

Russell on Introspection and Self-Knowledge

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1 Introduction

This chapter examines Russell's developing views—roughly from 1911 to 1918—on the nature of introspective knowledge and subjects' most basic knowledge of themselves *as* themselves. One reason for doing so is that the details of Russell's views on introspection have largely been neglected or misunderstood, despite the sizeable interest in his epistemology and metaphysics of the self. Another reason is that doing so helps shed additional light on other aspects of his thought at the time, such as his broader acquaintance-based theory of knowledge, his preference for logical constructions over inferred entities, and his gradual progression toward neutral monism. This chapter argues that Russell's theory of introspection distinguishes between direct awareness of individual psychological objects, the presentation of psychological complexes involving those objects, and introspective judgments that aim to correspond to them. It also explores his transition from believing subjects enjoy introspective self-acquaintance, to believing they only know of themselves by self-description, and eventually to believing that self-knowledge is a logical construction. It concludes by sketching, in broad outline, how Russell's views about introspection and self-knowledge change as a result of his adoption of neutral monism.

2 Knowing things and knowing truths

Russell's early views (from around 1911 to 1913) about introspective knowledge and self-knowledge center on his well-known notion of knowledge by acquaintance. Because there are many misconceptions about its nature and role

in Russell's theory of knowledge, this section briefly considers how it fits into his overall epistemology. While some of the elements of his view appear earlier, it achieves its fullest articulation in his 1911 "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description" (hereafter *KAKD*), 1912 *The Problems of Philosophy* (hereafter *POP*), and abandoned 1913 *Theory of Knowledge* manuscript (hereafter *TK*). Thus, they are the primary focus of this discussion.

In these works, Russell's theory of knowledge—inspired by the writings of William James (1890/1950)—draws a fundamental distinction between *knowledge of things* and *knowledge of truths*. Like James, Russell sees this distinction as corresponding imperfectly with an ordinary distinction drawn in many natural languages, including French and German, between two uses of the term "know" (*POP*, 69–70).¹ We sometimes talk about a subject knowing *that* such and such is the case regarding some subject matter, but we also talk about a subject simply knowing *of* a person, place, or thing, either by encountering it firsthand or in virtue of some less direct informational connection to it. However, many interpreters have pointed out that Russell's theory of knowledge departs from ordinary usage in numerous ways (Bostock 2012; Crane 2012; Kremer 2015).

There is a great deal of ongoing controversy concerning how exactly Russell understands these two kinds of knowledge and their relationship to one another. As I interpret him, a subject has knowledge of a thing if and only if the subject is in some way aware of it such that he or she is in a position to think and talk about it.² In contrast, a subject has knowledge of truths about something if and only if the subject bears a cognitive attitude toward it which can be evaluated in terms of truth or falsity (or success conditions more generally). Paradigmatically, such knowledge involves conceptually articulated beliefs and is propositional (or multiple-relational) in character. Knowledge of truths does not, however, require the exercise of reflective judgment or reasoning, as it often involves "instinctive," "psychological," or "physiological" judgments and inferences.

For Russell, there are two ways a subject can have knowledge of something. Subjects can know of something by becoming directly aware of it "without the intermediary of any process of inference or any knowledge of truths" because it is presented to them in experience (*POP*, 73). Russell calls this kind of knowledge of things *knowledge by acquaintance*. Alternatively, subjects can know of something *indirectly* in cases where "in virtue of some general principle, the existence of a thing answering to this description can be

inferred from the existence of something with which [they are] acquainted” (*POP*, 71). Russell calls this kind of knowledge of things *knowledge by description*.³

During this period, Russell conceives of acquaintance as a special epistemic relation holding between two distinct relata, where one constituent of the relational fact is a mental subject and another is an object of the subject’s awareness. In *TK*, he identifies this epistemic relation with direct experiential awareness:

Now, since we have decided that experience is constituted by a relation, . . . we shall employ synonymously the two words “acquaintance” and “awareness,” generally the former. Thus when *A* experiences an object *O*, we shall say that *A* is acquainted with *O*. (35)

Russell holds that acquaintance is “the simplest and most pervading aspect of experience. . . . All cognitive relations—attention, sensation, memory, imagination, believing, disbelieving, etc.—presuppose acquaintance” (*TK*, 5).⁴ In fact, he maintains, “the faculty of being acquainted with things other than itself is the main characteristic of a mind. Acquaintance with objects essentially consists in a relation between the mind and something other than the mind; it is this that constitutes the mind’s power of knowing things” (*POP*, 66–67). Indeed, Russell follows Brentano (1874/2009) and James (1890/1950) in thinking it vital to draw a distinction between the psychological *acts* involving acquaintance and the *objects* toward which those acts are directed.⁵

At this time, Russell holds that subjects can be acquainted with relatively few kinds of mind-independent objects. Through sensation, subjects can be acquainted with external “sense-data” consisting of particular sensible objects, qualities, and relations presented within the egocentric space of their sensory experience (*POP*, 12 and 29–31).⁶ Through memory, subjects can be acquainted with previously experienced sense-data as well as various temporal relations (*POP*, 76). Through imagination, subjects can be acquainted with sense-data that need not be experienced as having occurred at any time whatsoever (*TK*, 59–63).⁷ And through conceiving, subjects can be acquainted with abstract universals and general principles, including the objects and relations of logic (*POP*, 81; *TK*, 97–101).⁸

When it comes to the relationship between knowing objects by acquaintance and knowing truths about them, there is compelling (though controversial) evidence that Russell endorses what Proops (2014) calls “the independence thesis.”⁹ According to the independence thesis, a subject’s possession of

knowledge of something by acquaintance neither presupposes nor entails that the subject knows *any* truths about it. In one clear statement of this thesis, Russell asserts:

Knowledge of things, when it is of the kind we call knowledge by *acquaintance*, is essentially simpler than any knowledge of truths, and logically independent of knowledge of truths, though it would be rash to assume that human beings ever, in fact, have acquaintance with things without at the same time knowing some truth about them. (*POP*, 72)

Later in *POP*, he reiterates this claim:

We may have knowledge of a thing by acquaintance even if we know very few propositions about it—theoretically we need not know *any* propositions about it. (225, emphasis added)¹⁰

In contrast, a subject's possession of knowledge of something by description requires "as its source and grounds" antecedent possession of knowledge of truths about objects of his or her acquaintance, including truths about general principles (*POP*, 73).

Many take Russell's theory of knowledge to be motivated largely by a Cartesian quest for certainty. Such readings appear to be supported by his claims that subjects know the objects of acquaintance "perfectly and completely" and "just as they are" such that "no further knowledge of [them] is even theoretically possible" (*POP*, 73–74). Russell also says that it is not possible, without absurdity, to doubt the existence of such objects and that there is "no error involved" even in dreams or hallucinations unless subjects "go beyond the immediate object" (*POP*, 74, 172, and 235). These and other passages lead many to read him as holding that subjects can (at least sometimes) acquire absolutely certain knowledge about the existence, identity, features, and/or nature of the objects of immediate acquaintance.¹¹

As I have argued elsewhere, there is strong evidence that such Cartesian interpretations are misguided.¹² However, it is beyond the scope of the present chapter to rehearse those arguments. Instead, I will simply point to Russell's remarks that "it is of course *possible* that all or any of our beliefs may be mistaken, and therefore all ought to be held with at least some slight element of doubt" and that "a theory which ignored this fact would be clearly wrong" (*POP*, 39–40 and 210). In any event, one should not uncritically presume that Russell's accounts of introspection and self-knowledge are motivated by broader Cartesian concerns.

But what then is motivating Russell's acquaintance-based epistemology during this period? As Hyton (2003) notes, one of the main factors is his commitment to direct realism—the view that subjects can attain direct empirical knowledge of mind-independent reality without the mediation of conceptual structures (such as mental contents, ideas, or *Sinne*). Russell sees such direct realism as essential for challenging the Monistic Idealist claim that the conceptual structure of human thought modifies all empirical knowledge so that it provides only imperfect, partial, and at best approximately “true” knowledge of Absolute Reality (Hylton 2003, 207–09).

Russell also sees it as necessary for explaining how human thought (and talk) can manage to connect up with, and provide piecemeal knowledge about, mind-independent reality. Indeed, at this time he is committed to what is often called Russell's Principle, according to which “*every proposition which we can understand must be composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted*” (POP, 58). In defense of this thesis, he insists that “it is scarcely conceivable that we can make a judgement or entertain a supposition without knowing what it is that we are judging or supposing about. We must attach *some* meaning to the words we use, if we are to speak significantly and not utter mere noise” (POP, 91). Thus, the job of acquaintance is to determine (and put subjects in a position to know) the reference of thought at its most fundamental level, and thereby to supply subjects with the materials needed for thinking indirectly about the world beyond their personal experience (as well as about putative entities which do not, in fact, exist). In addition, Russell maintains that an acquaintance-based theory of knowledge is required for giving an adequate analysis of various cognitive phenomena such as consciousness, attention, belief, memory, imagination, and selectively based egocentric and demonstrative thought, among others (TK, 5, 31–32, and 39–41).

3 Knowing the mind by acquaintance

Though much of Russell's interest around 1911 to 1913 concerns how subjects are able to acquire knowledge of, and about, the mind-independent objects of sensation, memory, and conception, he also seeks to explain how they can have knowledge concerning the mind itself. As with the other sources of knowledge, his account is ultimately based on subjects having direct awareness of their

psychological episodes through a distinctive form of introspective acquaintance. In *POP*, he introduces it as follows:

We are not only aware of things, but we are often aware of being aware of them. When I see the sun, I am often aware of my seeing the sun; thus “my seeing the sun” is an object with which I have acquaintance. When I desire food, I may be aware of my desire for food; thus “my desiring food” is an object with which I am acquainted. Similarly we may be aware of our feeling pleasure or pain, and generally of the events which happen in our minds. (76–77)

Elsewhere, he says subjects can be introspectively acquainted with their own acts of sensation, attention, memory, imagination, believing, disbelieving, feeling, desiring, and willing, among others (*POP*, 80; *TK*, 5 and 34). When it comes to the minds of other people, in contrast, subjects can only know them by description based on indirect sensory evidence of others’ verbal and nonverbal behavior and similarity to themselves.

Russell appeals to a number of different considerations in making the case for subjects having introspective acquaintance with their own minds. To begin with, he thinks it is supported by an argument to the best explanation of how knowledge concerning minds is possible at all. Given that subjects are not acquainted with the minds of others, he argues, such knowledge must be based largely on their acquaintance with their own minds. Without such awareness, he maintains, subjects would not be in a position to understand the minds of others even by description. Consequently, “we should be unable to imagine the minds of others, and therefore we could never arrive at the knowledge that they have minds” (*POP*, 77). In fact, he questions whether subjects could know *they* have minds—or so much as consider whether they exist—if not for introspective acquaintance (*POP*, 78).¹³

In addition, Russell takes the existence of introspective acquaintance to be an “obvious” or “plain” fact of experience (*POP*, 76–77, *KAKD*, 110, and *TK*, 33). In fact, he admits to not knowing how to prove it, “for I cannot think of anything more evident” (*TK*, 31). His only (slight) hesitation concerns its relational character, since neutral monists such as James (1912), Mach (1889/1984), and Perry (1912) deny the distinction between psychological acts and their objects (*TK*, 33). Even still, he insists that there is a need to explain why introspective awareness at least appears to be relational. Moreover, he believes that neutral monism faces daunting challenges which cast it in serious doubt (Pincock, this book). Among them is the fact that “it is obliged to have recourse to extraneous considerations, such as the nervous system, in order to explain the difference

between what I experience and what I do not experience, and this difference is too immediate for any explanation that neutral monism can give" (*TK*, 31).

One thing to notice about Russell's view is that subjects do not invariably have introspective awareness of their psychological episodes. Rather, introspective awareness is something subjects "can" and "often" enjoy with respect to their thoughts, feelings, desires, and so on, through an act of "what may be called inner sense" (*POP*, 80).¹⁴ On such occasions, subjects are not only conscious of mind-independent objects, but also achieve a state of "self-consciousness" through which they are directly aware of the psychological episodes themselves (*POP*, 77–81). But, Russell suggests, such self-consciousness is seemingly absent in cases in which subjects do not attend to the objects of their experience (*TK*, 121). Furthermore, he argues that "it is logically evident that there must be instances [of being aware of something without being aware of such awareness], since otherwise every acquaintance would entail an infinite introspective series, which is absurd" (*TK*, 121).

The issue of determining when exactly subjects enjoy self-consciousness is complicated, however, by the fact that Russell also thinks subjects can be directly aware of their psychological episodes without directing introspective attention to them. For instance, he says that subjects can have introspective awareness of faint and peripheral sensations, dim thoughts and desires, and various other conscious episodes at the margins of their attentive focus (*TK*, 8–9). In fact, he argues, the field of introspective acquaintance *must* extend beyond the limited range of introspective attention since such acts involve the selection of objects from a larger, already present field of awareness "out of which attention chooses what it wants" (*TK*, 9).

In addition to being acquainted with particular psychological episodes, subjects can be introspectively aware of their qualities and various relations that hold between them. For instance, subjects can be introspectively aware of relations of similarity and difference between particular psychological acts. This allows subjects to become directly aware, through acts of conceiving, of the psychological kinds they fall under and various relational universals they instantiate.¹⁵ With the help of memory, subjects can also be directly aware of the temporal relations of the psychological episodes to themselves (in their private space of time) as well as their duration, simultaneity, and succession (*TK*, 64–78). Perhaps most importantly, subjects can be introspectively aware of the relation of "being experienced together" which holds between the various sensory, cognitive, and conative episodes that make up their psychological life

(TK, 8). For Russell, the awareness of such “being experience together” relations explains the unity that subjects experience their minds as having at any one time. By extension, the experience of psychological unity across time is achieved by combining their present experience of psychological unity with memories of similarly unified thoughts and experiences at earlier times (TK, 12–13).

It must be emphasized, however, that the direct introspective awareness subjects enjoy with respect to (at least some of) their psychological episodes and their features does not constitute knowledge of *any* truths about them. Nor does such introspective acquaintance, all by itself, *entail* any knowledge of truths about them. Rather, introspective acquaintance presents psychological episodes to the subjects who have them and thereby put those subjects in a position to think, talk, and acquire knowledge about them by exercising relevant cognitive capacities.

4 Inner perception and introspective judgments

Russell does not (at least to my knowledge) make explicit how exactly subjects acquire knowledge of truths about their psychological episodes on the basis of being introspectively acquainted with them. However, he asserts in *KAKD* that “from the point of view of theory of knowledge, introspective knowledge is exactly on a level with knowledge derived from sight or hearing” (111). Given similar remarks Russell makes elsewhere, it is reasonable to reconstruct his view based on what he says concerning how subjects derive knowledge of truths from other forms of acquaintance, such as sensation, memory, and conceiving.

When it comes to sensory knowledge, Russell draws a distinction between having direct awareness of objects through sensation, having direct awareness of complexes involving those objects and their features, and making judgments about the complexes of which subjects are directly aware.¹⁶ Regarding the latter two categories of sensory knowledge, Russell distinguishes between “truths of perception” and the “judgements of perception” which aim to express them (*POP*, 177–78).¹⁷ Both are kinds of “intuitive knowledge” which are non-inferentially derived from sensory experience, but there are fundamental differences between them.

The perception of truths is a matter of subjects being directly *presented* in experience with facts concerning the existence of sense-data, the features they possess, and their relations to other sense-data (*POP*, 178). As such, the

perception of truths should properly be considered a species of knowledge of things—in this case of sensory complexes—by acquaintance. Indeed, Russell remarks, “we may distinguish sensation from perception by saying that the former gives particulars while the latter gives facts” (*TK*, 37). He also makes this point clear in *POP*:

Thus in regard to any complex fact, there are, theoretically, two ways in which it may be known: (1) by means of a judgment, in which its several parts are judged to be related as they are in fact related; (2) by means of *acquaintance* with the complex fact itself, *which may (in a large sense) be called perception, though it is by no means confined to objects of the senses.* (211, second emphasis added)¹⁸

In *POP*, he tentatively assumes that all such perception of truths is what he later calls “complex perception” (*TK*, 125). In complex perception, subjects are directly aware of both the complexes presented to them in perception and (at least some of) the constituents of those complexes. This contrasts with what he calls “simple perception” in which subjects are presented with complexes as wholes without being directly aware of any of their constituents.

When it comes to judgments of perception, more is required of subjects than the receptive presentation of sensory complexes. Subjects must attend selectively to these complexes, in some cases analyze them, and ultimately form non-inferential judgments which aim to correspond to them. On Russell’s view, analyzing complexes requires selectively attending to both their constituents and the relations between them (*TK*, 123). Such analysis is a precondition for subjects being able to judge, explicitly or implicitly, that sense-data have particular sensible qualities (such as “this is round” or “this is red”) or stand in particular sensible relations to each other (such as “this is to the right of that”) (*POP*, 179). In contrast, Russell suggests that judgments about the existence of experienced sense-data (such as “there is *that*”) do not require analysis (*POP*, 179).¹⁹ Thus, subjects can make existential judgments about them without at the same time making any judgment about what kind of thing they are, what qualities they have, or what relations they bear to other things (even if subjects nearly always do so).

Altogether, this account of sensory knowledge provides a well-developed model for how, at this time, Russell likely conceived of introspective knowledge. Such an account would draw a distinction between having direct awareness of psychological acts, having direct awareness of psychological complexes, and making judgments about them. Both of the latter kinds of knowledge

would be cases of intuitive knowledge that are non-inferentially derived from introspective experience. The first of these, which we might call “truths of inner perception,” would involve the receptive presentation of mental complexes to the subject through “inner perception.”²⁰ As such, it is best thought of as introspective knowledge of mental complexes by acquaintance, rather than as a kind of knowledge of truths about them. If such inner perception directly presents them to subjects as wholes (without at the same time presenting their constituents), the result will be “simple inner perception.” On the other hand, if it also presents at least some of the complex’s constituents, the result will be “complex inner perception.” Russell initially supposes that subjects have complex inner perceptions of their psychological episodes, but gradually comes to think that subjects only have simple inner perceptions due to growing worries about whether subjects enjoy introspective self-acquaintance.

As in the case of sensory knowledge, arriving at “judgments of inner perception” would involve the active exercise of various cognitive capacities. Subjects would have to attend selectively to the perceived mental complexes, in some cases analyze them in terms of their constituents, and issue non-inferential judgments which aim to correspond to them.²¹ The logically simplest of such judgments would concern the existence of these mental complexes and would take the form of an introspectively directed “there is *this*” (or perhaps even “lo!”). Such judgments would not, by themselves, logically entail more complex ones about what kinds of objects are being experienced, what features they have, or what relations they bear to other things. Subjects could only make judgments of this kind after selectively attending to (at least some of) the constituents of the mental complexes and analyzing them in terms of their features and relations to each other.

Before moving on, it is worth noting that Russell’s account of introspective knowledge thus far does not exhaust the knowledge subjects can have regarding their psychological lives. For subjects can also acquire indirect knowledge of their psychological episodes by description, as well as derive additional knowledge of truths about them through the application of self-evident logical principles. The former of these is particularly vital for knowing of, and thereby being in a position to know about, unremembered past thoughts and experiences, predicted or imagined thoughts and experiences, and unconscious psychological episodes, among other things.²² What is more, the capacity for subjects to know of mental complexes and their constituents by description comes to play a key role in Russell’s developing views about self-knowledge during this period.

5 Is there acquaintance with the self?

On Russell's early views (1911 to 1913), there are a number of different ways that subjects can think and talk about (and thereby be in a position to acquire knowledge about) themselves. First, subjects can think (or talk) about themselves by means of a description that they uniquely satisfy. For example, the right subjects can think (or talk) about "the philosopher who received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1950," "the future president of the United States in 2030," "the featherless biped who wrote this chapter," and so on, and manage to think about themselves because of things they have done or features they uniquely possess at some time. When subjects have this kind of knowledge of themselves, they have what Russell calls "*merely* descriptive knowledge" of the persons they happen to be (*KAKD*, 113).

Second, subjects can think (or talk) about themselves using ordinary proper names that, as matters of linguistic convention, designate them. During this period, Russell treats such ordinary names as expressing, in a particular context, truncated definite descriptions that uniquely pick out their bearers. Sometimes these descriptions will be analogous to those mentioned above and include (somewhat vague and varying) unique historical or personal information about the persons they designate. However, in the most basic case ordinary names can designate subjects by means of descriptions of the form "the person named such-and-such" (*KAKD*, 119). In this way, Russell can think about himself as "the person called Bertie," Bernie Sanders can think about himself as "the person called Bernie," and so on. Because ordinary names express (contextually determined) truncated definite descriptions, subjects who have knowledge of themselves by means of ordinary names once again have merely descriptive knowledge of the persons they happen to be.

On Russell's view, neither of these kinds of knowledge captures the most basic, intimate knowledge that subjects have concerning themselves—knowledge which is best expressed in ordinary language with the context-sensitive expression "I." For one thing, anyone with the appropriate descriptive knowledge of someone is on equal footing in thinking of them using descriptions such as these. In doing so, subjects are thinking of someone (who they happen to be) in a way that is characteristically used for thinking of persons other than themselves (and is, in fact, the only way of doing so). For another, subjects seem to have ways of thinking of themselves *as* themselves that are more basic than, and do not require, descriptive knowledge of this

kind. For example, John Perry can have knowledge of himself as himself even if he does not realize that he is, in fact, “the person leaving a trail of sugar in the grocery store,” or wrongly thinks he is “the brooding vigilante superhero of Gotham City.” Likewise, he can think of himself as himself even if he forgets that the description “the person named John Perry” designates him, or acquires the delusional belief that the description “the person named Bruce Wayne” does.²³

In *KAKD*, Russell defends the view that the most basic form of self-knowledge subjects possess is introspective knowledge of themselves by acquaintance. In particular, he maintains that subjects can be directly aware of themselves through acts of complex inner perception directed at their own psychological episodes. He does hesitate, however, when it comes to the question of whether subjects can have introspective acquaintance with themselves as bare particulars, independent of such psychological episodes. Indeed, he says, “it is hard to discover any state of mind in which I am aware of myself alone, as opposed to a complex of which I am a constituent” (*KAKD*, 110). But, he insists, it is “very difficult to account for plain facts if we assume that we do not have acquaintance with ourselves” (*KAKD*, 110).²⁴

The chief difficulty arises when trying to account for how subjects can understand their own introspective judgments. Recall that at this time, Russell is committed to Russell’s Principle, according to which “*whenever a relation of supposing or judging occurs, the terms to which the supposing or judging mind is related by the relation of supposing or judging must be terms with which the mind in question is acquainted*” (*KAKD*, 118). So given that psychological episodes are complexes involving a subject, a psychological act, and an object, subjects can understand their introspective judgments only if they are acquainted with themselves or with all of the elements of an introspective-based description of themselves (*KAKD*, 110). However, he argues that there is a formidable problem with supposing that, upon analysis, the introspective judgments subjects make involve only self-descriptions, rather than self-acquaintance. The problem is this:

If we wished to maintain the view that there is no acquaintance with Self, we might argue as follows: We are acquainted with *acquaintance*, and we know that it is a relation. . . . Hence we know that this complex must have a constituent which is that which is acquainted, *i.e.* must have a subject-term as well as an object-term. This subject we define as “I.” Thus “I” means “the subject-term in awareness of which *I* am aware.” (*KAKD*, 110)

Russell's worry here is that if subjects only know themselves by description roughly as "the subject-term of the psychological episode with which *I* am introspectively acquainted," they will in turn need to understand the meaning of the "I," properly analyzed, as it occurs in this description. But if the subject designated by *that* descriptive element is known only by an analogous description, and so on, then understanding an introspective judgment would involve an infinite regress. The best way to block that regress, Russell reasons, is if at some level of analysis the descriptive elements eventually bottom out in introspective self-acquaintance (*KAKD*, 110).²⁵

By the time of *POP*, however, Russell becomes less confident that subjects do, in fact, enjoy introspective self-acquaintance. His growing hesitation stems largely from Humean worries about whether subjects ever directly experience themselves in introspection. Indeed, he remarks, "when we try to look into ourselves we always seem to come upon some particular thought or feeling, and not upon the 'I' which has the thought or feeling" (*POP*, 78). Thus, when it comes to acquaintance-based introspective knowledge, "it is our particular thoughts and feelings that have primitive certainty," rather than knowledge of the self (*POP*, 30).

Nevertheless, Russell asserts, "there are some reasons for thinking that we are acquainted with the 'I,' though the acquaintance is hard to disentangle from other things" (*POP*, 78). To begin with, he suggests that it simply seems evident, upon careful reflection, that subjects can be acquainted with themselves in inner perception given the relational character of psychological acts (*POP*, 79). What is more, there is no serious question of *who* the subject of the psychological episode is:

When a case of acquaintance is one with which I can be acquainted (as I am acquainted with my acquaintance with the sense-datum representing the sun), *it is plain that the person acquainted is myself*. Thus, when I am acquainted with my seeing the sun, the whole fact with which I am acquainted is "Self-acquainted-with-sense-datum." (*POP*, 79, emphasis added)

What Russell seems to be suggesting here is that the high degree of certainty subjects have that they, rather than anyone else, are the subject of the introspected psychological acts is difficult (if not impossible) to explain on the assumption that their self-knowledge is merely descriptive.

Russell also gestures at something like the regress argument he offers previously in *KAKD*, though with somewhat less confidence in its persuasiveness.

Indeed, he argues, “we know the truth ‘I am acquainted with this sense-datum.’ [But it] is hard to see how we could know this truth, or even understand what is meant by it, unless we were acquainted with something which we call ‘I’” (*POP*, 79–80). Once again, the worry concerns how Russell’s Principle can be satisfied if subjects lack introspective self-acquaintance (*POP*, 58). However, he grants, “the question [of whether subjects can be acquainted with themselves] is difficult, and complicated arguments can be adduced on either side. Hence, although acquaintance with ourselves seems *probably* to occur, it is not wise to assert that it undoubtedly does occur” (*POP*, 79–80).

Despite his continuing belief in the likelihood of self-acquaintance, he becomes increasingly less sure that these selves are long-lived, persisting things such as persons. Answering the regress argument, he notes, does not require “that we are acquainted with a more or less permanent person, the same to-day as yesterday, but it does seem as though we must be acquainted with that thing, whatever its nature, which sees the sun and has acquaintance with sense-data” (*POP*, 80). Similarly, he denies that acquaintance with a persisting self, rather than a momentary one, is essential for explaining the high degree of confidence subjects have that they, rather than anyone else, are the subjects of their introspective judgments (*POP*, 29–30).

In fact, he argues that the lack of introspective evidence for the existence of a persisting self blunts some of the force of Descartes’ well-known *cogito* argument:

“I think, therefore I am” says rather more than is strictly certain. It might seem as though we were quite sure of being the same person to-day as we were yesterday, and this is no doubt true in some sense. But the real Self is as hard to arrive at as the real table, and does not seem to have that absolute, convincing certainty that belongs to particular experiences. (*POP*, 29)²⁶

So while Russell continues to think that subjects likely have self-acquaintance in *POP*, he is inclined to think that persons know of themselves as persisting things only by description—roughly as those things (whatever their nature may be) that have the continuing psychological lives they, as momentary subjects, are aware of through introspection and memory.

By the time of *TK*, however, “the elusiveness of the subject in introspection” convinces Russell that subjects likely lack introspective awareness of both the persisting and momentary self (36). Instead, subjects only know of themselves as themselves by description roughly as “the subject of such-and-such

introspected psychological episodes" (TK, 35). Put somewhat differently, he says:

Our theory maintains that the datum when we are [introspectively] aware of experiencing an object O is the fact "something is acquainted with O." The subject appears here, not in its individual capacity, but as an "apparent variable"; thus such a fact may be a datum in spite of incapacity for acquaintance with the subject. (TK, 37)

Of course, given the relational character of all acquaintance, the act of self-consciousness itself will involve both a subject and the psychological episode experienced. Thus, Russell remarks, an act of self-consciousness can be represented symbolically as " $S' - A - [(\exists S) \bullet (S - A - O)]$," where S is the subject of the introspected episode, O is the object of that episode, A is acquaintance, and S' the subject introspecting the episode (TK, 38).²⁷

There are a number of issues raised by Russell's newly adopted denial of self-acquaintance. One might worry that while the subject S of the introspected psychological episode is known only by description, the subject S' doing the introspecting does not appear in this way in the represented complex. Thus, it might strike one that self-acquaintance is required after all for subjects to make introspective judgments about their psychological episodes. However, Russell is quick to reiterate his claim in *POP* that episodes involving acquaintance need not themselves be known by acquaintance, on pain of an infinite regress (TK, 39).

Russell must also answer his former objection that introspective self-knowledge in the absence of self-acquaintance would require the use of the regress-producing self-description "the subject of the psychological episode I am aware of having." He addresses this challenge partly by reconceiving the relationship between the meaning of "I" and the subject's present psychological episodes. Indeed, he argues, "we might suppose that 'my present experience' might be defined as all the experience which 'I' have 'now'. But in fact we shall find that 'I' and 'now', in the order of knowledge, must be defined in terms of 'my present experience', rather than vice versa" (TK, 8). As Russell now sees things, the meaning of "I" derives from the subject's ability to be directly aware of his or her psychological episodes as wholes (via simple inner perception) and to designate them with proper names (TK, 39). Thus, the meaning of "I" as used by a subject in an introspective judgment is roughly "the subject of *this* presented psychological episode (and others co-experienced with it)" where the meaning of the "this" is simply given to the subject without any need for him or her to

understand that it is so given (*TK*, 40). In this way, the alleged regress involved in introspective self-description is blocked.²⁸

Russell's view that subjects lack self-acquaintance, despite having introspective acquaintance with their ongoing conscious mental lives, has far-reaching consequences for his views about what subjects can know about themselves. For one thing, he reasons:

If it is true, as it seems to be, that subjects are not given in acquaintance, it follows that nothing can be known as to their intrinsic nature. We cannot know, for example, that they differ from matter, nor yet that they do not differ. They are known merely as referents for the relation of acquaintance, and for those other psychological relations—judging, desiring, etc.—which imply acquaintance. (*TK*, 37)

What is more, he continues to hold that introspection cannot reveal whether the successive psychological episodes of a single mind share a single persisting subject or different momentary ones (*TK*, 35). In fact, he argues that there is no good reason to think that the subject of an act of self-consciousness is identical with the subject of the psychological episode being introspected, even when they are contemporaneous (*TK*, 38). Indeed, he continues, “the one ‘self’ or ‘mind’ which embraces both may be a construction, and need not, so far as the logical necessities of our problem are concerned, involve any identity of the two subjects” (*TK*, 38–9). This suggestion, that selves and minds might be logical constructions, soon becomes central to Russell's thought on these topics.

6 Constructing the self

Shortly after completing *POP*, Russell begins to explore how the techniques of logical construction, which were central to the logicist project of *Principia Mathematica*, might also be fruitfully applied to physics and the empirical sciences, more broadly.²⁹ Russell's change in course undeniably results from his growing unease about inferring material objects from sense-data, but there is much debate about what exactly is behind his preference for logical constructions over inferred entities. Some think that he sees logical constructions as providing a better tool for answering traditional skepticism (Sainsbury 1979; Graham forthcoming). Others interpret him as adopting logical constructions to explain how knowledge of physics is possible while better respecting the principle of acquaintance (Pears 1987; Hylton 1990; Baldwin 2001). Still others take his

theory of logical constructions to be a linguistic doctrine according to which the meaning of all talk ostensibly about physical objects is really about sense-data and nothing more (Soames 2003 and 2014). However, as Wahl has cogently pointed out, none of these interpretations is plausible given Russell's appeal to both unsensed sensibilia and the sense-data of others in the logical construction of matter (2015, 98–100).

A more compelling interpretation is that Russell prefers the ontological parsimony of a physics logically constructed from sense-data and unobserved entities of the same kind to one requiring inferred entities of a fundamentally different, and unobservable, kind (Bostock 2012; Wahl 2015). The advantage of logical constructions, then, is that they supply a means for paring down the *kinds* of entities to which physics is ontologically committed. This reading also receives support from his frequent designation of the objects of logical construction as “logical fictions,” suggesting a penchant on his part to deny their existence.³⁰ To take one notable example from his 1918 *Philosophy of Logical Atomism* (hereafter *PLA*), Russell asserts that statements ostensibly about Piccadilly, when properly analyzed, will not express propositions including it as a constituent, but will instead include the series of suitably related sense-data and unsensed sensibilia which are normally presumed to be appearances caused by a certain region of the Earth's surface (51). But, he remarks, “I believe that series and classes are of the nature of logical fictions: therefore that thesis, if it can be maintained, will dissolve Piccadilly into a fiction” (*PLA*, 51).

If the elimination of unnecessary kinds of inferred entities is indeed the primary motivation behind Russell's logical constructions, it would have radical consequences for his views about knowledge of the “self” and “mind.” As noted above, he suggests, but does not endorse, the possibility of logically constructing both in *TK*. But by the time of his 1915 “The Ultimate Constituents of Matter” (hereafter *UCM*), he embraces this view. In this paper, Russell relays his first cinematic experience of seeing what appears to be a persisting man but which, in reality, is “a [continuous] succession of films, each with a different momentary man” (*UCM*, 129). Praising the cinema in this respect as “a better metaphysician than common sense, physics, or philosophy,” Russell asserts that “the real man too . . . is really a series of momentary men, each different one from the other, and bound together, not by numerical identity, but by continuity and certain intrinsic causal laws” (*UCM*, 129). Thus, persons, like other ordinary objects, can be treated as series of suitably arranged momentary particulars “collected together on account of some property which makes it convenient to be able to

speak of them as wholes, [and] are what I call logical constructions or symbolic fictions" (*UCM*, 129). These remarks, and similar ones made elsewhere, lead some to read Russell as flatly denying the existence of the self (whether momentary or persisting), and ipso facto any possibility of genuine self-knowledge (Sainsbury 1979; Olson 2007).

One problem for reading Russell as eliminating the self, as Sainsbury (1979) points out, is that it conflicts with his ongoing commitment to the relational nature of psychological acts and mental facts (192). Thus, either Russell does not recognize this tension in his views about the self and mind, or his description of them as logical constructions is not motivated primarily by considerations of ontological parsimony. While Sainsbury sees the former as more likely, there is good reason to prefer the latter interpretation.

As I read him, Russell's logical constructions are largely guided by epistemological concerns other than a desire to secure certain knowledge in the face of skepticism. Rather, the aim of logical construction is to reinterpret a body of knowledge ostensibly about unobservable kinds of entities entirely in terms of a smaller number of observable kinds of entities (Hylton 2015). For Russell, there are several important benefits of doing so. First, to the extent that a body of knowledge can be reinterpreted in terms of observable kinds of entities (even if they are not, in fact, observed by anyone), it becomes possible, in principle, for the truth of that body of knowledge (so interpreted) to be verifiable.³¹ Second, it also explains how the body of knowledge (so interpreted) can be knowable, in principle, to subjects, even if it does not describe its actual psychological origin.³² Third, it reduces the size of the apparatus needed to account for this knowledge, thereby diminishing (but not eliminating) its risk of error (*PLA*, 154). At the same time, it reduces the extent to which the truth of the body of knowledge is held hostage to the existence of unobservable kinds of entities.³³ Thus, it makes it possible to accept the body of knowledge (so interpreted) while sidestepping contentious metaphysical debates about the nature of unobservable kinds of entities and the legitimacy of the principles used to infer their existence.³⁴ In doing so, it renders possible the elimination of the logically constructed entities, but does not, all by itself, give grounds for doing so.³⁵

When it comes to the logical construction of the mind and self, then, Russell's primary aim is not to deny (nor affirm) the existence of the metaphysical subject or ego. Rather, it is to reinterpret the body of knowledge subjects have concerning themselves and other people into a smaller apparatus that is less risky, more apt for empirical verification, and less prone to entanglement in contentious

metaphysical disputes. On Russell's view, empirical knowledge of other persons can be logically constructed from series of suitably related sensory appearances they present, rather than in terms of a persisting ego since "whether there be such a persistent subject or not, [that] is certainly not a datum" (*PLA*, 149). In a similar manner, subjects' empirical knowledge of their own minds can be logically constructed from series of suitably related thoughts, memories, sensations, and other psychological episodes presented introspectively without any need to assume a metaphysical self (or selves) to whom they are presented (*PLA*, 149).³⁶ Lastly, when it comes to these subjects' "selves," such knowledge can be logically constructed from series of suitably related psychological episodes and sensory appearances together (*PLA*, 149–50). In a subject's own case, then, "you have a much richer material and are therefore much less likely to be mistaken as to your own identity than as to someone else's" (*PLA*, 149). So while Russell notes that "there are [sometimes] mistakes even as to one's own identity, in cases of multiple personality and so forth," he also asserts that "as a rule you will know ... that it is you, not by consciousness of the ego at all but by all sorts of things, by memory, by the way you feel and the way you look and a host of things" (*PLA*, 149).

But despite the fact that the self and mind can be treated as logical constructions for most empirical purposes, Russell insists that "we shall not deny that there may be a metaphysical ego" (*PLA*, 150).³⁷ In fact, there is reason to think that he continues to accept, however cautiously, the existence of the metaphysical ego (whether momentary or persisting) as an inferred entity. Russell's primary grounds for doing so are the difficulties, noted in sections two and three above, in accounting for the difference between what someone experiences and does not experience, the selectiveness of attention, and egocentric and demonstrative thought, among other things (*PLA*, 86–87 and 153). However, he eventually confesses to the possibility that these worries might "be solved by ingenuity" and that these issues are "so delicate and so subtle that I cannot feel quite sure whether [this set of objections] is a valid one or not" (153). Thus, while Russell is arguably not completely agnostic about the existence of the metaphysical self or ego by the time of *PLA*, as Pears (1967) seems to suggest, he is (at least) very nearly so.

6 Toward neutral monism

Taking stock, Russell's theory of introspection from roughly 1911 to 1918 is grounded in the threefold distinction between direct awareness of psychological objects, the presentation of psychological complexes, and introspective

judgments about these complexes. When it comes to self-knowledge, his initial view is that subjects enjoy self-acquaintance, but he gradually comes to think subjects merely know themselves by introspective self-description, and he ultimately arrives at the view that “selves” and “minds” are, in fact, logical constructions. There is good reason to think that these changes are not driven by a Cartesian quest for certainty and that his preference for logically constructing the self and mind over inferring them is not primarily motivated by a taste for ontological parsimony. Indeed, Russell seemingly continues to cautiously accept the existence of the metaphysical self in 1918 due to the difficulties in explaining the selectiveness of the mind and egocentric thought, and because the relational character of psychological acts is introspectively observable even if the self is not.

Russell's views about introspection and self-knowledge begin to undergo significant changes in his 1919 “On Propositions” (hereafter *OP*) and 1921 *The Analysis of Mind* (hereafter *AMi*). In *OP*, Russell at last comes to the view that neither mental subjects nor psychological acts are discoverable in introspection (25). At the same time, he grows increasingly confident that neutral monism can account for both the selectivity of attention and egocentric and demonstrative thought (Landini 2011; Pincock, this book). As a result, he concludes that there are neither empirical nor theoretical grounds for drawing a distinction between subjects, psychological acts, and their objects. Instead, he embraces the view that both “minds” and “matter” are constructions composed of transitory elements that are intrinsically neither mental nor physical but are rendered one or both depending on whether they are parts of physical and/or psychological processes. Consequently, he comes to believe that “persons” and “selves” are also bundles of transitory neutral elements bound together by the right kinds of spatiotemporal and causal relations.³⁸

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to survey the many changes that result from Russell's adoption of neutral monism. However, it is worthwhile to mention, all too briefly, some of the more significant ones regarding introspection and self-knowledge. Whereas he previously conceived of sensory experience, for instance, as a matter of subjects engaging in an act of sensation directed toward mind-independent sense-data, he comes to see it as the occurrence of qualified sensory events (or “percepts”) in the brain that are causally connected to physical events outside the brain. As a result, he comes to deny that there is a sharp distinction between awareness of sensory experience and the perception of the external world, the key difference only being the degree of privacy involved and their position in the causal process (*AMi*, 118–21). As for introspective judgments,

Russell adopts the view that they are a matter of belief-image events in the brain being causally connected to (and often in some way resembling) sensory events elsewhere in the brain (*AMi*, 116–22).³⁹ In this respect, introspective judgments are not essentially different in kind from other sorts of judgments and are “not, in isolation, in any degree more trustworthy than ‘external’ perception” (*AMi*, 123). Thus, not only does Russell’s neutral monism aim at closing the gap between “mind” and “matter,” it also aims at doing so regarding introspective knowledge and knowledge of the world more generally. Much more can be said about each of these issues, but that must be a project for another time (though see Pincock, this book).

Notes

- 1 In *TK*, Russell acknowledges that “a certain difficulty as regards the use of words is unavoidable. . . . The meanings of common words are vague, fluctuating and ambiguous, like the shadow thrown by a flickering streetlamp on a windy night; yet in the nucleus of this uncertain patch of meaning, we may find some precise concept for which philosophy requires a name. . . . Sometimes it will be well to introduce a new technical term, sometimes it will be better to polish the common word until it becomes suitable for technical purposes” (6).
- 2 In saying that knowledge of something puts one *in a position* to think and talk about it, I do not mean to imply that *all* other preconditions for thought and talk about it are met. A subject might also need to attend to it, demonstrate it with a proper name, analyze it, or otherwise exercise relevant cognitive capacities. The key (trivial) point is that a subject cannot in any way cognize something of which he or she has no knowledge whatsoever.
- 3 Proops (2014) suggests that Russell’s key divergence from how James (1890/1950) understands the distinction between knowledge of things and knowledge of truths is that he allows, whereas James does not, that subjects can have genuine knowledge of, and therefore be in a position to know about, objects outside of their acquaintance. While James grants that subjects can in some sense conceive of things beyond their experience, he insists that such conceptions are “hollow and inadequate” and generate a “false conceit of knowledge” (1890/1950, II, 7).
- 4 Interestingly, later in *TK* Russell seems to leave open the possibility of both acquaintance and mental subjects being further analyzable, saying only that he has “no analysis to suggest, and therefore formally both will appear as if they were simple, though nothing will be falsified if they are found to be not simple” (45).

- 5 James remarks that it is a shortcoming of the English language that it does not explicitly draw “the generic distinction between the-thing-thought-of and the-thought-thinking-it, which in German is expressed by the opposition between *Gedachtes* and *Gedanke*, in Latin by that between *cogitatum* and *cogitation*” (1890/1950, I, 195). This shortcoming, of course, is in addition to the failure of English to mark the difference between knowledge *of* things and knowledge *about* things. For an excellent discussion of Russell’s introduction to Brentano through his teacher G. F. Stout, see Nasim 2008.
- 6 Russell is clear in *POP* that sense-data are external to the mind but is frustratingly silent about their nature. Early in this work, he says that sense-data are at most “*signs* of some property [inherent in a physical object] which perhaps *causes* all the sensations, but is not actually apparent in any of them” (16). He goes on to suggest that they likely correspond in some way to the relational structure of physical objects in physical space, but are seemingly themselves neither mental nor physical (49–50). However, it could be that Russell already implicitly sees sense-data as transitory physical particulars that are signs of the unobserved material continuants of physics, as Landini 2011 claims (238–39).
- 7 See Carey 2015 for an in-depth discussion of Russell’s changing thought about acquaintance via memory, hallucination, dreams, and imagination and how they influence his views about physical knowledge.
- 8 This is by no means an exhaustive list of the ways subjects can be acquainted with external sensory and abstract objects. Subjects can also fear them, desire them, love them, and hate them, among many other possibilities. See Klement 2015 for an excellent discussion of Russell’s views about logical objects.
- 9 Also see Amijee 2013, Linsky 2015, Proops 2015, and Wishon 2017.
- 10 As Amijee and others have noted, Russell also expresses this claim in a 1911 letter to Gilbert Murray, the Home University Library editor for *POP*: “Acquaintance with a thing does not (theoretically) involve *any* knowledge of truths about the thing, and in practice involves often very little such knowledge” (Amijee 2013, 1183).
- 11 Among the many interpreters who read Russell this way are Baldwin 2001, Bostock 2012, Campbell 2009, Evans 1983, Geach 1957, Jeshion 2010, Ludlow 2013, Irvine 2015, and Soames 2010.
- 12 See Wishon 2015 and 2017. Also see Landini 2011, Linsky 2015, Proops 2015, and Wahl 2015. To my knowledge, Russell’s earliest statement that subjects cannot achieve absolute certainty even with perceptual judgments about what is currently given in sensory experience occurs in his 1910 *Philosophical Essays* (hereafter *PE*) (182–83).
- 13 Russell goes on to suggest that introspective awareness of psychological episodes is perhaps what distinguishes conscious human persons from sentient nonhuman animals (*POP*, 77–78).

- 14 One should resist the temptation to understand “inner sense,” as Russell is here loosely using the phrase, as either a literal act of looking into the theater of the mind (since psychological episodes are relations between subjects and things outside the mind) or in terms of causally mediated internal scanning or tracking mechanisms. This passage also shows that Russell rejects the view that whenever subjects bear an acquaintance relation to anything, they are at the same time acquainted with their acquaintance. This view is defended by Brentano (1874/2009), Meinong (1910), and many in the phenomenological tradition (most notably Husserl 1913/1982 and Sartre 1943/1948).
- 15 See *KAKD*, 111; *POP*, 158–61; and *TK*, 79–89. We must be careful to note that Russell does not think that knowledge of universals can be acquired from acquaintance with particular instances of psychological relations and their particular similarities and differences alone. As his regress argument against nominalism demonstrates, he thinks subjects must also be directly acquainted with the bare universal relation of resemblance at the very least (*POP*, 149–51). In *TK*, Russell suggests that we are likely directly aware of other bare universal relations as well (79–85). For more on Russell’s regress argument for universals, see Perovic 2015.
- 16 Russell leaves open whether the correspondence of complexes with facts or truths is a matter of identity or of some other one-one relation (*TK*, 79–80). I here follow Russell in treating them as identical for ease of exposition.
- 17 To my knowledge, Russell first draws this distinction in his 1910 “On the Nature of Truth and Falsehood” in *PE*, but he does not therein discuss its applicability to introspective knowledge (181–83).
- 18 Similarly, Russell claims that subjects can have “perceptions” of past complexes presented in memory as well as of abstract complexes presented in a kind of intellectual experience, among other possibilities.
- 19 Russell is here following James who also suggests that the most basic judgments of perception have roughly the form of “there is this.” However, James argues that even perceptual judgments of this kind “would perhaps be too discriminative, and the intellectual acknowledgement [of the existence of the objects of sensation] would [in its most basic form] be better expressed by the bare interjection ‘lo!’” (1890/1950, II, 8).
- 20 Once again, we must be careful not to understand “inner perception” here as a literal act of perception directed *inwards* (given the relational character of psychological episodes) or in terms of causally mediated internal scanning or tracking mechanisms.
- 21 As with all judgments, Russell allows that these introspective judgments can fail to correspond to the mental complexes they are about, and so they do not enjoy absolute certainty. It is worth noting how Russell’s views about introspective

knowledge here differ from Brentano's (as I read him). First, as noted above, Brentano thinks that every psychological act involves, in itself, both awareness of something and awareness of the act itself (1874/2009, 107). Second, he does not distinguish between inner perception and introspective judgments since, on his view, the former are already cognitions (111). Third, he argues that every act of awareness is accompanied by an inner perception of it (in addition to the reflexive awareness involved in that very act) (111). And fourth, he holds that it is immediately evident that inner perceptions are infallible and absolutely certain (107–11).

- 22 Russell's views at this time concerning the full scope and nature of unconscious psychological episodes, if there are any, are somewhat unclear. But he does suggest that subjects, like chickens and horses, engage in unconscious reasoning (*POP*, 97–98 and 175). By the time of his 1915 "The Ultimate Constituents of Matter," Russell is more explicit about the existence of unconscious psychological phenomena: "Psychologists point out how much of what we think we see is supplied by association or unconscious inference, how much is mental interpretation, and how doubtful is the residuum which can be regarded as crude datum" (126–27).
- 23 See Perry 1979, 2009, and 2012.
- 24 Russell amends this passage in the revised version of *KAKD* that appears in his 1919 *Mysticism and Logic and Other Essays* to say, "It is difficult, but probably not impossible, to account for plain facts if we assume that we do not have acquaintance with ourselves" (*Papers* 6, 149).
- 25 As Pincock (this book) notes, Russell adds "or to find some other analysis of self-consciousness" in the revised version of *KAKD* (*Papers* 6, 149).
- 26 As noted previously, I think there is good reason to resist interpreting Russell's remarks here, as elsewhere, as part of a Cartesian defense against skepticism. See Landini 2011, 300–02 and Wishon 2017.
- 27 As will be discussed below, Russell warns against assuming that the subjects *S* and *S'* are one and the same.
- 28 Bostock (2012) challenges Russell's view about self-knowledge in *TK* from a somewhat different direction. His question is this: "What grounds does one have for supposing that acquaintance is a two-term relation, if one of its two terms is never experienced?" (172). Russell's response at the time would be that subjects can be introspectively acquainted with their psychological acts, and thereby be in a position to know their relational character, even if they lack self-acquaintance. Indeed, in a review of James' *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, Russell remarks: "On the grounds of the purest empiricism, from mere inspection of experience, I for my part should hold it obvious that perception is in its intrinsic nature a fact of relation, involving an act as well as an object" (*Papers* 6, 303).

- 29 Russell's initial foray into this topic occurs in his unpublished 1912 manuscript "On Matter" (*Papers*, 6).
- 30 See Klement 2013 and Linsky 2003 and 2014 for more detailed discussions of Russell's notion of "logical constructions" and its relation to the notions of "incomplete symbols" and "logical fictions."
- 31 See Russell's "The Relation of Sense-Data to Physics" (hereafter *RSP*), 145–47; *Our Knowledge of the External World* (hereafter *OKEW*), 110–11; and *PLA*, 144. One might challenge Russell on the issue of whether the verifiable truth of the reinterpreted body of knowledge has any bearing on the truth of the original body of knowledge. Settling those issues, however, is beyond the scope of this chapter.
- 32 See *OKEW*, 105 and 140–41; and *PLA*, 146.
- 33 See *RSP*, 155–56; *OKEW*, 107; and *PLA*, 144.
- 34 Of course, it leaves untouched the unavoidable metaphysical and epistemological debates about whether the unobserved world actually consists of the same kinds of entities as those subjects observe, assuming it exists at all.
- 35 Russell is explicit on this point in *PLA* when, after proposing the possible logical construction of material objects, he asserts, "I want to make clear that I am not *denying* the existence of anything [in calling it a logical fiction]; I am only refusing to affirm it. I refuse to affirm the existence of anything for which there is no evidence, but I equally refuse to deny the existence of anything against which there is no evidence" (146). It is also worth bearing in mind Russell's warning in "On Matter" that "if it were known that the universe had been created for the purpose of delighting mathematicians, there would be some reason to suppose that, of two hypotheses which both fit the facts, the simpler is more likely to be true. As, however, there is no evidence that this is the purpose of the universe, there is no reason whatever to expect the [universe and its workings to be parsimonious]" (*Papers* 6, 86).
- 36 Presumably, a subject's knowledge of the minds of others would be logically constructed from the hypothetical series of suitably related thoughts and experiences the subject would attribute to them based on sensory appearances (including of observable behavior) and analogy with the subject's own case (*OKEW*, 96). For a recent criticism of Russell's views about inferring or constructing knowledge of others, see Kremer 2015.
- 37 There is one notable possible exception to the empirical adequacy of logical constructions of the self and mind: if introspection reveals psychological episodes to be relational, then any logical construction of them that ignores the role of the subject will leave this empirically discoverable fact unaccounted for. Incidentally, it is Russell's coming to doubt the availability of introspective evidence for the relational character of psychological episodes (in addition to the subject) in his 1919 "On Propositions" that finally convinces him to embrace (a partial) neutral monism. See Wishon 2015.

- 38 For more on Russell's treatment of objects as bundles, see Maclean 2014.
- 39 It is not quite accurate to say that image events are in the brain in *OP* and *AMi* since at the time Russell thinks they are parts of psychological processes but not physical ones. But within just a few years he adopts, and never thereafter abandons, his notorious belief that both images and percepts are brain events. It is also worth noting that Russell comes to believe that subjects do not enjoy introspective awareness of their desires or impulses and that "the discovery of our own motives can only be made by the same process by which we discover other people's, namely, the process of observing our actions and inferring the desire which could prompt them" (*AMi*, 31). For more on Russell's neutral monism, see Bostock 2012; Landini 2011; Pincock, this book; Stubenberg 2015 and 2016; Tully 2003; and Wishon 2015. For more on Russell's neutral monist theory of desire, see Griffin 2015.

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