

## 1

# Acquaintance Is Consciousness and Consciousness Is Acquaintance

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## 1. Introduction

Acquaintance is a notion that has obviously played an important role in the history of philosophy of language, epistemology, and philosophy of mind.<sup>1</sup> With respect to philosophy of mind in particular, many have found it intuitive that there is some inherent connection between conscious experience and acquaintance. So, for instance, perception is often thought to be the primary vehicle of acquaintance, and is also the primary example of (phenomenal) consciousness. Russell indeed believed that sense-data—the principal denizens of conscious experience—were the only concrete entities with which we could be acquainted. On the other hand, many philosophers have hoped to reconstruct the phenomenon of acquaintance in a naturalistic manner that gives no special place to conscious experience in their account.

In this chapter I want, first, to survey the various roles that acquaintance might play in philosophy of language, epistemology, and philosophy of mind; I will then explore the prospects for a naturalistic account of acquaintance to fill these roles; I will argue that while some roles can be filled by a naturalistic theory, others cannot; and finally, I will briefly present a non-naturalistic theory, according to which consciousness just is the relation of acquaintance, and show both how it accomplishes what a naturalistic theory could not but also how it cannot accomplish everything a naturalistic theory can.

## 2. Acquaintance Roles

The first role for acquaintance concerns philosophy of language, one made prominent by Russell (1905). This is the role of semantic primitive. According to Russell, the only terms that are genuine referring expressions, as opposed to (disguised) descriptions, are terms for entities with which we are acquainted, like sense-data.

<sup>1</sup> For the *locus classicus* see Russell (1912).

Normal proper names, for instance, only designate their bearers because they satisfy associated definite descriptions.

But whether or not one adheres to such a strict notion of reference as Russell's, something has to play the role of semantic primitive. It's clear that the compositional mechanisms of our language cannot serve to generate an infinite class of interpretations for the infinite class of sentences unless there is first a primitive assignment to the atomic expressions of the language. But if a term is genuinely atomic, so not definable in other terms, then there must be a means for connecting the term to its referent without mediation by other conceptual mechanisms—that is, it must acquire its interpretation 'directly', as it's sometimes put. It would be natural to call the mechanism of direct reference 'acquaintance'.

Another job for acquaintance comes from epistemology. A natural thought regarding justification, and one that underlies Descartes's quest for indubitable foundations, is that justification for one belief cannot consist in an endless string of justificatory relations among beliefs, but must bottom out with beliefs that stand in no need of justification themselves—the foundational beliefs. One way to demarcate the set of foundational beliefs is to say that they consist in beliefs that are based on a relation of acquaintance. If I believe that there is a reddish, roundish object in front of me, that belief requires no more justification than my direct acquaintance with that object. Obviously nowadays foundationalism is not the only game in town, but it's still one of the main contenders, and the role an acquaintance relation can play to provide the necessary foundational elements is straightforward.

Another epistemological job for which acquaintance seems well suited is to provide a mechanism for 'objectual', as opposed to propositional knowledge—or 'thing knowledge', rather than 'fact knowledge'. This role has recently been emphasized by Michael Tye (2009), and it's one he exploits in order to respond to Jackson's (1982) famous 'Knowledge Argument' against materialism. (I will discuss Tye's position more below.) Generally it is assumed that items of knowledge are aptly described by 'that-clauses', expressing propositional contents. One knows that snow is white, that the sun is 93 million miles from the earth, and that  $2 + 2 = 4$ . But we also often speak of knowing objects, people, and places. I know New York, Hilary Kornblith, and my car. Indeed, it's pretty standard to describe such objectual knowledge as being acquainted with the place, person, or object in question. So to the extent one holds that objectual knowledge really is a distinct kind of knowledge, not reducible to propositional knowledge, one has reason to regard the relation of acquaintance with favour.

The issue of objectual knowledge is related to a long-standing issue in philosophy of language concerning the distinction between *de re* and *de dicto* belief ascriptions.<sup>2</sup> *De dicto* belief ascriptions, which block quantifying in, attribute relations between subjects and propositions that are general in the sense of not containing individual objects. So with regard to the statement 'John believes that the last person to leave the building should lock the door', we don't consider that

<sup>2</sup> A classic discussion is in Quine (1956).

John stands in any special relation to the last person to leave, but rather stands in the belief relation to the general proposition expressed by the ‘that’-clause.

On the other hand, when we attribute the *de re* belief to John that Sheila should lock the door, we are prepared to say John believes something ‘of Sheila’. David Kaplan (1968) proposed that only statements employing ‘vivid names’ within the scope of the belief operator ascribe *de re* beliefs. A vivid name is one that puts the subject ‘en rapport’ with the object/person in question. Similarly, Gareth Evans (1982) enunciates a principle he calls ‘Russell’s Principle’: ‘that in order to be thinking about an object or to make a judgment about an object, one must know *which* object is in question—one must *know which* object it is that one is thinking about’, which assumes that there is a principled notion of ‘knowing who or what’ someone/something is. Being ‘en rapport’ with someone or something and ‘knowing who or what’ someone or something is, are usually taken to require acquaintance with the object in question.

Related to all of these roles, perhaps underlying them all, is the role of serving as the mechanism of direct cognitive, intentional contact between mind and world. Whenever one thinks of acquaintance, the idea of cognitive immediacy or directness comes to mind. What we can think about might seem to be limited in some way by, or at least bootstrapped from, what we can be acquainted with. Cognitive immediacy is what enables foundational knowledge and primitive semantic interpretation. Acquaintance just isn’t acquaintance without cognitive immediacy.

### 3. A Naturalistic Acquaintance

What I mean by ‘naturalism’ for our purposes is the doctrine that all of the basic properties and relations in nature are non-mental and non-intentional.<sup>3</sup> Any new physical properties and relations discovered or postulated by practitioners of fundamental physics count as natural, for my purposes, so long as they aren’t recognizably mental or intentional. So charm and spin are natural, but a fundamental seeking or thinking are not. Naturalism about the mind, then, is the doctrine that all mental properties and relations are realized by non-mental properties and relations.

Partly because I think it’s true, but also because it’s easier for my exposition, I will assume that the most promising naturalist theory of mind is the Computational-Representational Theory of Mind (CRTM).<sup>4</sup> On this view mental states are relations between subjects and mental representations. The relations are computational in the sense that they are realized in non-mental mechanisms, but serve to underwrite interpretations to the representations under which the operations defined over these representations come out semantically coherent. Thus the functional mechanisms that realize inference look like inferences when the representations involved are assigned the appropriate interpretations. What determines the interpretations is of course a big question for such theories, but for present purposes I will assume some form of ‘information-based semantics’, the idea that a mental representation is about

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of naturalism in philosophy of mind see Levine (2016).

<sup>4</sup> See Fodor (1975) for the classic presentation and defence of the doctrine, and also Rey (1996), from which I took the term ‘CRTM’.

what it's about in virtue of standing in the appropriate causal-covariational relation to its referent.<sup>5</sup>

Let's see how the various roles for acquaintance characterized above would fit into CRTM. While I don't want to rule out non-discursive, iconic representational formats, especially for perceptual systems, let's make the simplifying assumption that all mental representations are language-like, with atomic symbols and complex symbols constructed according to combinatorial principles that determine both well-formedness and compositional semantic values. So the obvious first role for something like acquaintance is to determine the semantic values of the atomic terms, both singular and general.

In Levine (2010a) I explored this question through a discussion of the nature of demonstrative thought. There I distinguished between two kinds of 'meta-semantic' mechanisms: IMMs (intentionally mediated meta-semantic mechanisms) and DMMs (direct meta-semantic mechanisms). Meta-semantics, a term taken from Kaplan (1989), is distinguished from semantics in that the latter tells us what the semantic values of the expressions of a language are, while the former explains how it is that the expressions acquired these semantic values. With regard to the complex expressions of the 'language of thought', we know that their values are determined by the values of the atomic symbols together with the compositional semantic rules that align with the combinatorial syntactic principles of the language. The main meta-semantic question then comes down to how the values of the atomic symbols are determined.

It's plausible that the ultimate DMM, upon which all other meta-semantic mechanisms are based, involves perceptual demonstratives. However precisely we formulate the causal-covariational conditions for a symbol meaning a certain object or property, it seems plausible that our perceptual contact with the object, or instances of the property or kind, play a foundational role. My thinking 'that x' when perceptually confronted with an x seems to serve as the most basic point of intentional contact between mind and world. Assuming that an appropriate causal condition that is characterizable in non-intentional terms can be formulated on which a primitive percept is of a particular object, and one's demonstrative thought employs that percept in demonstrating the object, we have the DMM we're looking for. What's more, the kind of cognitive contact we enjoy with the objects we can perceptually demonstrate seems appropriately described as a form of acquaintance. So here we have a naturalistic account of acquaintance that seems to fill one of its most important roles.

Let's turn to epistemological roles. The two related ones we described above were: serving as the foundational elements in justification and constituting a ground of certainty, thus allowing the ultimate justifiers to themselves not require justification. Sense-data clearly played these roles, as did 'clear and distinct' ideas for Descartes. Can the items we identified above, the objects of perceptual demonstratives, also play the epistemological roles? To an extent, and given some qualifications, I'd say that they can.

<sup>5</sup> See Dretske (1981) and Fodor (1990).

When it comes to certainty, there is no naturalistically realizable cognitive relation that can deliver. The objects of perception, available for demonstration, are not guaranteed to be as I perceive them to be, nor to be there at all. But most epistemologists have long given up the quest for absolutely certain foundations, allowing error to creep in right from the very start. What does matter, however, if we are to preserve any notion of an epistemological foundation, is that there be elements in the chain of justification that are not themselves justified by, or even cognitively affected by, other elements in the chain. That is, that there be something that plays the role of ‘the Given’.

One way to achieve this foundational character for perceptual judgement is to endorse a version of the modularity thesis. According to Fodor (1983), perceptual and other ‘input’ systems (specifically, language), are ‘informationally encapsulated’. That is, the process of forming a percept is essentially ‘bottom up’, so all that the perceptual systems have to go on in formulating their hypotheses concerning the distal environment are the impinging energy on the system’s receptors and a highly restricted data base of information concerning general features of the external world. What one expects, desires, or believes, on this view, does not affect what one sees.

Fodor himself emphasizes how the modularity thesis helps deliver a principled observation-theory distinction, and therefore also a notion of intersubjective objectivity. Two people can differ in myriad ways in their world views, coming from perhaps wildly different cultures, yet still be constrained to see the litmus paper as blue (assuming it is and their visual system is working properly and in decent light). The primitive cognitive relation between world and percept will not deliver certainty, but it still can deliver, if the perceptual psychology works out right, a foundation.

However one comes down on Fodor’s modularity thesis, it does seem that a Given can only be reconstructed within the naturalistic framework of CRTM if there is a principled cognition-perception boundary. If one assimilates perception into cognition, or vice versa, one loses any basis for isolating some representations as foundational, having the Given as their contents. But of course those who seek to blur this line also disparage the notion of the Given and so don’t mourn its loss.

Let’s turn to the question of objectual knowledge and the related issue of *de re* knowledge. As described in Section 2, *de re* knowledge (or belief) entails a principled notion of knowing who or what something is. I can believe that the best student in the class (whoever it turns out to be) will get an A without knowing who that student is, but I can’t believe *of* the best student in the class that she will get an A without knowing who she is; or, as we might say, without knowing her. This seems to entail that there is a principled distinction to be made between those people, or objects generally, I can be said to know and those I can’t. But can such a distinction be maintained?

To my mind this distinction is a pragmatic one, and applies differently depending on context. If asked whether I know Donald Trump, I’d say ‘no’. If asked, do I know who Donald Trump is, I’d say ‘yes’. Usually questions about knowing someone or something, or knowing who/what someone/something is involve a contextually determined set of criteria for an affirmative answer. Does one know the person’s name? Does one know the generally known facts about the person? Is one personally ‘acquainted with’ the person?—a question that itself has contextually determined

criteria. To illustrate that last point, note that even if one has a perceptual encounter with Donald Trump, which seems the best candidate for a principled non-pragmatic sense of being acquainted with him, for most conversational purposes it doesn't count as being acquainted with him. Otherwise all those people who attended his rallies—or have seen him on TV—would count as being acquainted with him.

The problem I see for coming up with a principled notion of knowing who or what someone/something is underlies the reason I don't think CRTM can underwrite a notion of objectual knowledge. The problem with finding a principled distinction between knowing what something is and not knowing what it is derives from the fact that knowing anything with respect to an object (or person) involves bringing it under a description. If that's the case, then the principled distinction we're looking for would have to be characterized in terms of a distinction between two kinds of description: those that capture what an object is and those that don't. The only principled way I know of for making that distinction appeals to essential properties. But, assuming an object's essential properties are given by scientific descriptions (if they exist at all), most cases of knowing what something is won't count. But any other basis looks hopelessly pragmatic and contextual, appealing to conversational norms and the like.

Notice that even using essential properties as the distinctive factor doesn't quite work. For which descriptions count as expressing an object's essential properties? Take, for instance, the notion of knowing what water is. A number of philosophers have worried about the apparent consequence of externalist semantics for self-knowledge of content.<sup>6</sup> Supposedly when I believe that water is what comes out of my tap I know what I believe—so I know the content of my belief. Some have worried that if it's essential to water that it's composed of H<sub>2</sub>O molecules, then I wouldn't know what it is I believe when believing that water comes out of the tap unless I also believed that water is composed of H<sub>2</sub>O molecules. But if water is in fact identical to a substance that is composed of H<sub>2</sub>O molecules, when I apply the description (or term) 'water' to the stuff coming out of my tap, aren't I in fact attributing to it the property of being composed of H<sub>2</sub>O molecules? What is it I'm lacking? It seems to me that here too, what counts as my knowing what water is depends on contextually determined pragmatic considerations. It's a matter of which and how many descriptions I'm able to apply to the stuff in question, and how explanatorily connected they are.

A premise in the argument above was that the only way we have of characterizing knowledge of a thing involves bringing it under a description. Once we have predication, we have a structure in thought that can be truth-evaluable, and thus a candidate for the object of belief, so long as we also have the interpretations of the predicates and singular terms. We then need to distinguish belief from other propositional attitudes, such as desire, and the only way I know of that CRTM can do that is through functional role. Once we have true (and false) belief characterized, we then need the conditions that must be added to true belief to make it knowledge, and we all know how that endeavour goes. But the main point here is

<sup>6</sup> See Wright et al. (1998) for a number of papers on the topic.

that only with predication can a notion of belief emerge at all, and thus bringing under a description is the basis of any cognitive relation CRTM can underwrite.

As Kant might say, to know an object is to bring it under a concept. But once we do that, especially on CRTM, the object of our cognition is not the object itself, but rather the propositional content that is expressed by the composed representation consisting of the representation of the object and the concept under which we brought it. On CRTM, it seems, the only sort of intentional relation involving a singular term in thought is the representational relation itself; when I use a token of a proper name, or demonstrative, in thought, I am representing the relevant person or object. But this relation of representation, though the fundamental intentional relation, is not really a mental relation itself. Rather, it is the necessary condition for there being any mental relations. I don't represent as a mental act—it isn't something I do—but rather it is something that happens by virtue of my brain's standing in the relevant causal/covariational relation to the object/property. Put another way, it isn't really a relation between the subject and the object, but rather a relation between a representation, a symbol, and the object. But cognition is something the mind—the subject—does, something that goes beyond mere representation, though it presupposes it. On CRTM the only way for that to happen is for a predicate to be applied to the singular representation and for the subject to stand in the appropriate functional/computational relation to the composed singular-predicate representation.

To illustrate my point about the non-mental character of primitive representation, consider this contrast between two ways of representing exemplified by the practice of using 'bitter herbs' during the Passover Seder to symbolize the suffering of the Israelite slaves in Egypt. When I use the bitter herbs in this way, I am mentally associating two objects and deciding to let one represent the other. But I couldn't do that unless the thoughts I had about the bitter herbs and the suffering already met the conditions for representing them. When I thought 'bitter herbs' and 'suffering', that I did without any intention to represent them—I just tokened those representations. What did the representing worked behind my back, as it were; again, it's something that happened to me, I didn't do it. On the other hand, the deliberate employment of the bitter herbs to represent the suffering was indeed something I did; it was a mental act of mine. My point is that where the acquaintance relation for CRTM is doing its work is below the threshold of mental activity, behind the scenes, and so cannot support a principled notion of knowing an object, or knowing what one is referring to or thinking about. We only get genuine mental activity, on CRTM, once representations are combined into a truth-evaluable unit and a functional attitude toward that complex representation is taken.

If this is right, then it undermines a recent argument of Michael Tye's (mentioned above) that seeks to employ the notion of acquaintance to support a principled distinction between 'thing-knowledge' and propositional knowledge. On Tye's view, we can use this distinction to reply to Jackson's 'Knowledge Argument' against materialism. According to the argument, Mary, the super-scientist in the black-and-white room, knows all there is to know about colour vision and colour experience that can be learned from science texts and experiments. When she leaves the room and sees red for the first time she seems to gain some knowledge; namely,

what it's like to see red. According to the argument, since she already knew all of the physical-functional facts before leaving the room, what she learns upon leaving must involve a non-physical-functional fact. This conclusion stands in conflict with materialism.

Tye claims that what happens upon leaving the room is that Mary becomes acquainted with red for the first time and thus acquires objectual knowledge. Knowing what it's like to see red just is being acquainted with red, which can be characterized as acquiring objectual knowledge of red. Since everything she knew in the room about colour consisted of propositional knowledge, it is true that she gains new knowledge upon seeing red for the first time. However, it isn't knowledge of something new—as the argument purports to show—but rather a new kind of knowledge of the very same thing. Since we can capture what Mary learns in terms of her becoming acquainted with red and thereby gaining objectual knowledge of it, we are not forced to posit non-physical-functional properties to adequately characterize Mary's new cognitive state.

While I do think something happens to Mary when she sees red for the first time that is accurately described as her 'becoming acquainted' with red, and thereby gaining objectual knowledge (or non-propositional knowledge, at any rate), as I argued above, I don't believe that CRTM can support this claim—at least not in a principled way. Mere intentional contact, of the sort underwritten by the causal impingement from the red object to the visual system, is not acquaintance, not a kind of cognition at all, but rather the precondition of any cognition. Genuine cognition only begins with a truth-evaluable complex.

The issue of objectual knowledge and the issue of cognitive immediacy, or directness, come down to the same thing I think. I mentioned earlier that underlying all the jobs for acquaintance is its serving as an immediate relation between subject, or mind, and object, or world. We have seen that within the framework of CRTM there is only one point of immediacy, at the foundational level of intentional contact, whereby a symbol comes to have its semantic value by virtue of a DMM. But this fundamental intentional relation, I have argued, is not a genuinely cognitive relation; it holds between symbol and object, not mind and object, and it happens to the subject, and is not something done by the subject. To the extent we want to hold on to a notion of genuine cognitive immediacy through acquaintance, it seems we will have to abandon the naturalistic framework.

This is of course a pretty strong conclusion. One way for a naturalist to respond is to just give up on the notion of cognitive immediacy as an essential feature of acquaintance. After all, just like 'the Given', many items that seem intuitively compelling are subject to ontological expulsion in the name of best overall theory of the world, and why not this robust sort of acquaintance as well? To this I don't have a counter-argument other than to say that I think anyway there are lots of reasons to be suspicious of naturalism about conscious experience, so the case against naturalism doesn't rest here alone.

On the other hand, one might want to push back against the argument above in the following way. What we're looking for is a relation between mental subject and some object that is genuinely cognitive and also immediate so that it adequately conforms to what we intuitively think of as acquaintance. So why, the CRTM naturalist objects,



can't perceiving an object count? After all, we can suppose, as described earlier, that the relation between the perceived object and the percept, by virtue of which the latter is about the former, is non-intentionally mediated. On the other hand, the perceived object isn't merely represented, it's *perceived*—and isn't this just the kind of cognitive relation between subject and object we're looking for?

In reply, I want to make two points. First, I agree that when we perceive an object we do stand in this cognitively immediate relation of acquaintance to it. This may not be the only case of acquaintance, but it certainly is the paradigmatic one. But the question isn't what happens in perception, but whether this thing that so compellingly seems to happen can be adequately explained in terms of CRTM. Second, I contend that it can't. While the primitive intentional relation realized by causal-covariational mechanisms can, perhaps, adequately explain how the percept is about the object, it doesn't yet amount to cognizing the object. What we need here is some attitude toward the representation, and the representation has to 'say something'—if only, there is something out there in such-and-such a location. Again, CRTM seems to give us a way of building an 'awareness that' which is fed from perception to cognition, but I don't see it gets us just 'awareness of' *per se*. The only direct relation is between the percept and the object, and that's just the ground-level representation relation, not, as emphasized above, a genuinely mental relation at all.

#### 4. Acquaintance as a Primitive Non-Natural Relation

For our purposes, what I mean by a 'natural' relation is any relation for which there is a realization theory adverting to only non-mental, non-intentional properties and relations. CRTM counts as a naturalized theory because all mental relations—crucially, the foundational representation relation and the attitude relations—are cashed out in terms of causal or evolutionary history and nomic covariation, or, for the attitudes themselves, functional relations, which are all non-intentionally characterizable. I've argued that a direct, immediate, cognizing relation between subject and object is not something that can be reconstructed in these terms.

What's the relation between acquaintance and consciousness? I propose that they are just one and the same. Of course there has been a lot of literature recently about phenomenal vs. access consciousness, along with much attention devoted to the seemingly peculiar metaphysical features of phenomenal properties.<sup>7</sup> For a long time in philosophy of mind the problem of 'qualia', the older name for phenomenal properties, was strictly distinguished from the problem of intentionality. Qualia—the reddishness of what's it's like to see red, or the qualitative character experienced when smelling a rose—were treated as what Mackie (1977/90), speaking of moral properties, called 'queer' properties. They were thought to be metaphysically non-natural properties that were instantiated in experiential states and what made those states the kinds of phenomenally conscious states they were. If they had any representational features—were about anything—what they represented was thought

<sup>7</sup> For the phenomenal-access consciousness distinction, see Block (1995).

to be accidental, not essential to them. Materialists then tried to show how such apparently queer properties could be realized in natural, ultimately physical properties, while anti-materialists resisted this reductive enterprise.

More recently philosophers have come to question this strict distinction between phenomenal, or qualitative character and intentionality. This has come from both directions: those who want to reduce phenomenal character to intentional content as a way of executing the materialist reduction of the phenomenal,<sup>8</sup> and those who see intentionality as inherent in phenomenal consciousness, and thus undermining even the naturalization of intentionality. The recent popularity of the ‘phenomenal intentionality programme’ is evidence of this latter trend.<sup>9</sup>

I see my current position as within the phenomenal intentionality fold, though with a crucial difference, which I will get to below. Basically, as I see it now, phenomenal consciousness just is a kind of intentional relation—it is pure awareness, or acquaintance, with whatever one is conscious of. There are two slogans of Sartre’s (1956/92) that to me beautifully capture the essential features of conscious awareness: first, that all consciousness is *consciousness of*, and second, that consciousness is ‘nothingness’. The first slogan captures the essentially relational and intentional character of conscious awareness, and the second captures the fact that all there is to conscious experience that is amenable to substantive characterization derives from its object, what it is we are conscious of. In this sense, the recent emphasis on the so-called ‘transparency’ of conscious experience, deriving from G. E. Moore’s discussion, and revived by Harman (1990), is also consonant with Sartre’s view of the ‘for itself’ as non-substantial, a kind of ‘nothingness’.

I propose, then, to treat consciousness as just the same thing as conscious awareness, which is the same thing as this special relation of acquaintance we’ve been trying to pin down. Consciousness (phenomenal consciousness, the only kind I’m talking about here) is not, then, a matter of instantiating certain ‘queer’, ‘feely’ properties, but rather a matter of *experiencing*, or *being acquainted with*, a world that is *presented* to the subject.<sup>10</sup>

I will call the relation ‘Conscious Awareness’ (or the CA relation), and my claim is that this relation is what constitutes both phenomenal consciousness and acquaintance. As I conceive of it, CA is a primitively intentional relation holding between the subject of conscious experience and whatever objects the subject is consciously aware of. One interesting question is what the nature of the object of conscious awareness is, and just which ontological categories are represented there—concrete objects, properties, or perhaps also propositional contents. By saying the relation is ‘primitively intentional’ I mean that its intentionality is not constituted by a non-intentional relation (or combination of such relations), such as causal covariation. It holds of its relata as a basic relation. I also mean to convey that the intentionality is inherent in the relation itself, and not a matter (as with CRTM) of inheriting its

<sup>8</sup> See Harman (1990), Dretske (1995), and Tye (1995).

<sup>9</sup> See Kriegel (2013) for a number of papers generally supporting this line.

<sup>10</sup> I have discussed this view in three previous papers, Levine (2006, 2008, and 2010b). In those papers I referred to the CA relation as the ‘AA’ relation, standing for Acquaintance Appearance.

intentionality from the intentionality of a representation tokened by the subject. So, to take a paradigmatic instance of conscious awareness, when I visually experience my computer screen as I type, I, the subject, am consciously aware of the screen. This is a relation I bear to the screen. This relation—being aware of the screen—is thereby intentional, as it is directed upon, in some sense about, the screen. But, to repeat, this isn't a matter of my bearing an attitude toward a token in my head that represents the screen. The intentionality is primitively in the relation of awareness itself, not in some representation that mediates my relation to the screen.

In Section 2 I listed a number of functions that acquaintance has been asked to play in the literature, so let's see how CA does. Let's begin with the job that seemed troublesome for the CRTM model of acquaintance, capturing the phenomenon of objectual knowledge. Now 'knowledge' is a tricky word, with relations to truth, belief, and justification built in. So whatever is meant by 'objectual knowledge', it's important not to engender these commitments in analysing it. Rather, as Chomsky did a long time ago for another purpose, let's consider a more neutral term, like 'cognize'. I think what people mean by saying that acquaintance affords objectual knowledge of what we are acquainted with can be captured by saying that acquaintance with an object is a form of cognizing it. Cognizing is intentional, but it goes beyond mere representation in being cognitive—involving the mind's 'taking in' the object in question, 'grasping' it. Whether it meets all the conditions one requires for full-fledged knowledge is irrelevant here.

Consider again Tye's attempt to respond to the Knowledge Argument by appealing to objectual knowledge. He argued that though Mary knew all the facts about red and experiences of red before leaving the room, she did gain a new kind of knowledge when she saw red for the first time, namely objectual knowledge. So there was no new subject matter, but rather a new mode of cognizing. Since the Knowledge Argument seemed to rely on there being new things known, not a new way of knowing, this response plausibly undermined the argument.

But if what I've presented above is right, Tye's response doesn't help the materialist. Perhaps what it is Mary is acquainted with is in fact identical to some physical (or physically realized) property, though we will have reason to reject that presently. Still, the relation of acquaintance, the kind that supports cognizing an object (or property, taking 'object' here quite loosely), is itself a basic intentional relation, so we still have ontological commitments that take us beyond those of materialism.

In this section I've introduced the CA relation and characterized it as a basic, intentional, cognitive relation between conscious subject and the objects of which the subject is conscious. I claimed that one of the chief features of the traditional notion of acquaintance—that it affords a different kind of knowledge, objectual knowledge—can be sustained for the CA relation, but not for any version of acquaintance constructible within the naturalistic CRTM. But what about the other features of acquaintance we discussed above, the ones which CRTM seemed capable of capturing? Interestingly, I think CA actually cannot do that work, and so I argue for a division of labour when it comes to acquaintance. The reasons I say this also bear on the difference between my view of phenomenal intentionality and that of many others who talk about it.

## 5. The Division of Intentional Labour

In order to develop the points I want to make here, it's helpful to begin with a question I haven't yet addressed: what are the objects of conscious awareness, or acquaintance? Acquaintance is normally thought to relate us at least to concrete objects and their properties. So when Mary sees a red tomato for the first time after leaving the black and white room she becomes acquainted both with the tomato and with its redness. Tomatoes are concrete physical objects, and redness, let's assume for now, is some complex property of the surface involving its spectral reflectance profile. Does the CA relation hold between a conscious subject and these physical objects and properties?

I think there are two reasons to answer in the negative. For one thing, though I have displaced 'queer' qualia from being the defining feature of phenomenal consciousness, focusing instead on the inherently and primitively intentional relation of conscious awareness, there is still something 'queer' about qualitative properties like redness, the odour of a rose, and the taste of coffee, not to mention the feeling of pain. For all the reasons I and other anti-materialists have argued there is an explanatory gap between the phenomenal and the physical/functional, it doesn't seem plausible to identify qualities like redness with, say, surface spectral reflectances, or the qualitative characters of phenomenal states with internal physical/functional states.<sup>11</sup>

The secondary qualities generally appear singular in two ways. First, as purely qualitative and intrinsic properties, they don't seem identifiable with a causal role property, and it seems that all the properties that are appealed to in any naturalistic account of the world are ultimately reducible to something like a causal role. As Chalmers (1996) has emphasized, physical properties ultimately are either structural or functional, and the secondary qualities seem to be neither of these.

The second singular feature of the secondary qualities is their especially intimate connection to conscious awareness. In (Levine 2006) I described properties like redness, loudness, and painfulness as 'ways of appearing'. Following to an extent Berkeley's view that for the sensible qualities 'esse et percipi', it seems essential to, say, colour that it is a way of appearing to a conscious subject, just as pain seems to be. If this is right, then what seems to be the case is that conscious awareness relates us to properties that themselves are inherently tied to their being objects of conscious awareness. Only within conscious experience do ways of appearing seem to be instantiated. If this is right, then it isn't the actual external physical properties of objects with which we are acquainted, but rather properties that themselves have no existence outside of conscious experience.

What then about the concrete objects themselves? Perhaps the redness of the tomato is a property it has only in the context of being the object of conscious awareness (in particular, visual experience), but one might think it's still the case that the tomato itself is a direct object of acquaintance. By experiencing its redness I am aware of the tomato. However, what do we do about hallucination?

<sup>11</sup> See Chalmers (1996) and Levine (2001) for extended arguments on this question.

As I am eschewing a representational theory of conscious awareness in favour of a direct intentional relation between subject and object, it might seem I should adopt the view of many ‘direct perception’ theorists on the question of hallucination; namely, ‘disjunctivism’.<sup>12</sup> On that view, the phenomenal state one is in when veridically viewing a tomato is fundamentally distinct from the one we are in when hallucinating a tomato, and the difference is that the former is essentially a relation between the subject and the tomato.

I personally do not want to adopt disjunctivism, for two reasons. First, I do think there’s something fundamentally in common between veridical and hallucinatory experiences—I think the structure of conscious awareness is the same in both cases. I won’t argue for this here, but it’s one of my principal reasons for rejecting disjunctivism. Second, even if disjunctivism were right, there is still the question of how to characterize the objects of acquaintance in hallucinatory experiences.

Of course one thing to say is that when hallucinating one is acquainted with nothing. But this seems inadequate. Imagine occupying a visual state that is qualitatively, for you, just the same as you would have were you looking at a ripe tomato in good light. Perhaps you’re a brain in a vat. Clearly we want to say that there is something it’s like for you to have this experience, and also that experiencing redness partly characterizes what it is like. But if conscious awareness is relational, and the contents of experience are what it is you are conscious of, then we have to say something about the status of the apparent red tomato in your hallucinatory experience.

Once we find ourselves required to find an object for hallucinatory experiences, it only makes sense to provide the same sort of object for veridical experiences and unify the two categories. What I propose is that conscious awareness involves a relation between subjects of conscious experience and a ‘virtual world’, one that is composed of the (virtual) objects and properties we seem to encounter in experience. While this might sound like a sense-data doctrine—and indeed does bear some similarity to it—it is different in the following way. I don’t take there to be individual qualities that obtain in a mental realm and that somehow combine in a way to form the normal objects of experience. Rather, I take conscious experience to be the result of a constructive process which begins with a structured and complex description of a world surrounding the subject and which then is presented in its structural complexity to the subject as what she is consciously aware of.

What is the input to this constructive process? I propose that the input is precisely the representations of the world produced by our naturally realized cognitive and perceptual systems. An analogy I like is to consider conscious experience to be a movie (or ‘Cartesian Theater’ if you like) and the ongoing, constantly updated cognitive/perceptual representation of the world to be its script. The reason I think you have to tie the contents of the virtual world—with the conscious subject as its sole audience member—to the systems studied by cognitive science is that so much of the fine-grained structure of conscious experience is explained by the natural cognitive and perceptual systems. One of the principal arguments materialists have been

<sup>12</sup> For direct perception and disjunctivism see Brewer (2011) and Martin (2004).

making for decades is that by appeal to the functional structure of cognition and perception—as revealed through cognitive science—one can explain quite a lot about the nature of our experience. This has led many philosophers and cognitive scientists to then infer that conscious experience just is the tokening of the relevant cognitive and perceptual representations; a conclusion that then also allows them to dispense with the non-materialist metaphysics one is otherwise stuck with. I find the evidence of the intimate connection between the representational structure produced by cognition and perception and the fine-tuned structure of conscious experience to be extremely persuasive. However, rather than reduce the latter to the former, for all the reasons cited above, I am inclined to see the latter as determined by the former in the way just described. That is, in conscious experience we somehow (and this is the non-naturalistic part) get a conversion from a systematic representation of the world in our brains to a (virtual) world of objects and qualities presented to us, as subjects, to be aware of.

If we see conscious experience as this output of the cognitive machine in our brain—that device captured by CRTM—then two interesting and related consequences follow. First, unlike most of the philosophers who have signed on to the ‘phenomenal intentionality programme’, I do not see phenomenal intentionality as the source of all intentionality, the ground of so-called ‘original intentionality’. Most philosophers who have discussed intentionality have distinguished between ‘derived’ intentionality and ‘original’ intentionality. Standard examples of the former are the intentional properties of natural language systems and the representational properties of various symbols and pictures. Usually the semantic features of computer languages are included in the derived category. What makes these vehicles possess only derived intentionality is that their meaning what they mean depends on the intentional states of people’s mental states (and intentionally sustained conventions). The idea, then, is that the intentional buck stops with our own minds.

Now some philosophers have, understandably, despaired of there being a naturalistic account of original intentionality, finding the nomic-covariation and related accounts associated with CRTM to be inadequate. So some have looked to the intentionality of conscious experience—phenomenal intentionality—as the only truly original form of intentionality, and to then accord intentional status to unconscious brain states by virtue of their causal or other relations to conscious experience. Thus, on this view, all intentionality outside phenomenal intentionality is derived.<sup>13</sup>

However, on the view I’ve taken here—that conscious experience is the result of the computational-representational activity of the mind-brain—one cannot consider the intentionality of this very constructive activity to be derived from its result. In some sense the intentionality of the script must precede that of the movie. I am not saying that phenomenal intentionality, the intentionality of conscious experience, is derivative from that of the computational machine in the way that the intentionality of natural language and artificial symbol systems is. For one thing, as I emphasized above, phenomenal intentionality is intrinsically embedded in the relation of conscious awareness, which itself I treat as a basic, non-naturalistic

<sup>13</sup> Again, see a number of papers in Kriegel (2013).

relation. Secondly, when it comes to the pure qualities like colour, odour, pains, and tickles, they first make their appearance within the virtual world of conscious experience, so intentional directedness on them can't be derivative from the representational states realized in the computational mechanisms of the brain. I did say their fine-tuned structure is governed by the computational mechanism, but this doesn't extend to their intrinsic qualitative character. So on my view, there are two sources of original intentionality: one that is grounded in whatever naturalistic causal or nomic relations that attach the computational mechanism to the world, and the other that arises within conscious experience. Neither one is derivative, in the requisite sense, from the other, though one is a (causal) result of the other.

So while I hold that there is a kind of *sui generis* phenomenal intentionality, I do not hold that it is the basis for all intentionality. But this entails another consequence, taking us back to the original list of jobs that acquaintance is supposed to perform. Epistemologically, acquaintance was supposed to provide the Given for justification, and metaphysically and semantically it was supposed to provide the locus of mind-world connection. We saw earlier how the kind of acquaintance that is constructible within CRTM could plausibly fill these roles, to the extent one held they needed filling. (That is, many reject both foundationalism in epistemology and the very existence of a Given.) But if I am right in my characterization of conscious awareness, then it can't fill these roles for acquaintance. The fundamental mind-world connection is provided on my model by the computational machine, while the relation holding between conscious subject and virtual world is a reflection of the base level relation. Similarly, when it comes to justification, which must advert to truth conditions that involve a genuinely mind-independent world, there too all the foundational work—if there be any—is done by the interaction between stimuli from the world impinging on our sense organs. What we are conscious of is a function of what impinges on us together with what the computational machine already represents, and so is not a further input into that machine. When I enjoy the visual experience of my typing on the computer screen in front of me, all the evidence for my beliefs has already been processed and cognitive conclusions drawn before my conscious awareness sets in. What I see in the Cartesian Theatre is, on this view, but an epiphenomenal display of the results of the work going on behind and under it.

## 6. Conclusion

In this chapter I have surveyed various jobs that the notion of acquaintance has been assigned by philosophers over the years. These include both epistemological and semantic, or intentional jobs. I've argued that a naturalistic account of acquaintance consistent with the programme of CRTM can capture many of these roles, but not the role of exemplifying objectual knowledge. A non-naturalistic account of acquaintance that just takes it to be the non-naturalistic relation of conscious awareness does capture this immediate cognizing of an object by a conscious subject, but it cannot play the epistemic and semantic roles for which CRTM is well suited. If I am right, we need two different theories of intentionality to cover two different phenomena: the intentionality of the states studied in cognitive science and the intentionality of conscious experience.

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