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The History of Russell's Concepts »Sense-Data« and »Knowledge by Acquaintance«

I. »Sense-data«

A. Russell's Bradleyan Problem

Despite all his substantial differences with Bradley, Russell's »main problem« throughout his career — both in *Various Notes on Mathematical Philosophy* (1896/98) and in *Logical Positivism* (1950) — was Bradleyan: How to combine appearance and reality, logic and »data« (a concept defined in the beginning of the next section). His philosophical dream was to obtain »a chemical union between [logical] categories and sense«.[1]

The task of combining logic and data was the driving problem of both his theory of denoting, developed in Chapter 5 of *The Principles of Mathematics* (1903), as well as of its refined version in the theory of descriptions, developed in *On Denoting* (1905). Both theories can be seen as an attempt to fuse logic and matter, introducing chunks of reality into logically organized propositions.[2] Russell made this latter understanding explicit in the paper *Meinong's Theory of Complexes and Assumptions* (1904), in which it is stated that »the object of a presentation is the actual external object itself, and not any part of the presentation«.[3] As we are going to see in what follows, these chunks of reality, presented in logic, were the prototype of Russell's second conception of sense-data.

The novelty of the 1905 theory, when we compare it with theory of denotation, consists, above all, in concentrating attention on how we understand these realistic building blocks of the proposition. Its specific thesis is that we know a considerable part of them by direct »acquaintance«.

Failing to apprehend the »chemical« necessity of connecting logic with data, many authors incorrectly assume that there is nothing that renders Russell's decision to combine the theory of descriptions with sense-data inevitable.[4] Cor-

[1] Bertrand Russell: Various Notes on Mathematical Philosophy. In: The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell. Vol. 2, ed. by Nicholas Griffin and Albert C. Lewis (London 1990) 24. Towards the end of his career, Russell believed this task to have been resolved by the logical positivists, who »are enabled to combine mathematics with empiricism«. See B. Russell: Logical Positivism. In: Logic and Knowledge, ed. by Robert Charles Marsh (London 1956) 367.

[2] See on this interpretation Nikolay Milkov: The Varieties of Understanding: English Philosophy Since 1898. Vol. 2 (Frankfurt a.M. 1997) 263 ff.

[3] B. Russell: Meinong's Theory of Complexes and Assumptions. In: Essays in Analysis, ed. by Douglas Lackey (New York 1973) 33.

[4] See David Pears: Bertrand Russell and the British Tradition in Philosophy (London 1967) 58.

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respondingly misunderstood was the »principle of acquaintance«. Thus, MARK SAINSBURY recommended »the following maxim in expounding and criticizing Russell's philosophy: whenever possible, attempt to defend Russell's doctrines independently of the principle of acquaintance«.[5]

B. Bradley's Data

After Russell finished writing *An Essay on the Foundations of Geometry* in 1896, he came, in accordance with his *Tiergarten*-project for a »dialectical transition« from more fundamental to more peripheral sciences, to physics or philosophy of matter. This was necessary because of the assumption, in which Russell followed BRADLEY, that »geometry [is] impossible without moving matter«.[6] Matter adds the notion of *substance* to geometry, and the latter is impossible without the assumption of substances.

Substance, in turn, makes possible the further transition from geometry to psychology (philosophy of mind).[7] All these considerations brought Russell to BRADLEY's concept of »data«, which he transformed (why, we shall see in a moment) into *sense*-data.

In his first papers Russell defined *immediate data* as »continua«, and opposed them to *concepts*. In January 1898, he noted that immediate data cannot be put next to concepts, or »logical categories«, which are investigated by »pure logic«.[8]

These remarks of Russell brought out two important moments.

a) Data cannot be directly expressed in logic. In this point, Russell followed BRADLEY's understanding of data. In *The Principles of Logic*, the latter opposed data to logical premises. Since unstructured, BRADLEY's data were always to be accompanied by premises, or connectives, with the help of which they can form »logical constructions« (another term Russell adopted from BRADLEY); otherwise, the data »consisted in unrefined sensuous material«.[9] Only now, being fixed in logical constructions, can data enter logic.

b) BRADLEY considered data to be »particulars«. Further, in his view, »the particular is atomic. It excludes all difference«.[10] This explains why particulars, among them also phenomena, are not substances (individuals). Substances, or individuals,

[5] MARK R. SAINSBURY: Russell (London 1979) 32.

[6] B. RUSSELL: Various Notes on Mathematical Philosophy, loc. cit. [n. 1] 12.

[7] That psychical ideas investigated in »a physical statistics and dynamics [...] admit of a mathematical treatment« was accepted around 1880 by RUSSELL's teacher JAMES WARD, see JAMES WARD: A Study of Kant (Cambridge 1922) 71. This conception can be seen as one of the theoretical prerequisite of the concept »sense-data«.

[8] B. RUSSELL: Various Notes on Mathematical Philosophy, loc. cit. [n. 1] 24.

[9] FRANCIS HERBERT BRADLEY: Principles of Logic. Vol. 1 (Oxford ²1922) 257.

[10] Ibid. 187. This is another source of the Russellian penchant for atomism.

which build up matter, are the universals, not the particulars. BRADLEY's conclusion was that »analytical judgements of sense are all false«.[11]

C. Russell's First Theory of Sense-Data and its Downfall

In his writings from 1896/98, Russell agreed with BRADLEY in asserting that data are somewhat inferior to logic. Indeed, data are particulars, or »concrete indefinables«. This explains why one »abstract indefinable«, or universal (»red« or »hot«), can appear in many data.[12]

At the same time, however, he made an important correction to BRADLEY. Russell started to discriminate between data of inner and of outer sense, the status of the data of outer sense being more privileged than the status of the data of inner sense. More precisely, he started to believe that despite being continua, outer data can be apprehended as substances, or individuals.[13] This can be done with the help of the dialectical category of »quantity«, which is defined as »a range of attributes (i. e. properties or relations), all of the same kind, additively and ordinally related to one another«.[14] This uniformity of the attributes of outer sense makes it possible to denote their continua with one a term. Russell thus made data and logic coherent — with the help of dialectic.

This new approach to data was first expressed in Russell's definition of matter from 1896: »Matter is that, in the data of the outer sense, which can be regarded, with less contradiction than any other sensational datum, as logical subject, or as *substance*«;[15] and from 1897: »Matter is the *logical subject* of assertion in all knowledge derived from such *immediate data* as appear under the form of space. It thus includes all immediate data, except such as given by the ›inner sense‹«.[16]

Apparently, Russell's motive in championing outer sense at the cost of inner sense was his affection for the philosophy of the British empiricists. There are many cryptic indications of this. Thus, in 1928 Russell, speaking of GEORGE EDWARD MOORE and himself at the end of the nineteenth century, told VIRGINIA

[11] Ibid. 93.

[12] See B. RUSSELL: An Analysis of Mathematical Reasoning. In: The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell. Vol. 2, loc. cit. [n. 1] 164.

[13] In contrast to this interpretation, NICHOLAS GRIFFIN is adamant that »Russell [of this period] did not regard the discrete things on which pure number depends as given in experience, but as intellectual constructions«, see N. GRIFFIN: Russell's Idealist Apprenticeship (Oxford 1991) 252.

[14] JOEL MICHELL: Bertrand Russell's 1897 Critique of the Traditional Theory of Measurement. In: Synthese 110 (1997) 257.

[15] B. RUSSELL: Various Notes on Mathematical Philosophy, loc. cit. [n. 1] 14.

[16] B. RUSSELL: On the Conception of Matter in Mixed Mathematics. In: The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell. Vol. 2, loc. cit. [n. 1] 86; italics mine.

WOOLF: »We believed in [GEORGE] BERKELEY«.[17] As a matter of fact, the concept of »external sense« was often discussed by the British empiricists, e.g. in JOHN LOCKE's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.[18]

In connection with these considerations, it is important to point out that the beginning of the realistic revolt of MOORE and Russell against British Neo-Hegelianism is to be dated much earlier than 1898. It is to be traced instead to their first acceptance of the outer data theory. According to this understanding, as developed in MOORE's paper *What is Matter?* (1 June 1895), we know nothing immediately but our outer perceptions, which are objective. This is the »world of colours and sounds, figures and notions [...], the manifold, which it, this spirit, unifies«.[19]

D. Prehistory of the Term

The first actual use of the term »sense-data« in Russell's writings, one not found in the works of BRADLEY, was made in *On Some Difficulties of Continuous Quantity* (1896).[20] The term »sense-data« as such, however, did not originate with Russell. »It is most likely that Russell absorbed it from reading [WILLIAM] JAMES«[21] — that master of a fresh turn of phrase. JAMES used the term for the first time in 1890 in *The Principles of Psychology*.[22]

Another use of the term occurred in the newly published edition of JOHN LOCKE's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1894), in which ALEXANDER CAMPBELL FRASER also spoke of »sense-data«.[23]

The term »sense-data«, however, was used before both WILLIAM JAMES and FRASER by JOHN VENN in 1889.[24] Even before that, the term can be traced to JOSIAH ROYCE's paper *Mind and Reality* published in 1882.[25] ROYCE also employed the term later.[26]

Often the roots of the term are sought in the tradition of the British empiricists, »where in place of ›sense-data‹, related expressions were used, such as

[17] VIRGINIA WOOLF: The Diary of Virginia Woolf, ed. by ANNE OLIVER BELL. Vol. 2 (London 1977) 294.

[18] JOHN LOCKE: Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Book II, Chapter I, § 4.

[19] PAUL LEVY: Moore (London 1979) 162.

[20] See B. RUSSELL: On Some Difficulties of Continuous Quantity. In: The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell. Vol. 2, loc. cit. [n. 1] 48.

[21] ROLAND HALL: The Term »Sense-Datum«. In: Mind 73 (1964) 130.

[22] See WILLIAM JAMES: The Principles of Psychology. Vol. 2 (New York ²1950) 146, 184, and 620.

[23] See J. LOCKE: Essay Concerning Human Understanding, ed. by ALEXANDER CAMPBELL FRASER. Vol. 1 (Oxford ⁴²1894) 108.

[24] See JOHN VENN: The Principles of Empirical or Inductive Logic (London 1889) 150.

[25] See JOSIAH ROYCE: Mind and Reality. In: Mind (Old Series) 7 (1882) 43–4, 53.

[26] See, for example, J. ROYCE: The Religious Aspect of Philosophy (New York 1885) 321.

›idea‹, ›impression‹ or ›sensation‹«.[27] This, however, can scarcely be the whole story. Infact, the term »sense-data« was introduced mainly in order to point out the *objective* character of the percept; in opposition, »impression« and »sensation« are typically subjective.[28]

Our suggestion is that the introduction of the term »sense-data« was directly connected with the powerful anti-psychologist movement which spread in both German and British philosophy of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In two works published in the 1870s — *Logic* (1874) and *Metaphysics* (1879) — the father of this movement, RUDOLF HERMANN LOTZE, advanced an objective understanding of the content of the mental activity, of any kind: both of perceiving and of judging. This objective content was called the »given« — in Latin, »data«.

a) It is apparently this LOTZEan »given« which, in regard to perception, was transformed by ROYCE into »sense-datum«. To be sure, the already cited article *Mind and Reality* (1882) was one of the first works of ROYCE (then 27 years old), who some five or six years earlier, in 1876/77, »heard LOTZE at Göttingen, and was for a while strongly under his influence«.[29]

b) In regard to judgement, LOTZE called its objective content a »state of affairs« (*Sachverhalt*) — another term he introduced into philosophy.

It is symptomatic that the British philosophers who used terms that can be called »proto-sense-data«, for example, WILLIAM HAMILTON (who spoke of »data of conscious«[30]), connected them not with the empiricists,[31] but with the objectivist THOMAS REID. This disproves once more DRECHSLER, who accepts[32] that the »sense-data« theories were directed above all against the »naive realists«.

Of course, LOTZE had his own predecessors, above all JOHANN FRIEDRICH HERBART, who first made an objectivist interpretation of IMMANUEL KANT's *noumena*, and, ultimately, it was KANT himself. Indeed, KANT's *noumena* — exactly like the »impressions« or the »outer data« of the British empiricists — can be

[27] MARTIN DRECHSLER: Sinnesdaten. In: Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie, hg. von JOACHIM RITTER / KARLFRIED GRÜNDER. Bd. 9 (Darmstadt 1995) 875.

[28] This remark also opposes EDMUND HUSSERL's sporadic use of the term »sense-data« (*Sinnesdaten*). Thus, in *Erste Philosophie* (1923/24) he speaks of a theory of sense-data held by the British empiricists and states that »sense-data are possible only as being perceived. Their existence requires the existence of the mind.« E. HUSSERL: Erste Philosophie. Erster Teil. In: Husserliana. Bd. 7, hg. von RUDOLF BOEHM (The Haag 1956) 173.

[29] J. ROYCE: An Autobiographical Sketch. In: The Basic Writings of Josiah Royce, ed. by JOHN J. MCDERMOTT. Vol. 1 (Chicago 1969) 34.

[30] See WILLIAM HAMILTON: On the Philosophy of Common Sense. In: The Works of Thomas Reid, ed. by WILLIAM HAMILTON (Edinburgh 1846) 749.

[31] This is also true of TH. HILL GREEN, who spoke of »datum of sense« (in 1874) in an objectivist sense. Cf. THOMAS HILL GREEN: Introduction. In: The Philosophical Works of David Hume, ed. by THOMAS HILL GREEN / THOMAS HODGE GROSE. Vol. 1 (London ²1986) 41.

[32] See M. DRECHSLER: Sinnesdaten, loc. cit. [n. 27] 875.

interpreted both objectively[33] and subjectively. To be sure, in a pre-critical work (written in Latin) KANT already spoke of »intuitive data« and »sensitive data«.[34]

E. The Basics of Russell's Second Theory of Sense-Data

After Russell abandoned the concept of *quantity* in July 1898, accepting the philosophy of logical atomism, he lost the theoretical recourses of expressing indivisible (unstructured) continua with logical terms. Thus, his »chemical dream« of combining logic and sense had to wait for its fulfillment. For the time being, the concept of sense-data was abandoned and apparently forgotten. In August 1900, however, with Russell's gradual assimilation of the new technique of quantification, following first PEANO and then FREGE, the old project for connecting logic and data was unexpectedly revived. Why was this?

Russell's new logical understanding of continua came with the acceptance of the intensional treatment of unities (classes) in the theory of denoting.[35] More precisely, in the theory of denoting Russell accepted that the newly introduced concept of *denoting phrase* provides a technique for treating infinities with one concept. In fact, the concept of denoting phrase came to replace the old dialectical concept of continua.

Now, in the same way in which denoting phrases treat classes of individuals with the help of one concept, after 1911 he also accepted that in one sense-datum (now understood as an abstract indefinable), many forms (now considered concrete indefinables) may be discerned. This made out the multiplicity of sense-data — an understanding expressed in the belief that sense-data are complexes; they are such since they are compounds of sensuality and form. That sense-data have forms is seen in that they are situated in space, are related to physical objects; finally, indiscernible sense-data are logically (numerically) different.[36] The sensual material being thus structured, it was not difficult to relate it to Russell's technical (in distinction from his philosophical) logic.

This position is apparently highly idiosyncratic, and perceptibly different from Russell's first theory of sense-data. Above all, it assumed that sense-data are complexes. Their perception, or the acquaintance with them, is, however, simple. The consequence of this understanding was that Russell now saw no hindrances to accepting that inner sensations are also data — i. e., that they are objective.

[33] That is why some modern authors often render KANT's »presentations« as »sense-data«. See, for example, JAMES WARD: A Study of Kant (Cambridge 1922) 42.

[34] See IMMANUEL KANT: De mundi sensibilis atque intelligibilis forma et principiis. In: Immanuel Kants Werke, hg. von ERNST CASSIRER. Bd. 2 (Berlin 1912) 404, 417.

[35] See on this B. RUSSELL: The Principles of Mathematics (London ²1937) ch. V.

[36] See on this argument B. RUSSELL: Our Knowledge of the External World (London ²1926) 148 ff.

F. The History of Russell's Second Theory of Sense-Data

Of course, we must bear in mind that Russell needed years to develop this understanding. In brief, the macro-history of Russell's second theory of sense-data looks like this:

a) After August 1900, he accepted the theory of denoting, according to which we immediately know chunks of reality which we can also accept as parts of a proposition.

b) In *On Denoting* (1905), Russell specified that we are directly *acquainted* with some of these chunks/parts.[37]

c) As we are going to see in the next paragraph but one, in the papers *Analytic Realism*, and *Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description* (both first delivered in 1911) he accepted that some of these chunks/parts are sense-data. This was the first use of Russell's second theory of sense-data.

The specific history of the reintroduction of the term »sense-data« in Russell's philo-sophy is not as dramatic. His friend G. E. Moore was very impressed with both *The Principles of Mathematics* and especially *On Denoting*. These two works persuaded Moore that in philosophy he had to make up for lost time. In consequence, he spent the years between 1905 and 1909 studying Russell's technical philosophy.

In this period, Moore published nothing but reviews. It was in his first paper brought out after these long years of philosophical deliberations, *The Subject-matter of Psychology* (read on 6 December 1909 at the Aristotelian Society), that Moore introduced the term »sense-data« in analytic philosophy.[38] A few months later he used it in the lectures *Some Main Problems of Philosophy* (delivered 1910/11), which Russell read in manuscript. The latter found the term appropriate and used it in the paper *Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description* (read on 4 March 1911 in Oxford),[39] and in *Analytic Realism* (read on 23 March 1911 in Paris).[40] With *The Problems of Philosophy* (1912), Russell made the term widely popular among philosophers. Incidentally, in the »Preface« to the

[37] See B. Russell: On Denoting. In: Logic and Knowledge, loc. cit. [n. 1] 41.

[38] See George Edward Moore: The Subject-matter of Psychology. In: Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society 10 (1909/10) 57 f. Since Moore's 1909/10 paper was not attentively read for years, it was assumed that the term sense-data was first introduced in Moore's lectures *Some Main Problems of Philosophy*, see G. E. Moore: Some Main Problems of Philosophy (London 1953) 30 ff. This was accepted, for example, in Allan R. White: George Edward Moore: A Critical Exposition (Oxford 1969) 153; in Alfred Jules Ayer: Russell and Moore: The Analytical Heritage (London 1971) 233; and in Thomas Baldwin: George Edward Moore (London 1990) 234. This error was first pointed out in Wolfgang Künne: The Nature of Acts: Moore on Husserl. In: The Analytic Tradition, ed. by David Bell and Neil Cooper (Oxford 1991) 105.

[39] See B. Russell: Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description. In: The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell. Vol. 6, ed. by John G. Slater (London 1992) 148–149.

[40] See B. Russell: Analytic Realism. In: The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell. Vol. 6, loc.cit. [n. 39] 133, 135–136.

Book he pointed out: »As regards the relations of sense-data to physical objects, [...] I have derived valuable assistance from unpublished writings of G. E. MOORE.«[41] These unpublished writings were MOORE's lectures of 1910/11.

Perhaps Russell did not recognized that this was the same term he himself had used in 1896/98. Apparently, this didn't matter to him. What was important was that the term fitted his current logic very well.

II. »Knowledge by Acquaintance«

A. Opening

The adoption of the concept of »sense-data« has a flip side, too: the epistemology of their being grasped. Introducing chunks of reality into both propositions (in logic) and into his ontology, Russell needed a concept indicating their cognition. For this purpose he started to use the concept of »acquaintance«. Its introduction was again connected with the name of a foreign philosopher, senior to Russell. This time this was the Austrian ALEXIUS MEINONG.

B. Meinong's Presentation

In the last few years, many authors have become aware that »the distinction between acquaintance and description is not a *consequence* so much as a presupposition of [the theory of descriptions]«.[42] Such hints notwithstanding, until now no-one has traced the specific history of Russell's principle of acquaintance.

To Russell's first theory of sense-data of 1896/98 corresponded the peculiar epistemology of being immediately grasped. In *An Analysis of Mathematical Reasoning* (1898), for example, he spoke of the »intuitive apprehension« of (concrete or abstract) indefinables.[43]

After introducing the theoretical grounds for a new, second theory of sense-data, Russell advanced a second theory of immediate grasping: the already mentioned principle of acquaintance. This time, however, the new theory of immediate grasping was introduced before the (second) theory of sense-data.

As already noted, the immediate impulse for introducing the term »acquaintance« in Russell's philosophy came from MEINONG. In *Über Annahmen* (1902), this philosopher accepted that the mind has two attitudes towards matter: presen-

[41] B. RUSSELL: The Problems of Philosophy (Oxford ²1946) 6.

[42] MICHAEL PAKULAK: The Interpretations of Russell's »Gray's Elegy Argument«. In: Russell and Analytic Philosophy, ed. by ANDREW D. IRVINE / GARY A. WEDEKING (Toronto 1993) 61. The newly gained awareness of the leading role of the »principle of acquaintance« in Russell's logic contrasts with MARK SAINSBURY's statement, quoted above [n. 5], that this principle is superfluous.

[43] B. RUSSELL: An Analysis of Mathematical Reasoning, loc. cit. [n. 12] 163.

tation (*Vorstellung*), and judgement (*Urteil*). Of course, many philosophers in the past bifurcated cognition into »presentation« and »judgement«. What was new in MEINONG was that he connected this understanding with the theory of objects in epistemology. According to this conception, both presentation and judgement have a (complex) object other than themselves. Hence, »truth and falsehood apply not to beliefs, but to their objects«.[44]

Precisely this theory of the discrimination between two kinds of knowledge directed towards outer objects lies at the root of Russell's later distinction between »knowledge by acquaintance« and »knowledge by description«.

The strong influence exerted by MEINONG in introducing the term »acquaintance« into Russell's philosophy can clearly be demonstrated if we follow its chronology.

a) Russell started reading MEINONG's newly-published book of *Über Annahmen* in June 1902. Apparently, by the time he was doing this reading he had already translated MEINONG's *Vorstellungen* for himself as »acquaintances«.

b) In December 1902, he wrote the »Preface« to *The Principles of Mathematics*, in which the term »acquaintance« (with indefinables) was mentioned for the first time in his writings.[45]

c) In April 1903, Russell wrote the aforementioned paper, MEINONG's *Theory of Complexes and Assumptions* (published in 1904), in which he stated: »Two distinct attitudes occur towards objects, one that of presentation, the other that of judgement [...]. We may say that the first gives acquaintance, while the second gives knowledge«.[46]

This passage precisely suggests the specific concept in MEINONG to which Russell related »acquaintance« — »presentation«.[47] In the already cited paper *Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description*, Russell set out: »To say that *S* has acquaintance with *O* is essentially the same thing as to say that *O* is presented to *S*«.[48]

d) In the autumn of 1903, Russell introduced the very distinction between »knowledge by acquaintance« and »knowledge by description«. In the manuscript paper *Points about Denoting*, it was stated: »We may distinguish the terms with which we are *acquainted* from others which are merely denoted«.[49] The first we know by acquaintance, the second by description.

[44] B. RUSSELL: Meinong's Theory of Complexes and Assumptions. In: Essays in Analysis, ed. by DOUGLAS LACKEY (New York 1973) 21.

[45] See B. RUSSELL: The Principles of Mathematics, loc. cit. [n. 35] xv.

[46] Ibid. 62.

[47] On the »explicit connection [of Russell's theory of acquaintance] with MEINONG's theory of presentation« see JANET FARRELL SMITH: Russell's Re-evaluation of Meinong, 1913–14: An Analysis of Acquaintance. In: Russell 8 (1988) 180.

[48] B. RUSSELL: Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description, loc. cit. [n. 39] 148.

[49] B. RUSSELL: Points about Denoting. In: The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell. Vol. 4, ed. by ALASDAIR URQUHART (London 1994) 306.

e) Russell used publicly the distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description for the first time on 5 May 1905 in a paper read in London which was later rewritten and published as *The Elements of Ethics* (1909). Unfortunately, in the published paper the distinction was not retained.

f) In *On Denoting* (composed in July 1905), Russell pointed out: »We have acquaintance with the objects of perception, and in thought we have acquaintance with objects of a more abstract logical character; but we do not necessarily have acquaintance with the objects denoted by phrases composed of words with whose meanings we are acquainted«.[50]

g) Russell articulated the distinction between »knowledge by acquaintance« and »knowledge by description« only in the paper *Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description* (1911), the paper in which, as already seen, Russell also made use of the term »sense-data« for the first time after 1898.[51]

These were the seven stages of the history of the concept of »acquaintance« in Russell's philosophy.

C. The William James Connection

Whereas MEINONG suggested to Russell how to differentiate between presentation and judgements when formulating the theory of objects, it was again WILLIAM JAMES who suggested to him the very English term »acquaintance« as well as the actual distinction between »knowledge by acquaintance« and propositional knowledge. Indeed, in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), JAMES specified: The function of sensation »is that of mere *acquaintance* with a fact. Perception's function, on the other hand, is knowledge about a fact«.[52] In 1892, in *Psychology: Briefer Course*, a widely popular course in psychology at the turn of the century, JAMES explicitly differentiated between »Knowledge of Acquaintance« and »Knowledge-about«.[53] Incidentally, the distinction Russell made in *On Denoting* was – exactly like the distinction JAMES made – between *acquaintance* and *knowledge about*.[54]

Russell apparently knew these passages in JAMES by heart. Indeed, there is evidence that he read JAMES' *Principles* in September 1894.[55] Later, in discussing »acquaintance« in his *Theory of Knowledge*, Russell quoted exactly that passage

[50] B. RUSSELL: On Denoting, loc. cit. [n. 37] 41–2.

[51] See B. RUSSELL: Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description, loc. cit. [n. 39].

[52] WILLIAM JAMES: The Principles of Psychology. Vol. 2 (New York ²1950) 2.

[53] W. JAMES: Psychology: Brief Course. In: The Works of William James. Vol. 14 (Cambridge, MA 1984) 19.

[54] See B. RUSSELL: On Denoting, loc. cit. [n. 37] 41.

[55] See B. RUSSELL: The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell. Vol. 1, ed. by KENNETH BLACKWELL et al. (London 1983) 354.

of JAMES' in *The Principles of Psychology*, vol. 2, where JAMES made the distinction for the first time.[56]

It is especially intriguing that JAMES directly related »data like the whiteness, smoothness, or squareness of this paper«, i. e. his sense-data, to knowledge by acquaintance.[57] Obviously, there is an intimate connection between the concepts of sense-data and knowledge by acquaintance. To be sure, sense-data are, as Russell often said, »the first and most obvious example [...] of objects with which we are acquainted«.[58]

MOORE was so impressed (listening to Russell's aforementioned 1905 lecture, »The Elements of Ethics«) with the distinction between »knowledge by acquaintance« and »knowledge by description« that he incorporated it into his philosophical vocabulary at once. Precisely this is what motivated him to reintroduce the concept of sense-data in 1909. We must keep in mind, however, that where Russell spoke of »acquaintance«, MOORE preferred to speak of »awareness«. MOORE accepted that we are »acquainted« only with certain complex facts — for example, with the data of philosophy — which need further analysis.[59]

D. Prehistory of the Term

Exactly like the term »sense-data«, the concept of »knowledge by acquaintance« has its prehistory. Our supposed originator of the term, WILLIAM JAMES, inherited this distinction from the Cambridge (England) philosopher JOHN GROTE, who before 1865 had already made the distinction between »knowledge of acquaintance« and »knowledge of judgement«.[60] Ironically enough, as JOHN PASSMORE has put it,[61] »this doctrine traveled from one Cambridge man to another via Cambridge, Mass.«.[62]

[56] See B. RUSSELL: Theory of Knowledge: The 1913 Manuscript. In: The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell. Vol. 7, ed. by ELIZABETH RAMSDEN EAMS (London 1984) 55.

[57] W. JAMES: The Knowing of Things Together. In: The Works of William James. Vol. 5 (Cambridge, MA 1978) 75.

[58] B. RUSSELL: Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description, loc. cit. [n. 39] 148.

[59] See G. E. MOORE: Some Main Problems of Philosophy (London 1953) 267, 269, 279.

[60] JOHN GROTE: Exploratio philosophica. 1st part (Cambridge 1865) 60.

[61] PASSMORE was first to notice GROTE's connection in introducing the distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description.

[62] JOHN PASSMORE: A Hundred Years of Philosophy (Harmondsworth ²1966) 230.