011), Schwitzgebel (2008), and Wilson (2002)). Some have also developed nonempirical arguments with similar conclusions (see, e.g., Williamson, 2000, Ch. 4).

[34] These critics need not deny, and typically do not deny, that we are aware of things we experience. They just deny that we are *acquainted*—i.e., *directly* aware—of them. This is a common view about our awareness of perceptual objects, and some accept a parallel view about introspection. For example, inner-sense theorists (e.g., Armstrong, 1968; Dretske, 1994; Lycan, 1996) claim that introspection is akin to perception in that our awareness of our mental states is mediated by a contingent, causal process.

[35] Fumerton (2005), who is among those who use The Doubt Test, speaks to the history of the test as well as to its connection to Descartes, saying, "… many classical foundationalists sought to identify the objects of direct acquaintance by stripping from experience all that is clearly not before consciousness. One does this through something resembling a Cartesian method of doubt" (p. 123; see also Gertler, 2011, Ch. 4; Fumerton, 2019). These foundationalists include Descartes (1641/1993) and Malebranche (1674/1997). More recent users of the test include Russell (1912), Price (1932), Lewis (1946), Chisholm (1957, Ch. 5), BonJour (1999), Duncan (2015, 2017), Gertler (2012, p. 104–105), Balog (2012, p. 23), Feldman (2004), Fumerton (2005), and Chalmers (1996, Ch. 5).

[36] Here are just a few more details: First, The Doubt Test is a *first-personal* test for acquaintance—I can use it to determine whether *I* am acquainted with something, and you can use it to determine whether *you* are acquainted with something, but we cannot use it on behalf of each other. Second, The Doubt Test is exclusively concerned with one's ability to doubt the existence of something that one is, or seems to be, *aware of*. So it does not concern one's ability to doubt the truth of some proposition that one inferred from indubitable premises, for example. Finally, as for what it means to be able/unable to doubt that some x exists, I prefer to think of it as *immunity to skepticism* (which is an epistemic (vs. psychological) sense of "doubt"). The idea is this: If, given one's seeming awareness of x, one can rule out all skeptical scenarios in which x does not exist, then one cannot doubt (or is certain of) x's existence.

[37] This argument is different from the well-known regress argument about *justification*, which I will bring up later.

[38] Notice that this argument only supports the claim that I am directly aware of something in the less strict sense of "direct" mentioned above whereby one is directly aware of some x if and only if one is aware of x and not in virtue of being aware of some distinct y. It does not support the claim that I am directly aware of something in the stricter sense of "direct" used by acquaintance theorists about self-knowledge, because it does not rule out the possibility that my

awareness "bottoms out" with awareness that is not mediated by awareness of something else but that is mediated by, say, a causal process (see Duncan (2017) for further discussion of this point and this argument more generally).

[39] This resistance is the sort that one often hears in conversation (at least in my experience). In print, it often comes in the form of puzzlement over what acquaintance is or could be (see, e.g., Dennett, 2002, p. 229; Frankish, 2019, §6; Knowles, 2019, p. 177, 183; Plantinga, 2001; Pollock, 2001; Poston, 2007, p. 336), a complaint about acquaintance being non-naturalistic (see, e.g., Frankish, 2019, §6; Hill, forthcoming, p. 3), a worry about acquaintance as primitive not doing any explanatory work (see, e.g., Hill, 2014, Ch. 11) or being out of step with vision science (see, e.g., Hill, forthcoming, p. 3; Williamson, 2013, p. 3), or hesitance to use such a mysterious notion (see, e.g., Kriegel, 2009, p. 112). Kriegel (2009) develops his worry into an argument against acquaintance—an argument based on denying that there are *any* basic factive mental relations like acquaintance (though, in more recent work, Kriegel (2018) is more amenable to acquaintance).

[40] This includes the most famous objections to the acquaintance theory—Sellars' dilemma and the problem of the speckled hen (which I will discuss below). These are not objections to the claim that we are acquainted with something. Rather, they are objections to claims about what acquaintance can do in theories about justification and knowledge.

[41] Fumerton (1995, 2001) argues that acquaintance also helps to explain the fact that sometimes we are *not* aware of our experiences (see also Moser, 1989, p. 78). For example, you may feel pain and initially be aware of it but then get distracted and cease to be aware of it until later when you are no longer distracted and become aware of it again. The pain is there throughout, but your awareness of it is not (or so the argument goes). This suggests that there is a relation of awareness that we sometimes, but not always, bear to our experiences. And, according to Fumerton, acquaintance helps explain this. For we can understand the case just described as one where, due to your shifting attention, you are only intermittently acquainted with your pain. With that said, other philosophers—including friends of acquaintance—seem to deny that one can have an experience without being aware of it (see, e.g., BonJour, 2003a; Chalmers, 2010, p. 291).

[42] Recently some acquaintance theorists have appealed to this claim to rebut illusionism about consciousness and address the "meta-problem" of consciousness—that is, the problem of explaining why people believe that the hard problem of consciousness is hard (see, e.g., Balog, 2020; Chalmers, 2018; Levine, 2019a). According to these philosophers, our acquaintance with our experiences explains both how we know that consciousness is not an illusion and why people believe that the hard problem is especially hard.

[43] This terminology is Byrne's (2005). But the same idea can be found in and defended by acquaintance theorists such as Balog (2012), BonJour (2001, 2003a), Chalmers (1996, 2003, 2010), Duncan (2015, 2017, 2018a, 2018b), Gertler (2001, 2011, 2012), Goff (2015), Howell (2013), and Fumerton (1995). For some recent, influential objections to acquaintance theorists' claims about privileged access, see Bayne (2001), Carruthers (2011), Schwitzgebel (2008), and Williamson (2000, Ch. 4). Also, Chalmers (2013, p. 351–352) raises an interesting and underexplored puzzle regarding the claim that acquaintance with a phenomenal property instance can ground certainty or immunity to doubt that it is instantiated. He starts by imagining a world in which we are acquainted in the strictest sense with sensible qualities (e.g., colors, shapes, and textures) instantiated in external objects. He then asks whether, in this world, our acquaintance with sensible qualities would give us certainty that they are instantiated. If the answer is no, then either these fictional experiences are phenomenally different from normal experiences (which seems unmotivated) or experiential acquaintance with a property (in any case) does not, by itself, ground certainty that it is instantiated. If the answer is yes, then strict acquaintance "carries no extra epistemological powers" relative to normal perceptual awareness, since the fictional experiences are supposed to be phenomenally the same as normal perceptual experiences (p. 351). Pautz (2011, p. 394–395) also raises a version of this puzzle.

[44] Here I am alluding to the famous regress argument about justification that is sometimes used to motivate foundationalism (this argument is different from the Russellian regress argument I gave in the previous section). The argument goes roughly like this: If there is no foundation for our knowledge—no noninferentially justified "stopping point"—then, for any of our beliefs to be justified, they would have to be supported by an infinite chain of justifiers; there is no such infinite chain; yet our beliefs are justified; therefore, there must be a foundation for our knowledge. Versions of this argument can be found throughout the history of Western Philosophy, going back at least to Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*, I.3 (see Hasan and Fumerton (2018) for an overview). More recent versions of it are discussed by, among others, BonJour (2003a, §1.2), Fumerton (1995, Ch. 3), Hasan and Fumerton (2018, 2019), and Pryor (2005). Bergmann (2006, §1) appeals to a similar argument to criticize epistemic internalism (which many classical foundationalists accept). See DePoe (2012) and Hasan (2011) for acquaintance-friendly responses.

[45] See, for example, BonJour (2003a), Fumerton (1995, 2001), and Moser (1989).

[46] See, for example, Balog (2012), Chalmers (2003. 2010), Duncan (2018b), Gertler (2001, 2012), Giustina (forthcoming), McGrew (1995, 1999), and Nida-Rümelin (1995).

[47] Many of those who are interested in foundational knowledge are of course also interested in how this knowledge supports—yields, gives rise to, generates, justifies—other knowledge, including knowledge of the external world. See

BonJour (2003a), Chalmers (2003, 2010), DePoe (2018), Duncan (2018a, 2018b, 2020), Fumerton (2015), Hasan (2017), Hopp (2011), and Moser (1989) for examples of how that might go. Critics of acquaintance theorists' approaches to explaining foundational knowledge include Ballantyne (2012), BonJour (1978, 1985), Davidson (1983), Huemer (2006, 2007), Markie (2009), McDowell (1994), Plantinga (2001), Pollock (2001), Poston (2010), Sellars (1963), Sosa (2003a, 2003b), Tucker (2016), and Williams (2005).

[48] An alternative to thinking about foundational knowledge as knowledge of one's own experiences (as most foundationalists believe) is to think of our most basic perceptual knowledge along naïve realist lines as involving direct awareness of the external world. This, in turn, may be used to help explain how we know about the external world and thus where external-world skepticism goes wrong (see, e.g., Campbell, 2002; Langsam, 2002, 2011; Martin, 2002; McDowell, 1994).

[49] Chisholm (1942) attributes this problem to Gilbert Ryle. Also see Sosa (2003a, 2003b), Poston (2007), and Markie (2009) for prominent renditions of the problem.

[50] This objection is defended most famously by Sellars (1963). But it is also stated and developed in particularly influential ways by BonJour (1978, 1985), Davidson (1983), and McDowell (1994).

[51] For some acquaintance theorists' responses to the problem of the speckled hen, see BonJour (2003b), Chalmers (2010, p. 88), Duncan (2020), Fantl and Howell (2003), Feldman (2004), and Fumerton (2005). For some acquaintance theorists' responses to Sellars' Dilemma, see BonJour (2003a), Chalmers (2010, Ch. 4), Fumerton (1995, p. 75), Hasan (2013b), Moser (1989), and Pryor (2005).

[52] For recent defense of the view that we are acquainted with ourselves, see Billon (2017), Duncan (2015, 2018a), Kripke (2011), and Strawson (2017). For recent defense of the view that experiences bear the acquaintance relation to themselves, see Williford (2015, 2019) and Zahavi (2006).

[53] Relatedly, some appeal to acquaintance (or something like it) to help explain reference (especially in thought) to objects (see Brewer, 1999; Campbell, 2002; Lewis, 1983; McDowell, 1986), the nature of thought in general (see, e.g., Fumerton, 2019), or a priori knowledge (see Bealer, 1982, Ch. 8; Bonjour, 1998, Ch. 6; Chalmers, 2010; Fumerton, 2019).

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How to cite this article: Duncan M. Acquaintance. *Philosophy Compass*. 2021;16:e12727. https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12727