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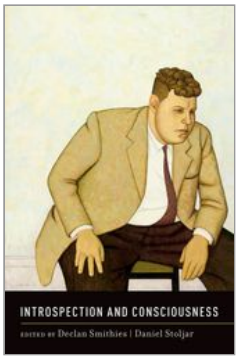

Introspection and Consciousness
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Renewed Acquaintance

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter elaborates and defends a set of metaphysical and epistemic claims that comprise what is called the *acquaintance approach* to introspective knowledge of the phenomenal qualities of experience. The hallmark of this approach is the thesis that, in some introspective judgments about experience, (phenomenal) reality intersects with the epistemic, that is, with the subject's grasp of that reality. While this approach is a descendant of Russell's acquaintance theory, it is epistemically more modest than that theory. The chapter shows that the acquaintance approach's hallmark thesis does not carry the ambitious epistemic implications often associated with acquaintance views. And the chapter defends that thesis from objections stemming from what is required for an epistemically substantial grasp of the phenomenal, and from Stalnaker's worry that, if the thesis were true, information about the phenomenal would be incommunicable.

Keywords: acquaintance, epistemic justification, introspection, knowledge, phenomenal, phenomenal concepts, Bertrand Russell, self-knowledge

Pinch yourself (gently). By focusing your attention on the phenomenal quality of the sensation that results, you can come to know something about your current experience. Philosophers generally agree on this

much. Yet there is widespread and profound disagreement about what this kind of knowledge consists in, and how it is achieved. These issues have recently gained prominence because of their perceived significance for the question of physicalism about the mind.[1] My concern here is not, however, with that question, but only with the nature of this introspective knowledge itself.

I will elaborate and defend a set of metaphysical and epistemic claims that comprise what I call the *acquaintance approach* to introspective knowledge of the phenomenal qualities of experience. The hallmark of this approach is the thesis that, in some introspective judgments about experience, (phenomenal) reality intersects with the epistemic, that is, with the subject's grasp of that reality. This thesis—or something close to it—is implied by the claim that we sometimes grasp our experiences directly, by using an experience's defining phenomenal quality to form an epistemically substantive conception of the experience itself. BonJour (2003), Chalmers (2003), Fales (1996), Feldman (2004) Fumerton (1995), Gertler (2001), Horgan and Kriegel (2007), and Pitt (2004) give accounts of introspection along these lines.

(p.94) The acquaintance approach is a set of claims about our introspective knowledge of the phenomenal that captures the spirit of these accounts. This is not to say that all of those just mentioned will accept each of the claims that comprise the acquaintance approach. My goal is to explicate and defend the core thesis shared by these views, namely, that a grasp of a current experience can represent an *intersection* between phenomenal reality and the epistemic. But some of those just listed may take issue with my way of unpacking this thesis and my means of defending it.

The acquaintance approach is inspired by Russell's theory of acquaintance, from which it derives its name. But the approach diverges from that theory in significant ways. In section 1 of the chapter I outline the acquaintance approach by drawing on its Russellian lineage. A more detailed picture of the approach emerges in succeeding sections, which respond to a range of objections. Some critics charge that approaches of this sort are overly idealized, in that they ignore the cognitive flaws and limitations of actual human beings. I begin to address these worries in section 2, by arguing that the epistemic commitments of the acquaintance approach are in fact relatively modest. In section 3, I sketch a picture of introspective reference that explains how phenomenal reality can intersect with the epistemic in a phenomenal judgment, as the acquaintance approach requires. Drawing on this picture of introspective reference, section 4 sets out a practical strategy for achieving knowledge by acquaintance. Some

contemporary acquaintance theorists (BonJour 2003, Fumerton 1996) employ demanding epistemic standards for knowledge by acquaintance, standards beyond those mandated by the acquaintance approach. In section 5 I show that instances of introspective knowledge that meet less demanding standards can satisfy the acquaintance approach's epistemic commitments. The final sections concern the most direct challenges to the acquaintance approach, which target the claim that phenomenal reality intersects with the epistemic. According to one such challenge, this claim is belied by the fact that possessing a phenomenal concept is a matter of having certain dispositions. Section 6 draws on a discussion by Sosa (2003) to articulate this challenge, and responds to it on behalf of the acquaintance approach. Section 7 addresses Stalnaker's (2008) worry that, if phenomenal reality intersected with the epistemic, phenomenal information would be incommunicable.

1. The Acquaintance Approach

The acquaintance approach is inspired by Russell's claim that we are acquainted with certain aspects of mentality. Here is Russell's characterization of acquaintance.

> (p.95) We shall say that we have acquaintance with anything of which we are directly aware, without the intermediary of any process of inference or any knowledge of truths. (Russell 1912, 73)

To determine whether you are acquainted with an object, Russell says, you should consider whether you can doubt the object's existence. If you cannot, your awareness of the object is direct; you are therefore acquainted with the object.

Russell does not provide an analysis of the acquaintance relation. Perhaps on his view this relation can be fully grasped only through acquaintance (ibid., 79). But it seems clear that Russellian acquaintance has both an epistemic and a metaphysical dimension. When I am acquainted with an object, my awareness of that object is epistemically direct: it is noninferential and does not epistemically depend on an awareness of anything else. My awareness is also metaphysically direct: there is no object, fact, event, or process that mediates my access to the object.

Russell's picture suggests that, if my access to the object were not metaphysically direct, I would be able to doubt the object's existence. For instance, on Russell's view my awareness of the table I see before me is metaphysically indirect; it is mediated by a causal process (involving light reflecting off of the table, striking my retina, and causing a visual experience). The presence of this mediating factor enables me to doubt the existence of the table, since I can recognize that, for all I know, my visual experience has an aberrant cause. So while the criterion for acquaintance is indubitability—an epistemic and/or psychological phenomenon—the acquaintance relation itself is both epistemic and metaphysical.

The idea that awareness can be both metaphysically and epistemically direct is the basis for the acquaintance approach developed here. But that approach diverges significantly from Russell's theory. The acquaintance approach is exclusively concerned with introspective knowledge, whereas Russell's theory has a much broader scope.[2] The acquaintance approach takes introspective knowledge to consist in occurrent judgments, whereas on Russell's theory knowledge by acquaintance is a nonpropositional knowledge of things. And the acquaintance approach remains neutral on some especially controversial aspects of Russell's view, including the commitment to

sense data, the idea that acquaintance is the foundation of all knowledge, and the claim that acquaintance with an object suffices for knowing it “perfectly and completely” (ibid., 73).

(p.96) The acquaintance approach’s defining claim is that some introspective knowledge possesses modified versions of the characteristics Russell ascribes to knowledge by acquaintance. As we will see, even this sharply restricted position is highly controversial.

The acquaintance approach adopts, in qualified form, three key elements of Russell’s theory. The first element concerns the metaphysical dimension of the acquaintance relation. On Russell’s view, acquaintance is a relation between subjects and things known: in the case of introspective knowledge of mental states, the objects of acquaintance are “events which happen in our minds” (ibid., 77). But because the acquaintance approach takes knowledge of phenomenal states to be knowledge of truths rather than knowledge of things, on that approach the salient direct relation obtains between a judgment—such as the judgment *I am experiencing pain*—and the mental event that is its truthmaker, e.g. the pain experience itself.[3]

Russell does not explain what, precisely, his “directness” requires. But it is clear from his remarks about perceptual awareness that no merely causal link between a subject and an object is direct in the sense required for acquaintance. The acquaintance approach similarly contends that introspective knowledge is sometimes metaphysically direct, in that the relation between an introspective judgment and its truthmaker is not merely causal. This is the first defining commitment of the acquaintance approach.

> *Direct Tie to Truthmakers*; Some introspective knowledge consists in judgments that are tied to their truthmakers *directly*, where the relevant notion of directness is metaphysical and not (merely) causal.

How might an introspective judgment like *I am experiencing pain* be directly tied to its truthmaker? Before answering this question, a brief note about the ontology of experiences is in order. I take experiences to be events: namely, instantiations of phenomenal properties in subjects at times. So my current *pain* experience is an instantiation of the phenomenal property *pain* in BG at time *t*. On this construal, the phenomenal property *pain* is strictly a property of the subject, rather than a property of an experience. But for convenience I will usually speak of experienced phenomenal properties, or phenomenal properties

of experience. “I am now (p.97) experiencing *pain*” or “this experience is *painful*” can be parsed as “*pain* is instantiated (in me, now).”[4]

Now to the question of how a judgment such as *I am experiencing pain* could be directly tied to its truthmaker. The leading possibility is that the truthmaker—the subject’s instantiation of the phenomenal property *pain* at a time—directly supplies part of the judgment’s content. This general idea is accepted by numerous philosophers, some of whom reject other commitments that define the acquaintance approach. For instance, Loar ([1990] 1997) says that an experience can directly contribute to the content of a judgment concerning it, by serving as its own mode of presentation (compare Horgan and Kriegel 2007). Others say that an experience embedded in a judgment can directly contribute to the content of that judgment (Gertler 2001), or that an experience can be directly responsible for constituting the content of a judgment (Chalmers 2003), or that an experience can be used to refer to the phenomenal property it exemplifies (Papineau 2007), or that an experience can be cognitively present within a judgment (Levine 2007).[5] Of course, much remains to be said about how, precisely, an experience can directly supply part of a judgment’s content. I address this issue in later sections.

Any judgment that is directly tied to its truthmaker will be true. But this fact carries no immediate epistemic implications. After all, any judgment causally tied to its truthmaker will also be true, though such judgments sometimes fall short of knowledge. I do not know that an evil genius is controlling my thoughts even if my judgment to that effect is caused by its truthmaker.

This brings us to the remaining two elements of Russell’s theory that contribute to the acquaintance approach, which are epistemic. Because Russell denies that knowledge by acquaintance is knowledge of truths, his epistemological position is somewhat difficult to spell out. For instance, we cannot isolate the epistemic basis for knowledge by acquaintance by specifying how such knowledge differs from merely true belief, since on Russell’s view knowledge by acquaintance does not consist in belief or, for that matter, anything that bears a truth value.

(p.98) The best way to identify Russell’s epistemological position as regards knowledge by acquaintance is to ask what makes acquaintance with an object sufficient for knowing the object. That is, what makes this relation to an object truly epistemic rather than, say, a matter of brutely metaphysical contact with the object?

Russell's answer seems to be that acquaintance with an object involves —or perhaps simply consists in—that object's being *immediately present to consciousness*, where such presence is an epistemic matter. This is not very illuminating as an analysis of acquaintance. But the salient point for our purposes is that Russellian knowledge by acquaintance is epistemically grounded exclusively in the presence of certain objects to consciousness.[6]

The acquaintance approach endorses a qualified version of this view, as regards some introspective knowledge. It says that some introspective knowledge is epistemically grounded exclusively in the subject's conscious states. More precisely: the doxastic justification for some introspective judgments that qualify as knowledge consists in conscious states alone. (These may include conscious states that constitute the subject's awareness—e.g., of an introspected pain.) This does not mean that the knowing subject must be aware of the fact that her conscious states play this justifying role. The salient claim, which constitutes the second commitment of the acquaintance approach, is as follows.

> *Justified by Conscious States*: Some introspective knowledge consists in judgments that depend, for their justification, only on the subject's conscious states at the time of the judgment.

The final element of Russell's theory that contributes to the acquaintance approach concerns the epistemic security of knowledge by acquaintance. Recall Russell's claim that, because perceptual knowledge rests on a causal process that renders perceptual awareness indirect, we can doubt the existence of perceptual objects. Russell concludes that no perceptual knowledge is as certain (epistemically secure) as knowledge by acquaintance. More generally, he contends that knowledge by acquaintance is more certain than any other type of knowledge.

The acquaintance approach is not committed to saying that introspective knowledge is absolutely certain, or that every instance of introspective knowledge is especially secure. But it does say that, among introspective judgments that satisfy (p.99) the acquaintance approach's first two commitments, at least some are more strongly justified—possess a greater degree of doxastic justification—than any empirical judgments that do not satisfy these commitments. That is:

> *Especially Strong Justification*: Some introspective judgments are more strongly justified than any empirical judgments that are not

directly tied to their truthmakers or that depend, for their justification, on factors other than the subject's conscious states at the time of the judgment.

A brief note about justification. The notion of justification here is neutral between various conceptions: as a starting point, it can be thought of simply as "the sort of justification that, in sufficient strength, is a necessary condition for knowledge" (Conee and Feldman 2004, 54). Of course, since the introspective judgments in question are justified exclusively by conscious states, the justification in question will meet the requirements of "mentalist" internalism (ibid). And insofar as these conscious states are accessible to the subject, it will also meet the requirements of (at least some versions of) "accessibility" internalism. However, endorsing the acquaintance approach does not commit one to any particular conception of justification. The acquaintance approach concerns only a limited class of introspective judgments; so one could endorse this approach while allowing that judgments outside that class are justified by factors external to the mind and inaccessible to the subject. And even as concerns the class of introspective judgments at issue, this approach is compatible with a range of answers to the question of how the conscious states at issue justify these judgments. (We will briefly examine two competing answers to this question in section 5.) So the current claim, that some introspective judgments are especially strongly justified, is cashed out in different ways by contemporary proponents of the acquaintance approach, corresponding to differences in their conceptions of epistemic justification.

I have isolated three elements in Russell's picture of knowledge by acquaintance.[7] These three elements of Russell's picture, when suitably modified, define the contemporary acquaintance approach to introspective knowledge. The defining thesis of the acquaintance approach is as follows.

Acquaintance Approach: Some introspective knowledge consists in judgments that

1. are directly tied to their truthmakers;
2. depend, for their justification, only on the subject's conscious states at the time of the judgment; and
3. are more strongly justified than any empirical judgments that do not meet conditions (1) and (2).

(p.100) I will use the term "knowledge by acquaintance" to refer to knowledge consisting in judgments that satisfy conditions (1)–(3).[8] So

the distinctive thesis of the acquaintance approach is that some introspective knowledge is knowledge by acquaintance.

The defining thesis of the acquaintance approach is existential in form. The approach is vindicated so long as some introspective knowledge constitutes knowledge by acquaintance; introspective knowledge by acquaintance may be achieved only rarely, and may be possible only as regards a narrow class of states. The existential form of the acquaintance approach's defining thesis means that this approach cannot be refuted by counterexamples.

Knowledge of phenomenal states is widely—and, I believe, rightly—considered the most plausible candidate for knowledge by acquaintance. (For this reason, phenomenal states will be my exclusive focus.) But the acquaintance approach is highly controversial even as regards introspective judgments about phenomenal states. For instance, contemporary versions of the inner sense theory imply that no introspective judgments meet conditions (1) or (2). (See Armstrong [1968] 1993; Goldman 2006; Lycan 1996; Nichols and Stich 2003; for a critical discussion of the inner sense theory see Gertler 2011, ch. 5.) A central tenet of these views is that the relation between an introspective judgment and its truthmaker is essentially similar to the relation between perceptual judgments and their truthmakers: that is, it is a causal relation. Since these inner sense theorists take introspective knowledge to be justified (or warranted) by the reliability of this causal connection between judgments and truthmakers, they also deny that introspective justification depends only on conscious states.[9]

Others reject the idea that introspective judgments are especially well justified, as compared with perceptual judgments, purely on the basis of epistemic considerations.

> (p.101) I suspect [that] … [o]ur judgments about the world to a large extent drive our judgments about our experience. Properly so, since the former are the more secure. (Schwitzgebel 2008, 268)

Even among those who accept that introspective knowledge can be especially secure, many will deny that conscious states can supply justification (or warrant) sufficient for knowledge. That idea is at odds with those brands of epistemic externalism that take justification or warrant to consist in certain regularities, such as those involved in the tracking relation. The acquaintance approach takes the doxastic justification for an introspective judgment to consist in events—namely,

the occurrence (or presence) of certain conscious states—and these events cannot constitute or entail such regularities. So the acquaintance approach implies that justification does not always consist in such regularities.

Relatedly, the acquaintance approach implies that purely dispositional features of the subject, which are not reflected in her conscious states, play no essential role in justifying these introspective judgments. This consequence runs afoul of a widely held view about phenomenal concepts, namely that the possession and justified exercise of a phenomenal concept (like *pain*) at least partly consists in dispositions to recognize states falling under it. (I discuss this issue in section 6.)

Perhaps the most controversial commitment of the acquaintance approach is the claim that reality can intersect with the epistemic: that is, that one's epistemic grasp of a bit of reality—a fact, event, or property—can be partly constituted by that reality itself. This claim will be rejected by those who accept certain semantic views according to which reality is grasped only through representations, either linguistic or nonlinguistic, which mediate between minds and reality. Such views are sometimes motivated by the assertion that thoughts depend, for their representational content, on relations to public objects. (Section 7 responds to an objection along these lines.)

A final source of objections to the acquaintance approach concerns its alleged antiphysicalist implications.[10] I will not address this issue here.

The acquaintance approach is, then, highly controversial. It conflicts with prominent views about the processes involved in introspection, the nature of knowledge, and mental semantics; it may also threaten physicalism. I cannot hope (p.102) to establish the acquaintance approach here, as that would require showing that the approach is preferable to competing views about introspection. But given the range and significance of the approach's controversial implications, demonstrating that key obstacles to the approach can be overcome will constitute genuine philosophical progress. I embark on this project in the next section.

2. The Limited Epistemic Commitments of the Acquaintance Approach

Perhaps because of their Cartesian–Russellian ancestry, acquaintance-type approaches to introspective knowledge are often associated with ambitious epistemic claims—for instance, that we are infallible or

omniscient about our own phenomenal states. But the acquaintance approach is not committed to these claims.

The acquaintance approach is defined by an existential thesis: namely, some introspective knowledge is knowledge by acquaintance. That thesis does not imply that every experience is introspectively accessible. In fact, it does not suggest that a subject's having an experience—even an experience that is of a type sometimes known by acquaintance—bears any substantial epistemic implications for her. So the acquaintance approach is not committed to the claim that some mental states are "self-presenting" in that anyone who has such a state, and considers whether he does, will self-attribute it (Chisholm 1982). It is even compatible with the idea that some persons never achieve introspective knowledge by acquaintance, because they abstain from—or perhaps are incapable of—forming judgments that satisfy (1)–(3).

An analogy will help to illuminate these points. Consider a traditional rationalist claim about mathematical knowledge: some mathematical judgments are based in pure reason and are therefore more strongly justified than any empirical judgments. Those who accept this claim can recognize that we are fallible as regards our mathematical judgments. They can admit that certain mathematical questions are simply too complex for us to resolve (using reason alone), and that questions that could be settled by reason are sometimes addressed through empirical means, as when one relies on a memory of a multiplication table. They can also allow that attempts to arrive at a mathematical judgment by reason alone do not always succeed: one may be careless in one's calculations or biased by antecedent expectations about the result. So claiming that some judgments based in a particular method (such as pure reason or introspection) are very strongly justified does not commit one to saying that subjects are generally reliable in their judgments about issues to which that method is applicable (mathematical truths, one's own current experiences).

(p.103) Recognizing these limits to the acquaintance approach's epistemic commitments will defuse some historically prominent objections. For instance, since the acquaintance theorist (a proponent of the acquaintance approach) need not claim that every experience is introspectible, she can neutralize the famous speckled hen argument. According to the speckled hen argument, when I see a hen with 48 clearly visible speckles on its facing side, my visual experience will differ, phenomenally, from the experience I have when seeing a similar hen with 47 speckles. But I may be unable to introspectively discern this phenomenal difference. The speckled hen argument does not threaten the acquaintance approach, since that approach does not

imply that every phenomenal state can be introspectively known. The acquaintance theorist should allow that “phenomenal properties can outstrip a subject’s ability to make justified judgments about them.” (Fantl and Howell 2003, 380) Our introspective powers are simply unequal to the task of discriminating highly complex phenomenal properties. (Compare: our powers of reason are unequal to the task of resolving highly complex mathematical questions.)

Another objection to acquaintance views is based on the claim (made by Hill 1991, among others) that attempts at introspection can alter the target experience. Stepping back from the epistemic ambitions traditionally associated with such views enables us to accommodate this objection as well. Imagine a radical possibility along these lines. Suppose that certain kinds of experiences are systematically altered by attempts at introspection: whenever one tries to form an introspective judgment about (what is actually) a phenomenal F experience, that experience ceases. In this scenario, we may be unable to achieve introspective knowledge of our F experiences. But this does not threaten the acquaintance approach, since we might nevertheless know some of our experiences by acquaintance. (Compare: a rationalist theory of mathematical knowledge is not threatened by the fact that certain mathematical truths are inaccessible to human reason.)

Moreover, attempts at introspection that alter the target state may nonetheless yield knowledge by acquaintance, though not of the original experience. The introspective judgments that are candidates for knowledge by acquaintance concern one’s current experience, that is, the experience one has at the time of the judgment itself. Such judgments are noncommittal as to whether that experience began before one engaged in introspection, and as to what caused it.

While limiting the acquaintance approach’s epistemic pretensions allows it to sidestep some familiar objections, this move also prompts new worries. The main epistemic commitments of the acquaintance approach are that some introspective judgments are very strongly justified, and depend, for their justification, only on conscious states. But some critics contend that these epistemic features require a more general connection between judgments and truthmakers. They claim, for (p.104) example, that a single introspective judgment to the effect that one is in pain cannot qualify as knowledge—or even as a genuine exercise of the concept *pain*—purely in virtue of one’s conscious states. One must also have certain nonconscious dispositions, for instance to recognize pains across a suitable range of circumstances.

This type of requirement could be met by reinstating some of the weighty epistemic claims that I have put aside. For example, we might ensure that subjects have the appropriate dispositions by maintaining that pains and other phenomenal states are self-presenting, in that anyone who is in pain and has the conceptual resources to consider "am I in pain?" will recognize that he is in pain.[11] Since my defense of the acquaintance approach rests on avoiding epistemic commitments of this sort, the charge that knowledge requires this kind of general connection between judgments and truthmakers presents a challenge for my project. I address that challenge in later sections.

My next task is to explain how phenomenal reality and the epistemic can intersect in a judgment.

3. Demonstrative Attention and Epistemic Appearances

The most promising way of explaining how phenomenal reality can intersect with the epistemic, in an introspective judgment, holds that subjects can refer to the phenomenal qualities of experience with *introspective demonstratives*. A brief review of the more familiar type of demonstratives, perceptual demonstratives, will provide a useful introduction.

The referent of a perceptual demonstrative is the object whose presence and properties causally contribute (in an appropriate way) to the relevant aspect of how things seem to the subject.[12] Consider the following modification of a famous example from Donnellan (1966). I point in a certain direction and say "that man drinking a martini is nattily dressed." My demonstrative "that man drinking a martini" refers to a particular man—Mr. Smith, say—because it is Mr. Smith's appearing in my line of vision and holding a martini glass that make the appropriate causal contribution to its seeming to me that there is a man over there drinking a martini. As Donnellan notes, (p.105) Mr. Smith can make this contribution even if he is not actually drinking a martini. The crucial point is that it is his presence and properties that appropriately contribute to its seeming to me that there is a man drinking a martini, and this might be true even if his martini glass contains only water.[13] In this sense, perceptual demonstratives are grounded in (an aspect of) how things seem to the referring subject.[14]

Like perceptual demonstratives, introspective demonstratives are also grounded in how things seem to the subject. And as in the perceptual case, the referent of my introspective demonstrative is the thing that appropriately contributes to how things seem to me. But on the version of the acquaintance approach I have in mind, there is a key difference between perceptual and introspective demonstratives (of the type

which concerns us[15]). In introspective demonstration the referent's contribution to how things seem is not, or not merely, causal. When you pinch yourself and attend to the sensation that results, it seems to you that your experience has a certain phenomenal property. This aspect of how things seem to you can ground your demonstrative reference to the property, as "*this* phenomenal property." The referent of this demonstrative is (let us assume) the phenomenal property *pinching*, since that property is what appropriately contributes to this aspect of how things seem to you. But whereas in the previous example Mr. Smith's presence and properties causally contributed to how things seemed, in this case the nature of the phenomenal property (that it is *pinching* rather than, say, *tickling*), and its instantiation in your experience, *constitutes* the relevant aspect of how things seem.

Two questions about this type of introspective demonstrative reference immediately arise. First, what are the referents of introspective demonstratives? And second, what kind of "seeming" grounds these demonstratives?

We should be liberal about the referents of introspective demonstratives, just as we are liberal about the referents of perceptual demonstratives. Depending on the subject's referential intentions, a perceptual demonstrative might refer to an object, (p.106) property, or event. For instance, I might refer to *that man drinking a martini* (an object), or *that color of a martini* (a property), or *that spilling of a martini* (an event). Similarly, an introspective demonstrative might refer to a mental object such as a sense datum (if there are such), a mental property, or a mental event. My discussion here will focus on introspective demonstrative reference to properties—in particular, phenomenal properties. Such reference can occur in a judgment of the form *this property is instantiated (in me, now)*, where "this" refers to a phenomenal property.

So the proposal is this. When I attend to the feel of my pinching experience, that experience—the instantiation of *pinching*—constitutes an aspect of how things seem to me. This aspect of how things seem to me grounds my demonstrative reference to the phenomenal property, when (while attending to the experience) I judge that *this property is instantiated (in me, now)*. The demonstrative "this property" refers to the phenomenal property (*pinching*) whose instantiation constitutes that aspect of how things seem to me. (Compare: in the perceptual case, "that man" refers to the man whose presence and properties causally contribute to the relevant aspect of how things seem to me.)

In the judgment *this property is instantiated (in me, now)*, the term "this" expresses what Chalmers calls a "direct phenomenal concept."

> The clearest cases of direct phenomenal concepts arise when a subject attends to the quality of an experience, and forms a concept wholly based on the attention to the quality, "taking up" the quality into the concept. (Chalmers 2003, 235)

I have said that an aspect of how things seem to me grounds the demonstrative "this" in my judgment *this property is instantiated (in me, now)*. Notice, however, that that judgment also expresses the relevant aspect of how things seem to me, e.g., that I am now having a *pinching* experience. This is precisely the aspect of how things seem that is constituted by my experience itself. So my judgment *this property is instantiated (in me, now)* is directly tied to its truthmaker, my *pinching* experience. It thus appears to satisfy condition (1) of the acquaintance approach.

But this last claim invites an objection, concerning the nature of the "seeming" at issue.

> Philosophers who speak of "appearances" or "seemings" in discussing consciousness invite conflation of the epistemic and phenomenal senses of these terms. They thus risk breathing an illegitimate air of indefeasibility into our reflections about phenomenology. "It appears that it appears that such-and-such" may have the look of redundancy, but on disambiguation the redundancy vanishes: "it epistemically seems to me that my phenomenology is such-and-such." No easy argument renders this statement self-verifying. (Schwitzgebel 2008, 263)

(p.107) This distinction between epistemic and phenomenal appearance threatens the proposal just sketched. How things *phenomenally* seem to me is simply a matter of the phenomenal reality: that is, of the phenomenal properties I instantiate. But what my judgments express, and what grounds my demonstratives, is how things seem to me *epistemically*: roughly, what I believe, or am inclined to believe.

The "air of indefeasibility" Schwitzgebel mentions stems from a familiar thought: that "in the case of phenomenal consciousness there is no gap between appearance and reality, because the appearance *just is* the reality: how the phenomenal character seems, to the agent, is how it is" (Horgan, this volume). This thought is plausible as regards phenomenal appearances, since how an experience phenomenally appears just is its phenomenal reality. But as both Schwitzgebel and Horgan note, it is mistaken as regards epistemic appearances. For instance, what epistemically appears to me to be a *47-speckledness*

experience may, in (phenomenal) reality, be a *48-speckledness* experience. What I am inclined to believe about the experience may diverge from its phenomenal reality.

Schwitzgebel's objection suggests that introspective judgments express how things epistemically appear, not how they phenomenally appear. Since there is a gap between epistemic appearance and phenomenal reality, such judgments are not directly tied to the phenomenal reality itself. According to this objection, then, they are not directly tied to their truthmakers.

One might respond to this objection by maintaining that introspective judgments, and the demonstratives they involve, differ from perceptual judgments and demonstratives. Whereas perceptual judgments express (and perceptual demonstratives are grounded in) epistemic appearances, introspective judgments express (and introspective demonstratives are grounded in) phenomenal appearances. However, this response is not promising. Denying that introspective demonstratives express how things epistemically seem would cast doubt on the cognitive significance of introspective judgments. If an introspective judgment does not express how things seem to me epistemically, it is hard to see how the judgment could have genuine cognitive significance for me, or why it should even be regarded as a judgment.

The acquaintance theorist should, then, acknowledge that it is epistemic appearances that are expressed in introspective judgments and that ground introspective demonstratives. Moreover, she should accept that epistemic appearances sometimes diverge from the phenomenal reality, as Schwitzgebel's objection implies. Since the defining commitment of the acquaintance approach is an existential thesis about some instances of introspective knowledge, that approach requires only that epistemic appearances sometimes converge with phenomenal reality. The acquaintance theorist should respond to Schwitzgebel's objection by saying that *when an introspective judgment about experience qualifies as knowledge by acquaintance*, the aspect (p.108) of how things epistemically seem that is expressed in that judgment is constituted by how they phenomenally seem—that is, by the phenomenal reality.

According to this response, some introspective judgments about the phenomenal qualities of experience play dual, epistemic-and-metaphysical roles. They express how things epistemically seem to the subject, and they are directly tied to their truthmakers, the phenomenal

reality they concern. (As we will see in sections 6 and 7, many who reject the acquaintance approach do so precisely because they deny that a judgment can play these dual roles.)

So the acquaintance theorist should say that, while there is sometimes a gap between epistemic appearances and phenomenal reality, in some introspective judgments the epistemic intersects with phenomenal reality.

To understand how this could work, let us consider in more detail the kinds of factors that can affect epistemic appearances. Factors shaping how things epistemically appear include: one's situation, relative to the object or state of affairs in question; the direction of one's attention; and one's background beliefs. These factors clearly contributed to its seeming to me that there was a man (over there) drinking a martini. Mr. Smith was in my line of vision; I directed my attention towards him; and I had the background belief that glasses of a certain shape usually contain martinis. These factors can also shape how experiences epistemically appear. My position relative to an experience—most importantly, whether the experience is mine or someone else's—plainly shapes how it appears to me. And the direction of my attention has an obvious effect as well. When I turn my attention to the taste of the coffee I have been absentmindedly drinking, the epistemic appearance of this gustatory experience may grow more nuanced.[16]

Background beliefs also affect how sensations epistemically appear, though their influence may be less obvious. Consider the blindfolded fraternity pledge who is told that his throat will be cut by a razor (Shoemaker 1996). When an icicle is held against his throat, he cries out, apparently believing that he is in pain. The background expectation of pain shaped how his experience epistemically seemed to him. Assuming that he was not actually in pain, this epistemic appearance diverged from the phenomenal reality.[17]

(p.109) So the key task, for one who would achieve knowledge of an experience by acquaintance, is to bring epistemic appearances into line with phenomenal appearances and, thereby, with phenomenal reality. The next section explains how one might go about this.

4. Achieving Knowledge by Acquaintance

I now outline a practical strategy for achieving introspective knowledge by acquaintance. This strategy draws on another factor that shapes epistemic appearances: the subject's degree of credulousness.

If I had been in a skeptical mood, the sensory experiences, background beliefs (etc.) involved in the martini case would not have inclined me to believe that there was a man drinking a martini. Depending on the degree of skepticism involved, these may have inclined me to believe that there was a man over there holding a martini glass, or simply that there was someone over there holding something. And if I had been more credulous, those same experiences and beliefs might have disposed me to a more specific belief, e.g. that there was a man *about forty-five years old* drinking a martini. So how things epistemically appear to one depends, in part, on one's degree of skepticism or credulity.

Obviously, subjects do not occupy fixed positions on the spectrum from skepticism to credulousness. One may grow more or less skeptical, and one may be skeptical as regards some issues or sources of information while comparatively credulous as regards others. Even relative to a topic or source, one's readiness to believe can vary according to one's purposes at the moment. This flexibility is illustrated by Descartes's First Meditation, which is essentially a set of exercises intended to increase skepticism by instilling an exceptionally cautious doxastic attitude—albeit one that is highly context-specific. Adopting a more cautious doxastic attitude has the effect of restricting the epistemic appearances, by raising the bar as to the strength (and kinds) of evidence regarding *p* that will dispose one to believe that *p*.[18]

Raising the bar is not easy, of course. As Descartes acknowledges, a resolution to believe only what is indubitable will not eliminate the appeal of familiar beliefs. My point is just that adopting a more skeptical attitude, while holding fixed the experiences, beliefs, and other factors that bear on your inclination to believe that *p*, can (p.110) decrease *p*'s subjective probability for you. If this subjective probability falls below a certain level, it does not epistemically appear to you that *p*.

By increasing skepticism and thereby decreasing subjective probability, as regards a topic or source, one can restrict the corresponding epistemic appearances. Suppose that you are especially concerned to avoid error in your judgments about your own experiences, though not so intent on this that you refrain from such judgments entirely (or adopt unreachably high standards for belief). This goal will naturally lead you to be scrupulously cautious in your judgments. Even if you are carefully attending to a *48-speckledness* experience, you will not be inclined to believe *I am now experiencing 48-speckledness*. If you are not inclined towards that belief, it does not epistemically appear to you that you are now experiencing *48-speckledness*. (Although *I am now*

experiencing 48-speckledness may retain a higher subjective probability for you than any comparable statement, such as *I am now experiencing 47-speckledness*.) In this way, the attitude of scrupulous caution effectively restricts—or prunes—the epistemic appearances.

The strategy for achieving introspective knowledge by acquaintance should now be clear. By adopting a scrupulously cautious doxastic attitude toward one's own experiences, one seeks to prune the epistemic appearances to the point where those that remain are exclusively determined by how things seem phenomenally—that is, by the phenomenal reality. Success in this endeavor will neutralize the influence of background beliefs; one will thereby avoid the fraternity pledge's mistake. The introspective judgments based on the remaining epistemic appearances will play the dual role envisioned by the acquaintance approach. They will express how things epistemically seem to one. And since how things epistemically seem is directly and fully determined by the phenomenal reality, they will be directly tied to the experiences that are their truthmakers.

When how an experience epistemically appears, to the subject, is determined exclusively by its phenomenal reality, the epistemic appearance amounts to what Horgan and Kriegel (2007) call a "*bracketing* mode of presentation" of the phenomenal reality.[19]

> [A bracketing] mode of presentation suspends any such presuppositions [about relational features of the experience], so that their truth or falsity does not affect the content of the specific belief that employs such a mode of presentation. This is a mode of presentation that brackets out all relational information about the experience and its phenomenal character, including how experiences of this sort (p.111) are classified by other subjects, how they are classified by oneself on other occasions, what their typical causes are, etc. It focuses (so to speak) on how the experience appears to the subject at that moment. (ibid., 128)

The process described here, of suspending presuppositions so as to reach a purely phenomenal or "bracketing" mode of presentation, is similar to the strategy I have described as adopting a scrupulously cautious doxastic attitude so as to prune the epistemic appearances. If one carries out this task successfully, the experience's epistemic appearance will be determined exclusively by its phenomenal appearance. In Horgan and Kriegel's terms, the remaining information about the experience will be constituted by "how the experience appears to the subject"—where the relevant appearance here is phenomenal. And an experience's phenomenal appearance just is its phenomenal reality. A judgment expressing this information will be directly tied to its truthmaker and will thereby meet the first of our three requirements for knowledge by acquaintance.

But can we successfully carry out this strategy? The best way to settle this question is to attempt it oneself. So I invite you to adopt a scrupulously cautious doxastic attitude as regards your current experiences. You need not go so far as imagining that a Cartesian evil genius is bent on deceiving you. Instead, simply set yourself the task of registering how your phenomenal experience seems to you (epistemically), while doing all you can, short of suspending belief entirely, to avoid error. It will help to make available a relatively sharp, clear-cut sensation, perhaps by pinching yourself. You can then focus your attention on the corresponding aspect of how things seem to you.

When I try this, I find it nearly impossible to doubt that my experience has a certain phenomenal quality—the phenomenal quality it epistemically seems to me to have, when I focus my attention on the experience. Since this is so difficult to doubt, my grasp of the phenomenal property seems not to derive from background assumptions that I could suspend: e.g., that the experience is caused by an action of pinching. It seems to derive entirely from the experience itself. If that is correct, my judgment registering the relevant aspect of how things epistemically seem to me (*this phenomenal property is instantiated*) is directly tied to the phenomenal reality that is its truthmaker.

Proponents of the acquaintance approach should concede that experiences do not always epistemically appear as they actually are. This was illustrated by the speckled hen example and the fraternity case. The acquaintance theorist must only maintain that sometimes, experiences are as they epistemically appear—and that, in at least some of these cases, this is because the epistemic appearance is constituted by the phenomenal reality.

(p.112) 5. The Justification of Introspective Judgments

Here, once again, is the distinctive commitment of the acquaintance approach.

Acquaintance Approach: Some introspective knowledge consists in judgments that

1. are directly tied to their truthmakers;
2. depend, for their justification, only on the subject's conscious states at the time of the judgment; and
3. are more strongly justified than any empirical judgments that do not meet conditions (1) and (2).

The last two sections focused on how introspective judgments can meet condition (1). We now turn to considering how such judgments can meet conditions (2) and (3).

How might conscious states justify an introspective judgment? And what gives this justification its special strength? Answers to these questions can be gleaned from statements by two leading acquaintance theorists, Richard Fumerton and Laurence BonJour.

> My suggestion is that one has a noninferentially justified belief that *p* [e.g., *I am in pain*] when one has the thought that *p* and one is acquainted with the fact that *p*, the thought that *p*, *and* the relation of correspondence holding between the thought that *p* and the fact that *p*. (Fumerton 1996, 75)

> On my view, … a foundational belief results when one directly sees or apprehends that one's experience satisfies the description of it offered by the content of the belief. (BonJour 2003, 191)

These proposals are similar in spirit. Putting aside some details—e.g., about whether direct awareness of an experience involves acquaintance with a fact or, instead, with an event—the following proposal emerges.

> One achieves knowledge by acquaintance of an F experience (that is, that phenomenal property F is currently instantiated) iff:
>
> i. One is directly aware of an F experience.
> ii. One is directly aware of the judgment *an F experience is now occurring*.
> iii. One is directly aware that the F experience mentioned in (i) makes the judgment mentioned in (ii) true.

This is a highly demanding conception of knowledge by acquaintance. It requires, for knowledge by acquaintance of an experience, that one is directly aware not only of the experience itself but also of one's judgment registering the experience and of the appropriate relation (truthmaking, correspondence, or satisfaction) between these.

(p.113) Is this conception of knowledge by acquaintance implausibly demanding, or can we meet conditions (i)–(iii)? One might seek to answer this question by attempting to meet these conditions, as regards a current experience. But in order to verify that one has succeeded here, one must not only meet these conditions but also recognize that one does so. And this is a tall order. Just to meet these conditions, one must achieve a highly complex state of awareness: one must be aware that the experience (of which one is aware) bears the truthmaking relation to the judgment (of which one is also aware). Recognizing that one satisfies these conditions is harder still, for it requires higher-order awareness of this complex state of awareness. Since recognizing that one has met these conditions is considerably more difficult than simply meeting them, an inability to directly verify that one can meet these conditions does not demonstrate that one is incapable of meeting them.

In any case, the acquaintance theorist need not place such stringent requirements on knowledge by acquaintance. Fumerton and BonJour effectively require not only that the subject be aware of the basis for her judgment (the experience itself) but also that she be aware that the experience provides a good basis for her judgment. This latter requirement is met by recognizing that the experience stands in the appropriate relation to the judgment (truthmaking, correspondence, or satisfaction). In a discussion of BonJour's view, Richard Feldman questions the need for this requirement.

> … BonJour adds a requirement for foundational justification that involves a meta-level perspective, a (mysteriously non-cognitive) comparing of the contents of beliefs and experiences. My own inclination is to resist the idea that any such perspective is required. (Feldman 2006, 726)

If we put aside the requirement that one grasp that one's experience is a good basis for one's judgment, what justifies the judgment is one's awareness of the experience (or, perhaps, simply the experience itself[20]). Knowledge by acquaintance does not require awareness that the experience appropriately supports the judgment; in fact, it does not require awareness of the judgment at all.

We have, then, two competing conceptions of the justification required for introspective knowledge by acquaintance. On the more demanding conception, (p.114) embraced by Fumerton and BonJour, a judgment cannot constitute such knowledge unless the subject has reason to believe that her judgment is appropriately based—e.g., that it is based on an experience to which it corresponds. The less demanding

conception, suggested by Feldman, rejects that requirement. On that conception, the fact that a judgment is appropriately based on an experience (or awareness thereof) can constitute justification adequate for knowledge by acquaintance.

I remain neutral between these two conceptions of justification. On either conception, introspective knowledge by acquaintance can clearly satisfy condition (2) of the acquaintance approach. On the more demanding conception, justification consists in the satisfaction of conditions (i)–(iii) above, where one's satisfying these conditions is purely a matter of one's conscious states. On the less demanding conception, it is a conscious experience (or conscious awareness thereof) that provides the justification suitable for knowledge by acquaintance.

This brings us to condition (3) of the acquaintance approach, which says that some introspective knowledge is more strongly justified than empirical judgments that do not meet conditions (1) and (2). (The acquaintance approach says that some introspective judgments meet all three of these conditions. It does not say that every introspective judgment meeting the first two will also meet the third.) Arguably, one benefit of the more demanding, Fumerton–BonJour conception is that any judgments meeting their stringent requirements will be extremely well justified. But since some doubt that these stringent requirements can actually be met, the acquaintance approach will be strengthened if judgments meeting only the less demanding conception of knowledge by acquaintance will satisfy condition (3).

Let us spell out what is involved in satisfying condition (3). A judgment that satisfies (1) and (2) will be more strongly justified than any judgment that does not meet these conditions if:

- The judgment's justification is immune from certain defeaters to which the justification for empirical judgments that do not meet (1) and (2) is vulnerable; and
- The judgment's justification is not vulnerable to any defeaters from which the justification for empirical judgments that do not meet (1) and (2) is immune.

I cannot offer a comprehensive theory of justification here (or anywhere else, for that matter). But a contrast between introspective judgments that meet (1) and (2), and perceptual judgments, will go some way toward establishing these points about the comparative immunity from defeaters.

Consider the following case. While attending to a current pinching experience (and exercising scrupulous caution, etc.), I judge *this phenomenal property is instantiated* (p.115) *(in me, now)*. Suppose this judgment is directly tied to the experience that is its truthmaker—that is, it meets condition (1). Moreover, I am consciously aware of this pinching experience, and this awareness justifies my judgment. My judgment thereby meets condition (2), and satisfies the epistemic requirements of the less demanding conception of knowledge by acquaintance just sketched. In that case, the justification for my judgment is immune from defeaters concerning how the experience, or my awareness thereof, is caused. For instance, the judgment remains justified even if my pinching experience is caused by an evil genius, or the actions of a mad scientist caused me to become aware of that experience. And it remains justified even if I have good reason to suspect that these forces are at work.

Now consider the case where I have a visual experience as of a table before me, and judge on that basis that there is a table before me. My justification for this belief will be defeated by a well-grounded suspicion that my visual experience has an aberrant cause—an evil genius, mad scientist, or hallucinogen. So perceptual justification is vulnerable to some defeaters from which the justification for the introspective judgment just described (which meets (1) and (2)) is immune.

Might the justification for judgments meeting (1) and (2) be vulnerable to some defeaters from which the justification for other judgments is immune? It is hard to see how a judgment's violating condition (1) or (2) could immunize its justification from defeaters. A direct tie to truthmakers seems epistemically neutral at worst. And the fact that my judgment depends, for its justification, only on conscious states does not seem to make it less secure than judgments that do not meet this condition. Arguably, empirical judgments generally depend, for their justification, on some conscious states of the subject: perceptual judgments depend on perceptual experiences; memory judgments depend on conscious memories; etc. If these judgments do not meet condition (2), this means that they depend on additional justifying factors as well. A dependence on additional justifying factors would seem to introduce potential defeaters rather than neutralize them.

What allows judgments constituting knowledge by acquaintance to be especially strongly justified is that the justification for such judgments is directly tied to the truthmaker. By contrast, in other types of empirical knowledge (memory, perception, etc.) justification is linked with the truthmaker through a less direct, merely causal relation.

Because of this difference, the latter justification is vulnerable to defeaters (such as aberrant causes) from which the former justification is immune.

Obviously, much more could be said about the epistemological implications of the acquaintance approach. But this brief discussion suggests that introspective judgments that meet the requirements of even the less demanding conception of justification—requirements which plainly can be met—can satisfy conditions (2) and (3) of the approach.

(p.116) 6. Acquaintance and the Dispositional Analysis of Concepts

At the core of the acquaintance approach is the idea that, in knowledge by acquaintance, phenomenal reality intersects with the epistemic (the subject's grasp of that reality). When one knows a phenomenal experience by acquaintance, one's judgment regarding that experience is directly tied to phenomenal reality (the experience itself) and directly expresses one's epistemic perspective. Not surprisingly, some of the most serious objections to the acquaintance approach take issue with the idea that phenomenal reality intersects with the epistemic in this way. We consider objections of this type in this section and the next.

The first objection is based on the observation that, if an introspective judgment truly represents an intersection between phenomenal reality and the epistemic, it must express an epistemically substantive grasp of the phenomenal property to which it refers. In such a judgment, of the form *this phenomenal property is instantiated (in me, now)*, the demonstrative term "this property" must be cognitively significant. Wittgenstein challenges the idea that an introspective demonstrative can express an epistemically substantive grasp of phenomenal properties. He contends that demonstratives directly linked to reality will be cognitively insignificant.

> Imagine someone saying: 'But I know how tall I am!' and laying his hand on top of his head to prove it. (Wittgenstein 1953, §279)

Suppose that, while his hand is on his head, the subject says "I'm *this* tall." So long as he succeeds in demonstrating the distance from the floor to the top of his head, he has said something true. But this statement does not reflect knowledge of his height. He has no substantive conception of the referent of his demonstrative: he does not know what distance he is indicating. In this sense, his demonstrative is cognitively insignificant, or *blind*.

The acquaintance theorist must maintain that introspective demonstrative reference sometimes involves a substantive phenomenal concept.[21] For the envisioned (p.117) intersection between phenomenal

reality and the epistemic requires a substantive grasp of the phenomenal property. Moreover, the acquaintance theorist must maintain that a substantive conception of a phenomenal property (of the sort that could help to justify an introspective judgment) does not depend on anything beyond conscious states.

These requirements provide the basis for an objection to the acquaintance approach. On that approach, a conception of a phenomenal property takes the form of a conscious state directly tied to an instantiation of that property. But, the objector claims, this conception is insubstantial, and grounds only blind demonstrative reference to the property. The price of tying an introspective judgment directly to phenomenal reality is that the judgment cannot express a substantive epistemic grasp of the phenomenal property at issue. (Hawthorne 2007, among others, makes this objection.)

In evaluating this objection, it will be useful to have before us an account of phenomenal concept possession that exemplifies the kind of account that is (allegedly) unavailable to the acquaintance theorist. The most plausible such accounts construe phenomenal concept possession in dispositional terms. Ernest Sosa offers an attractive account along these lines. According to Sosa, possession of a phenomenal concept "is defined in part by sensitivity to the relevant feature of which it is a concept. It is defined in part by the ability to tell when that feature is present or when absent in our experience," across a suitable range of circumstances (Sosa 2003, 125). To accommodate the fact that concepts can be lost over time, he construes this sensitivity requirement in counterfactual terms. On Sosa's view, then, my grasp of the phenomenal quality of my current experience partly consists in counterfactually-specified dispositions or abilities: to recognize the presence of this quality in other appropriate circumstances and to avoid mistaking a different quality for this one.

Sosa further claims that this understanding of phenomenal concept possession helps to explain why introspective judgments about the phenomenal qualities of experience are so reliable.

> We are maximally reliable [in introspective judgments employing these phenomenal concepts] because our very grasp of those concepts requires reliability in the right circumstances, and the circumstances are nearly always right, leaving little scope for possible failure. (ibid., 126)

If Sosa is correct, our dispositions or abilities play two crucial epistemic roles in introspective knowledge of the phenomenal qualities of experience. First, in order for reference to a phenomenal property to be cognitively significant, the referring subject must be able to recognize the property across a suitable range of circumstances, and to avoid mistaking different phenomenal properties for that one. (p.118) Second, judgments involving cognitively significant reference to phenomenal properties, like *this property is instantiated (in me, now)*, qualify as knowledge (at least partly) because anyone who can entertain these judgments will have those recognitional abilities.

Sosa's proposal is appealing. It is hard to imagine someone who genuinely possessed the phenomenal concept *pinching*, and whose exercise of this concept qualified as knowledge of his current experience, but who was prone to mistaking pinches for tickles and vice versa.

However, Sosa's proposal is incompatible with the acquaintance approach. His claim that certain dispositions are epistemically critical for knowledge of phenomenal qualities is at odds with the acquaintance theorist's claim that some instances of introspective knowledge (of the phenomenal) consist in judgments that depend, for their justification, only on the subject's conscious states. If the possession or justified exercise of phenomenal concepts is a matter of dispositions, then dispositions play a crucial epistemic role in justifying judgments about the phenomenal qualities of experience. But dispositions are not reducible to conscious states. So if dispositions play a crucial epistemic role in judgments employing phenomenal concepts, then no introspective knowledge of phenomenal qualities will satisfy condition (2) of the acquaintance approach.

The acquaintance theorist must, then, reject the dispositional account of phenomenal concept possession. But in order for her view to remain plausible, she must do justice to the intuitions that make the dispositionalist account appealing. One such intuition is this: the true judgment *this (pinching) property is instantiated (in me, now)* does not constitute genuine introspective knowledge if the subject is disposed to frequently misclassify pinches as tickles and vice versa. Absent the disposition to correctly apply this concept, the judgment seems merely lucky.

The acquaintance theorist can do justice to this intuition: the acquaintance approach is compatible with the claim that any subject who achieves introspective knowledge (of phenomenal qualities, by acquaintance) will have the dispositions Sosa describes. The

acquaintance theorist can maintain that these dispositions are explained by one's meeting the requirements for introspective knowledge by acquaintance. When I adopt a cautious doxastic attitude, and direct my attention exclusively to an experience, how the experience epistemically seems, to me, will be constituted by (an aspect of) its phenomenal reality. The acquaintance theorist can say that it is because I apprehend this phenomenal quality, at the moment I reflect on it, that the counterfactuals are true of me at that moment: my grasp renders me able, at that moment, to recognize this quality and to avoid mistaking a different quality for this one, across a suitable range of circumstances.

(p.119) The disagreement between the acquaintance theorist and the dispositionalist has the form of a Euthyphro question. Do I possess the phenomenal concept *pinching* because I can recognize instances of pinching sensations, or can I recognize instances of pinching sensations because I possess the phenomenal concept *pinching*? Here are the options spelled out.

> *Dispositionalist*: My possession of the phenomenal concept F—that is, my grasp of the phenomenal property F—(partly) consists in my disposition to apply this concept to instances of F, and to avoid applying it to non-F experiences (in relevant circumstances).
>
> *Acquaintance Theorist*: My disposition to apply phenomenal concept F to instances of F, and to avoid applying it to non-F experiences (in relevant circumstances), is explained by my possession of the concept F—that is, my grasp of the phenomenal property F.

The dispositionalist option has one clear advantage. It provides a partial analysis of what it is to grasp a phenomenal property, whereas the acquaintance theorist leaves concept possession unanalyzed.

However, the acquaintance theorist's position better reflects the simple idea that I can recognize pinching experiences *because* I know what it's like to undergo these experiences. If my grasp of a phenomenal property explains my ability to recognize instances of it, then my grasp does not consist in this ability.

So the acquaintance theorist can do justice to the intuition that one who possesses a phenomenal concept (who grasps a phenomenal property) will have certain dispositions, while maintaining that this grasp consists in conscious states. For she can claim that conscious states explain these dispositions. (One way to do this is to say that

awareness of a pain grounds the disposition to recognize pains; that is, the conscious state is the categorical basis of this disposition.[22]) The crucial point is that introspective knowledge of a phenomenal state can be justified entirely by conscious (p.120) states—in particular, the subject's direct awareness of an experience. These conscious states may ground or issue in dispositions, but so long as dispositions make no independent contribution to justification, the acquaintance approach is preserved.

The objection discussed in this section charged that if introspective judgments directly reflect phenomenal reality, they do not express a substantive epistemic grasp of the phenomenal. I have shown that the acquaintance approach can do justice to some of the key intuitions that inspire this objection. Yet I have not tried to prove that introspective demonstrative reference to phenomenal properties is (even sometimes) nonblind. This would require establishing a basic tenet of the acquaintance approach, namely that introspective awareness of an experience can yield a substantive grasp of its phenomenal character. Introspective reflection does suggest, to me at least, that that is the case. But those who deny this are ordinarily motivated by theoretical reasons rather than by introspective reflection. So the best way to support this facet of the approach is to highlight its resources for responding to these objections. I now turn to the final objection, which charges that direct reference to a phenomenal property can only be blind.

7. Acquaintance and Phenomenal Information

Robert Stalnaker explicitly denies that phenomenal reality intersects with the epistemic in the way the acquaintance approach requires. In this passage, he describes an acquaintance-style claim about what happens when Frank Jackson's character Mary sees red for the first time.

> [According to the view at issue] when Mary saw the red star, and named her experience "wow," she knew what she was naming, since she was *acquainted* with the experience; she had acquired a *pure phenomenal concept* of it. I want to question the assumption that there is something—phenomenal experience—that has both an autonomous place in a conception of the world as it is in itself and also this kind of distinctive epistemic role. (Stalnaker 2008, 88)

If Stalnaker is correct, a judgment can either be directly tied to phenomenal reality ("the world as it is in itself") or directly express the subject's epistemic perspective. But, he contends, no single judgment can play both roles.

Stalnaker objects to the claim that phenomenal reality intersects with the epistemic by arguing that, if this claim were correct, information about phenomenal reality would be "incapable of being communicated" (ibid., 77). As he notes, his reasoning here is similar to David Lewis's (1990) argument concerning the "Hypothesis of Phenomenal Information."

(p.121) Here is how the acquaintance approach implies that phenomenal information is incommunicable. Suppose that in my judgment *this is what it's like to feel a pinch*, the phenomenal quality *pinching* supplies the content expressed by "*this*." So "this" marks an intersection between phenomenal reality and my grasp thereof. Now if the acquaintance approach is correct, an instantiation of that phenomenal quality is the only thing that can supply that content.[23] This means that no one can think that thought unless *pinching* is instantiated in his or her experience.

The point is not that one must have the appropriate experience in order to demonstratively refer to that phenomenal quality as "this." Nor is it an epistemic point about other minds, e.g., that one cannot be sure that others have experiences similar to one's own. Rather, it is that even entertaining this content requires having the appropriate experience. Acquaintance theorists are committed to this point, by the claim that phenomenal judgments constituting knowledge by acquaintance derive (part of) their cognitive value directly from the experiences that are their truthmakers. If an aspect of my phenomenal reality (my current experiences) partly constitutes how things epistemically appear to me, then no one can share or even understand my epistemic outlook unless they are in a position to draw on a similar experience.

Since understanding *this is what it's like to feel a pinch* requires an appropriate relation to a *pinching* experience, this information cannot be conveyed in the usual way, by uttering statements that express it. Stalnaker claims that this consequence—the incommunicability of phenomenal information—is unpalatable.

This consequence derives, in part, from the fact that the phenomenal information at issue is expressed with "direct" or "pure" phenomenal concepts, which are definitionally tied to their instances. However, phenomenal concepts are not the only concepts definitionally tied to their instances—at least, if influential externalist views about content

are correct. Externalists (including Stalnaker) hold that possessing the concept *water* essentially involves a relation to actual water (H_2O): one must be appropriately situated, relative to H_2O, in order to entertain thoughts like *water quenches thirst*.[24] This parallels the claim at issue here: that one must be appropriately situated, relative to a *pinching* experience, in order to entertain thoughts like *this is what it's like to feel a pinch*. So on Stalnaker's own externalist view, phenomenal (p.122) concepts would not be unique in requiring, for their possession, that one is appropriately related to items falling under them.

Of course, there remains a difference between the acquaintance theorist's construal of phenomenal information and the externalist's construal of *water* information. The acquaintance approach implies that, in order to possess phenomenal concepts, the subject herself must instantiate the properties they express. By contrast, externalism's restriction for possessing the concept *water* is only that one inhabits a watery environment.

This difference makes the communication of phenomenal information more difficult. Since you and I live in the same environment, the presence of water in my environment is the presence of water in your environment. So the fact that the concept *water* is tied to the presence of water does not impair communication between us. But particular instances of phenomenal properties cannot be similarly shared between us. The communication of phenomenal information is more problematic because (to borrow from the title of Stalnaker's book) we inhabit different "internal worlds."

But even if phenomenal information is incommunicable in Stalnaker's sense, it can nonetheless be conveyed. If you have never had a *pinching* experience, conveying phenomenal information about such experiences requires introducing the appropriate experience into your "internal world"—perhaps by pinching you. A brute action of this sort will not qualify as communication in Stalnaker's sense. However, a similarly brute action would be required to enable Twin Earthians (who inhabit a waterless world) to acquire *water* information. We would have to bring it about that they stood in an appropriate relation to H_2O, perhaps by bringing water to their planet or by transporting them to Earth.[25]

Stalnaker is right to say that phenomenal information is incommunicable, so long as communicability requires (roughly) that the information at issue can be conveyed simply by uttering a descriptive statement expressing it. But the acquaintance theorist will argue that the incommunicability of phenomenal information is not objectionable.

The acquaintance theorist can draw on the point just illustrated. If Stalnaker's own externalist position about thought contents is correct, this kind of incommunicability is not peculiar to phenomenal information: information about *water* may be similarly (p.123) incommunicable to Twin Earthians. And the latter incommunicability need not be limited to hypothetical interplanetary communication. Peter Ludlow (1995) claims that there is a difference between American and British English, regarding the concept expressed by "chicory," that parallels the difference between Earthian and Twin Earthian English regarding "water." This suggests that *chicory* thoughts may be similarly incommunicable between some members of the actual terrestrial population.

Moreover, the differences between phenomenal information and water (or chicory) information may redound to the benefit of the acquaintance approach. According to content externalism, whether one can think a *water* or *chicory* thought depends on environmental factors such as the presence of H_2O or the linguistic community's use of "chicory." This dependence fuels the principal objections to content externalism. Critics charge that, because these environmental factors lie beyond the thinker (are "outside her ken"), individuating thought contents by reference to them will fail to capture the subject's epistemic perspective. However, the acquaintance theorist's claim that phenomenal information (the content of phenomenal judgments) is tied to experiences escapes this objection, since experiences seem to be squarely within the subject's ken. The acquaintance theorist can thus maintain that her view is preferable to content externalism, in at least one important respect.

This is not to say that the acquaintance theorist cannot be a content externalist. The point is only this. Both the acquaintance approach and content externalism take the possession of certain concepts to essentially depend on the presence of things falling under those concepts. But because the acquaintance approach takes such essential factors to be mental (e.g., experiences), it is immune from the doubts about epistemic significance that confront externalism.

Why does Stalnaker place such a premium on communicability? Like most externalists, Stalnaker gives special weight to the idea that thought contents must be knowable by others in certain ways.

> Thinkers are things with a capacity to make their actions depend on the way the world is, and with dispositions to make their actions depend on the way they take the world to be. Theorists and attributors of thought characterize these capacities and

> dispositions by locating the world as the thinker takes it to be in a space of relevant alternative possibilities. The theorist uses actual things and properties to describe these possibilities, and that is why content depends on facts about the actual world. (Stalnaker 2008, 131)

If we begin with the assumption that thought contents must be understood by reference to "actual things and properties" accessible to "[t]heorists and attributors of thought," it is a short step to concluding that my thought contents cannot (p.124) intersect with (or be partly constituted by) unshareable phenomenal reality. But, of course, the acquaintance theorist does not accept that assumption. So she will not be disturbed by the idea that phenomenal information cannot be communicated (in the usual way).

The core of the acquaintance approach is that knowledge by acquaintance represents an intersection between reality and the epistemic. On Russell's view, the intersection between reality and the epistemic anchors all *de re* reference and is the necessary foundation for all *de re* empirical knowledge. But one need not take acquaintance to play this foundational role, in order to recognize the appeal of the acquaintance approach. If any elements of empirical reality intersect with the epistemic, the most plausible candidates for this role are elements of mental reality. Because these features of reality occur (or are instantiated) within the individual, the claim that there are such intersections leads to the type of incommunicability that concerns Stalnaker. Acquaintance theorists should not be troubled by this consequence.

8. Conclusion

The acquaintance approach to introspective knowledge of the phenomenal does not imply that we are generally reliable in our phenomenal judgments; or that subjects have epistemic access to all of their phenomenal states; or that phenomenal judgments are generally better justified than other empirical judgments. But it is nonetheless a substantial philosophical view, with significant implications not only for debates about introspection but also for other questions in epistemology, for mental semantics, and for accounts of the relation between mind and world. If the acquaintance approach is correct, some introspective judgments possess a level of justification that is unmatched by the justification available for other empirical judgments. This epistemological fact is linked to a semantic feature: introspective judgments that achieve this level of justification derive their

(cognitively significant) content directly from their truthmakers. In this way, phenomenal reality intersects with our grasp of that reality.

Russell plainly takes acquaintance to involve an intersection between reality and the epistemic.

> Thus the sense-data which make up the appearance of my table are things with which I have acquaintance, things immediately known to me just as they are. (Russell 1912, 73)

(p.125) The acquaintance theorist need not follow Russell in claiming that "things with which I have acquaintance [are] immediately known to me just as they are." This claim construes our grasp of the objects of acquaintance as exhausting their reality. (Hence Russell's contention that the presence of a sense datum suffices for knowing it "perfectly and completely.") Mental reality intersects with the epistemic so long as my grasp of the phenomenal character of an experience—however limited and partial—is directly tied to phenomenal reality in the way elaborated here.

The intersection between reality and the epistemic may not be as broad as Russell believed. But a central and distinctive component of Russell's theory will be preserved if reality intersects with the epistemic to some extent. I have argued that our conceptions of our experiences are sometimes directly grounded in those experiences themselves: that is, in an aspect of their phenomenal reality. In such cases, experiences are as they are immediately known. Phenomenal reality thus intersects with the epistemic.[26]

(p.126) References

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Notes:

(1) Awareness of the phenomenal qualities of experience plays a central role in the leading arguments for mind–body dualism—the modal argument (Kripke 1972), the knowledge argument (Jackson 1982), and the zombie argument (Chalmers 1996). Several of the chapters in Alter and Walter (2007) discuss the ontological implications of views about phenomenal knowledge.

(2) According to Russell, introspective knowledge by acquaintance constitutes a relatively insignificant portion of our knowledge by acquaintance, even within the empirical realm (that is, putting aside our knowledge of abstract universals). The majority of such knowledge arises through ordinary perceptual experiences. Every perceptual experience involves sense data, and every sense datum is known by acquaintance.

(3) This is not to say that the contemporary acquaintance theorist must reject Russell’s claim that knowledge by acquaintance is underwritten by a direct relation between the subject and the object of knowledge. But that relation will not render introspective knowledge direct, in the relevant sense, unless it is reflected in a suitably direct relation between the introspective judgment that constitutes knowledge and its truthmaker.

(4) When appropriately based on introspection, judgments like *pain is instantiated (in me, now)* are arguably immune to error through misidentification of the first-person pronoun (Shoemaker 1968). Moreover, one who judges that *pain is instantiated (in me, now)* can conceive of herself indexically, as the thing in which the experience occurs: in that case, “in me” has the force of “here” or “in *this* subject of experience.” Howell (2006) advances an introspectivist account of self-reference along these lines.

(5) See also Balog (forthcoming). Some of these accounts specifically concern phenomenal concepts. The connection to judgments stems from the fact these concepts are exercised in introspective judgments.

(6) This explains Russell's hesitation about whether the self can be known by acquaintance: he is hesitant about this question precisely because he is not certain that factors immediately present to consciousness epistemically suffice for knowledge of the self. "So far as immediate certainty goes, it might be that the something which sees the brown colour is quite momentary, and not the same as the something which has some different experience the next moment. Thus it is our particular thoughts and feelings that have primitive certainty" (Russell 1912, 29–30).

(7) For a more detailed discussion of Russell's position, see Gertler 2011, ch. 4.

(8) I have not identified a particular relation that is the analogue of Russellian acquaintance. The relation between an introspective judgment and its truthmaker, mentioned in condition (1), is not Russellian acquaintance, since Russellian acquaintance is a relation between a subject and something else. A proponent of the contemporary acquaintance approach might accommodate this restriction by claiming that, when an introspective judgment satisfies conditions (1), the subject is acquainted with the mental state it concerns. I will remain neutral on that issue. My use of the term "knowledge by acquaintance" is simply intended to register that this thesis about (some) introspective judgments is Russellian in spirit.

(9) And since these inner sense theorists deny that such judgments satisfy (1) or (2), they also deny that these judgments satisfy (3). However, inner sense theorists generally allow that introspective judgments may be more epistemically secure than other empirical judgments. On their view, this difference derives from the fact that introspective detection mechanisms may be more reliable than the causal mechanisms involved in perception or memory.

(10) Here is one particularly clear statement of the view, which is held by numerous philosophers on both sides of the physicalism–dualism debate. "[V]arious theorists have suggested that we are 'acquainted' with our phenomenal states, or that tokens of phenomenal properties themselves 'partially constitute' our concepts of them, or that we possess a concept-forming mechanism that somehow 'quotes' these

property-tokens themselves when we think about them. Physicalists, however, should resist these suggestions" (Levin 2007, 97).

(11) Although the acquaintance approach implies that concept possession or knowledge does not consist in sensitivity, if sensitivity is construed dispositionally. More on this in section 6 below.

(12) I am concerned here only with so-called "speaker's reference." And this is only a rough, preliminary description of demonstrative reference. A fuller theory would spell out various details, such as what makes a causal contribution "appropriate" in the relevant sense.

(13) There are, however, limits as to how much the referent can diverge from one's conception. My judgment *the man drinking a martini is nattily dressed* would lack a referent if it were the presence of a naked penguin holding a martini glass that explained its seeming to me that there was a man there, drinking a martini. If I voiced this judgment, it would be plainly inappropriate for someone to respond "No, he's not—he's naked!" (Whether a perceptual demonstrative refers, in a given case, may depend on context and pragmatic matters.)

(14) Of course, the demonstrative term "that man drinking a martini" is unusual in that it expresses the relevant aspect of how things seem. A less descriptive term like "that guy" may be similarly grounded, if the subject mentally singles out Mr. Smith as the man drinking a martini (over there).

(15) The acquaintance theorist can allow that some types of introspective demonstratives share the causal structure of perceptual demonstratives: e.g., that I can demonstratively refer to an event as the cause of an experience I am now introspecting.

(16) While attention may change the phenomenology of an experience, phenomenal features sometimes withstand a shift in attention, as when one notices phenomenal features of one's coffee-drinking experience that, while previously present, had gone unnoticed.

(17) This is only one interpretation of the fraternity case. The important point is that background beliefs sometimes have this effect, not that this is the best interpretation of the fraternity case in particular.

(18) As Daniel Stoljar pointed out to me, there are plausibly limits as to how credulous—and perhaps how skeptical—one can be, while remaining rational. The kind of skepticism at issue here seems not to court these limits, for two reasons. First, it does not impose an

impossibly high bar for belief; and second, it applies only to beliefs within a narrowly circumscribed realm.

(19) I am grateful to Declan Smithies for bringing this comparison to my attention.

(20) In fact, I think it is more promising to take the justification for the judgment to consist in awareness of the experience, rather than the experience itself. By contrast, Smithies (this volume) claims that having an experience suffices for having justification to believe that one is having that experience. But this may not represent a real difference between our views, since Smithies is concerned with *propositional* justification, whereas my concern is with *doxastic* justification. Smithies leaves open the possibility that attention to the experience is required for using the justification it provides.

(21) The acquaintance theorist should allow that demonstrative reference to the phenomenal qualities of experience is sometimes blind, that is, that it does not always involve the exercise of a substantive conception of the phenomenal property. Here is one such case. Fred lives in a loud neighborhood and has learned to "tune out" the ambient noise when reading. But this does not mean that he ceases to hear the noises: his hearing is fully intact. Fred might demonstratively refer to an auditory experience he is now having, by thinking to himself *I will not allow this experience (or the instantiation of this phenomenal quality), whatever it is, to ruin my concentration*! Because he is deliberately not attending to the experience in question, he does not know whether it involves the phenomenal quality usually associated with hearing an ambulance siren, or with hearing a car backfiring (etc.).

(22) Suppose that I achieve introspective knowledge by acquaintance that *I am now experiencing pain*. This judgment is justified, according to the acquaintance theorist, by conscious states alone. Among these is my conscious awareness of my experience, achieved through careful attention exclusively to this aspect of phenomenal reality (my pain). The acquaintance theorist can say that this conscious state grounds my disposition to recognize pains; that is, the conscious state is the categorical basis of this disposition. On this account, my current, actual awareness of a pain makes it the case that the relevant counterfactuals are true of me. (Compare: the vase's molecular structure is what grounds its fragility: its actual structure makes it the case that it would break if dropped.) Introspective awareness of a phenomenal property can also explain the subject's ability to recognize an instance of that

property at a later time, though not in the same way. A conscious state cannot ground a later disposition; and this sort of explanation will involve memory. (I am indebted here to Trenton Merricks.)

(23) The acquaintance approach seems committed to this claim. For if phenomenal reality and the epistemic truly intersect in a judgment, then any epistemically equivalent judgment—any judgment with the same cognitive value—will also be directly tied to a type-identical portion of phenomenal reality, that is, to an instance of the same phenomenal property.

(24) The "appropriate situation" relative to H_2O may be that H_2O is in one's environment or that members of one's linguistic community have interacted with it (etc.).

(25) Might we instead simply give the Twin Earthians a chemistry lesson, explaining to them that water is a compound of hydrogen and oxygen? Perhaps. But content externalism's defining thesis is that thought contents are individuated by environmental factors. Even if the Twin Earthians acquire the concept *water* through a chemistry lesson, that concept is not purely descriptive. The chemistry lesson would enable them to think *water* thoughts only by forging a relation (involving a long causal chain) between the Twin Earthians and actual H_2O (or its atomic components).

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