

# RUSSELL'S TWO THEORIES OF MEMORY

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In this paper I examine Russell's account of memory in both the acquaintance and the neutral monist periods, more specifically, the years from 1910 until 1927, with emphasis on *The Problems of Philosophy*, *Theory of Knowledge*, and *The Analysis of Mind*. I argue that memory is central for understanding how knowledge works, which is the main reason it remained in the focus of Russell's analysis even after the gradual shift to neutral monism. I propose that memory played a not insignificant role in that shift. While this paper aims to show that Russell's theory of memory in the acquaintance period faced serious difficulties—mainly related to the commitment to direct realism—I argue that there is a consistent similarity and continuity between the theory of memory in the acquaintance period and that in the neutral monist period. Russell considered a similar type of memory to be paradigmatic and epistemically primary in both periods—a consideration, dictated, no doubt, by his commitment to the principles of Occam's razor and psychological plausibility.

## I. INTRODUCTION

**I**n this paper I examine what I claim are Bertrand Russell's two theories of memory developed, respectively, in the acquaintance and the neutral monist periods, that is, from 1910 until about 1927. I will argue that memory is the only experiential cognitive faculty that remained in the focus of his analysis after the shift to neutral monism. The main reason is that in both periods memory is central for understanding how knowledge works. My paper has two main goals: first, to draw attention to the cognitive faculty of memory (often overlooked in Russell scholarship), as well as to its importance for Russell's overall epistemological project; and second, to show that the new theory of memory was designed to overcome the difficulties with

the old theory.<sup>1</sup> Russell's theory of memory in the acquaintance period faced serious difficulties which, with time, became fatal for his epistemological picture. The new theory of memory, in the neutral monist period, was, to a large extent, designed to avoid and repair the issues the old theory faced, which I believe it largely, although not completely, did. Memory played a twofold and two-tier role for Russell's philosophical picture of the world. On the one hand, because of its important role in accounting for how and what we know about the world, he could not leave unresolved the difficulties with the earlier account of memory; hence the necessity to design a new theory of memory. On the other hand, theory of memory has a not insignificant share in engineering the shift from acquaintance theory to neutral monism. I am fully aware that the latter claim is far more complex than the former, and requires an account of what prompted Russell to move in the direction of neutral monism. That move cannot be properly accounted for here. However, in highlighting the essential qualities of memory, I will be able to suggest a scenario of why the shift happened.

Around 1910 Bertrand Russell announced that he was embarking on a new philosophical journey, one which, in his own words, would allow him to examine assumptions about knowledge and certainty. Along with the enthusiasm that this newly discovered epistemological direction brings, soon came the complications with what Russell refers to as the process of cognition. One of these complications, which will occupy his philosophical attention for the next few decades, long after he has abandoned the theory of knowledge by acquaintance, is precisely knowledge of the past. Knowledge of the past is provided by the

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<sup>1</sup> Paulo Faria has recently expressed a different view on the role of memory in the transition to neutral monism. Faria claims that the neutral monist account of memory shows continuity in Russell's theory of memory from the acquaintance period rather than solving problems with it. See FARIA, "Russell's Theories of Memory" (2017). It needs to be noted that Faria quotes from the articles "On the Nature of Acquaintance" published separately in *The Monist* in 1914 (RUSSELL 1914), as opposed to Part One of the same title from the 1913 manuscript, *Theory of Knowledge*. In the interest of avoiding confusion when referring to this text, I cite from the 1913 manuscript but I quote the title of the Part as well. (The content of the two sources is identical.) I do not disagree with the contention that the account of memory in the neutral monist period shows continuity in Russell's account of memory in the acquaintance period. However, as I will try to show in this paper, the neutral monist framework, despite the continuity, was adopted and designed to solve problems with the earlier theory.

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faculty of memory. In the acquaintance period, spanning roughly 1905 to 1918,<sup>2</sup> Russell claims that memory is important for the theory of knowledge for two main reasons. First, it makes our experience *ours*. He argues that when we remember something, we often remember our experiencing it. Thus, when we remember what we ate for breakfast this morning, we also remember that it was ourselves, wearing pyjamas and housecoat, who prepared it, ate it, etc. In other words, the act of remembering “prolongs our personality backwards”.<sup>3</sup> Second, the faculty of memory connects our past with our present experiences. As Russell puts it, “memory always makes the links in the chain connecting our present with our past [experience].”<sup>4</sup> Thus he acknowledges that he needs memory or knowledge of the past, so that knowledge by acquaintance is not trapped in the specious present (or is limited to knowledge of universals).

## II. MEMORY IN THE ACQUAINTANCE PERIOD

Before embarking on the exploration of the account of memory, there are two features of Russell's philosophy from the period that need to be mentioned. The first one is his direct realism, which he worked hard to retain even after the project of dividing knowledge into knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description had ceased being feasible. The other one is his well-known commitment to Occam's razor, or the principle of parsimony, which he adhered to until the end and which might be, at least partially, credited with the shift to neutral monism.<sup>5</sup>

According to Russell, it is only one certain type of memory that “prolongs our personality backwards” and connects our present and

<sup>2</sup> What I mean by “acquaintance period” is the period when Russell defends a classical dualistic (subject-object) epistemological picture based on the two main types of knowledge, namely knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description. I think it is fair to say that, regardless of the many modifications he proposes to the theory of knowledge, he maintains the two types of knowledge right until 1918, when he announced that the epistemological model he had maintained did not fit his philosophical picture of the world any longer, and he began the transition to neutral monism.

<sup>3</sup> RUSSELL, *Theory of Knowledge: the 1913 Manuscript (Papers 7)*, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> In 1913 Russell announced that Occam's razor is “the supreme methodological maxim in philosophizing” and admitted that, as per that maxim, James' theory of neutral monism is actually preferable. See *TK*, p. 21.

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past experiences. The type of memory that Russell has in mind is “memory of our experiencing”, or what would be referred to in the literature today as autobiographical or episodic memory. It is the memory of something that we, personally, have once experienced: “When we can remember experiencing something, we include the remembered experiencing with our present experiencing as part of one’s person’s experience” (*TK*, p. 12). This type of memory is an “extension of the present experience” (*TK*, p. 13). In other words, episodic memory is modelled after sensation/perception, and it is the type of memory upon which every other type of memory is built.<sup>6</sup> In the same chapter of *Theory of Knowledge*, Russell refers to this type of memory as “sensational memory”, which is knowledge of something that has happened in the most recent past and which the knowing subject remembers well (*TK*, p. 9). The subject is aware of the fact that there is a lapse of time between the moment when the thing that the subject remembers was present, and the moment in which the subject evokes it in her memory. With this memory, the subject becomes aware of a certain particular which has been “experienced before” (*TK*, p. 11). Unlike other types of memory, e.g., what Russell calls “intellectual memory” (*TK*, pp. 9–10), sensational memory grants me a privileged awareness of the object (e.g., what I ate for breakfast this morning) as well as awareness of my having the memory of what I ate this morning (i.e., the memory’s being *mine*). As with all knowledge by acquaintance, sensational memory yields the most certain type of knowledge of the past. Later in *Theory of Knowledge* Russell, in trying to convey the connection between acquaintance and memory, refers to sensational memory as “immediate memory”.<sup>7</sup> Immediate memory is our awareness of “the short period during which the warmth of sensation gradually dies out of receding objects, as if we saw them under a fading light” (*TK*, p. 72). On the same page, he introduces yet another type of memory, which he never mentions again in this text, or any other

<sup>6</sup> See RUSSELL, “Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description”, p. 152.

<sup>7</sup> There is a certain ambiguity in the way that Russell uses “sensational memory”. At first glance, sensational memory is what Russell describes later as “immediate memory”. However, the word “sensational” suggests that this type of memory is closer to what Russell labels as “physiological memory”, whose objects are present sense-data, rather than to “immediate memory”, whose objects are past sense-data. J. O. URMSON also interprets Russell’s use of sensational memory as physiological memory (see his “Russell on Acquaintance with the Past” [1969]).

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for that matter, namely “physiological memory”. Here is how he defines it: it is “simply the persistence of a sensation for a short time after the stimulus is removed.... Throughout the period of ‘physiological memory’, the sense-datum is actually *present*; it is only the inferred physical object which has ceased.” We can conclude, then, that this type of memory deals with objects which are still in the specious present (“the period of time within which an object must lie in order to be a sense-datum” [TK, p. 68]). So, for Russell the objects of physiological/immediate memory are fading sense-data, or, as they are known in psychology, after-images. Immediate memory, then, is “the relation which we have to an object which has recently been a sense-datum, but is now felt as past, though still given in acquaintance” (TK, p. 73).

What needs to be noted, however, is that while immediate memory is modelled after sensation, it is, in fact, “intrinsicly distinguishable from sensation” and thus represents a “different relation between subject and object” (*ibid.*). It seems, then, that in physiological memory what has ceased to exist is the external stimulus, not the sense-datum itself (the sense-datum is only beginning to fade away). While in immediate memory, the stimulus has been transformed into a sense-datum, and this sense-datum is not, strictly speaking, in the specious present any more. That is why immediate memory consists of past sense-data, and not of after-images (sense-data which are in a present mode). Russell’s definition of immediate memory links it directly with acquaintance: it is “a two-term relation of subject and object, involving acquaintance, and such as to give rise to the knowledge that the object is in the past” (TK, p. 70). Immediate memory is what he calls, quoting James, “the *original* of our experience of pastness, from where we get the meaning of the term” (*ibid.*). Therefore, given the burden placed on immediate memory, he needs to clarify what it means to actually *have* knowledge that the cognitive subject recognizes as *past*.

When we say that we are acquainted with past objects, we are actually saying not only that these objects belong to a moment of time when they are not perceived any more, but also that we are acquainted with those past objects in a way that enables us to know that they are past. An important question arises for Russell’s view on memory here: are we actually acquainted with the past itself, or do we know *about* the past only through *representation* (i.e., images) of the past? And is it not more intuitively obvious to say that we are aware of the presence

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of an image, something that resembles the sense-datum, rather than of something which has ceased to exist?

Although this would have been a much less complicated way of accounting for the past, it is, unfortunately, not a viable option for Russell's epistemology in the period. The trouble with images is that while they may resemble sense-data, they are not the sense-data themselves.<sup>8</sup> In this sense, while sense-data are always located in the spatio-temporal continuum, images, by contrast, are not. From a logical point of view, it sounds justified to argue that if the subject and the object of cognition are in a relation of being at different times, then the act of remembering is the instance where the object is earlier in time than the subject. From a psychological point of view, however, things do not look as straightforward, and there are issues in need of clarification. To say that we are acquainted with past sense-data sounds awkward, if not counter-intuitive: if we are acquainted with past sense-data, we are acquainted with something which is not temporally present before the mind any more.<sup>9</sup> The fact that we are acquainted with it, however, means that it is present before the mind. We end up being acquainted with something which is present and not present at the same time.

The solution that Russell gives to this conundrum: there are two distinct senses of the "presence" of the objects of acquaintance.<sup>10</sup> In one sense, all objects of acquaintance are present before the perceiving mind. This sense of "presence" does not involve duration in time. The other sense of "present before the mind" describes the temporal presence. In this sense, only certain particulars, such as sense-data, are present before the mind. The objects of memory are present in the

<sup>8</sup> "When we pass from imagination to memory by judgment, this seems usually the case: we do not believe that what existed was identical with what we imagine, but only that it may be described in terms of our image, by means of the kind of resemblance which commonly exists between sense-data and the images that we regard as images 'of' those sense-data" (*TK*, p. 171).

<sup>9</sup> And acquaintance is supposed to be, no more and no less, awareness of what is before the mind.

<sup>10</sup> Faria aptly notes that when thinking about knowledge by acquaintance, there is "an unfortunate amalgamation (partly encouraged by Russell himself) of acquaintance and presence". See FARIA, "Memory as Acquaintance with the Past: Some Lessons from Russell, 1912–1914" (2010). Faria is referring to Russell's 1911 text, "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description", where Russell writes: "That is, to say that *S* has acquaintance with *O* is essentially the same thing as to say that *O* is presented to *S*" (*ML*, p. 210; *Papers* 6: 148).

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first sense only.<sup>11</sup> In other words, Russell's solution to the problem with memory, understood as acquaintance with past sense-data, is to assume that in memory we are acquainted with past particulars which are *not* causally effective.<sup>12</sup> The adoption of this solution is necessitated by the trouble that the opposite account creates. If we are acquainted with causally effective particulars, it would mean that we are acquainted with past sense-data which are very close in time to the present sense-data—in which case, we would have to compare the time duration of present and past sense-data. But then the question becomes: what is the duration of a sense-datum? I am not sure that Russell thought of the duration of sense-data in those terms, which makes me think that his solution to the acquaintance-with-past problem is genuine.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Russell mentions physiological memory

<sup>11</sup> This is, again, supported by FARIA, who argues that this interpretation of acquaintance brings Russell's views closer to "contemporary views on direct reference and object-dependent thinking than is usually acknowledged" ("Memory as Acquaintance with the Past", p. 152). Faria's intuition is right that the latest tendency toward externalism in philosophy of mind has renewed interest in Russell's views on knowledge in the acquaintance period.

<sup>12</sup> Faria, for example, argues, without much textual evidence or further elaboration, that Russell's account of memory under acquaintance was causal: "Russell's notion of acquaintance was meant to encompass both the causal and the epistemic requirements, the latter taken in its strictest possible form as a requirement of discriminating knowledge" (see "Memory as Acquaintance with the Past", p. 154 n. 6).

<sup>13</sup> There are a number of scholars (among them Faria), following JOHN MCDOWELL, who believe that there is a thread, albeit not always a well-defined one, that goes from "On Denoting" to "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description" to *The Problems of Philosophy* and to *Theory of Knowledge*, namely the parallel between *acquaintance* interpreted as direct cognitive access to certain objects and *naming* interpreted as direct reference (see FARIA, "Memory as Acquaintance with the Past", p. 163). On this view, Russell modelled acquaintance (i.e., all empirical knowledge) on the theory of descriptions that he developed in "On Denoting". Acquaintance with past objects is thus little more than a logical move. On the one hand, having a representation (i.e., an image) of something does not necessarily presuppose perception or memory of it. Images are not located in the spatio-temporal continuum. On the other hand, if memory is modelled after perception, then if perception is always located in the spatio-temporal continuum (i.e., the present moment), then memory has to be, too, at least in principle. Russell himself alludes to this in Part One, "On the Nature of Acquaintance", of *Theory of Knowledge*. There he makes the pronouncement that the object of acquaintance may be "in the present, in the past, or not in time at all" (see "On the Nature of Acquaintance", *TK*, p. 5). Second, later in *TK* he writes, "Without, as yet, asserting that there is such a thing as immediate memory, we may define it as 'a two-term relation of subject and object, involving acquaintance, and such as to give rise to the knowledge that the object is in the past'.... It is indubitable that we have knowledge of the past, and it would seem,

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only once, and, from the way he describes it, it appears to be a mere extension of sensation, a pre-memory of sorts.

While the point is that images (representations of sense-data) are not the main ingredient of immediate memory, we need to be reminded that Russell does not reject the possibility of *other* types of memory having images as their objects. The objects of remote memory are described by Russell as full-fledged images (*TK*, p. 171). Remote memory, he argues, provides knowledge which is derivative and liable to error. Therefore, it does not belong to the “elementary constituents” of our knowledge of things (*ibid.*). When we have a memory of the remote past, it is often blurred and unclear, and indeed memories of the remote past can be completely false. For example, I thought that I remembered my deceased grandfather well enough to conjure up an image of him in my mind. In my image of him, he has a thick silver moustache. A few years ago, however, I was told by my mother that he never had a moustache, it was always his brother who had the moustache. What happens in the case of erroneous memory is that we think we know the past object, but what we actually know is an imaginary object which has no real temporal relation to the subject of cognition. In the case of my dead grandfather, I simply transported in my mind the vision of my great uncle’s moustache onto my grandfather’s face. Thus I created a *new* (conjured, i.e., not located anywhere in the spatio-temporal continuum) image, a product of my imagination rather than of my memory. The relationship of remote memory to the subject of cognition proves to be rather complicated and leads directly to the question about the relationship between memory and imagination, a question that will persist in the neutral monism period. Russell’s solution here is the relation of pastness. All objects of memory, whether leading to reliable knowledge or not, are beyond doubt in a relation of pastness to the knowing subject. He distinguishes two meanings of “pastness”. In one sense, there is the general relation of “pastness”. Consider the proposition: “That is in the past now.” Even

although this is not logically demonstrable, that such knowledge arises from acquaintance with past objects in a way enabling us to know that they are past” (p. 70). I believe it is precisely this interpretation that allows FARRA to claim that memory objects are “*de iure* placed sometime (in the past) and somewhere” (“Memory as Acquaintance with the Past”, p. 164). In other words, while Russell may not have been able to provide a psychologically plausible account of (immediate) memory, he was able to provide a logical one.

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though the precise past moment is not specified, everyone understands what “past” refers to in this proposition. And then there is “pastness” in the sense that we have already discussed in previous paragraphs, that of “definite temporal distances” (*TK*, p. 170). Within the recent past, Russell claims, we immediately perceive temporal distances. In other words, we are acquainted with the recent past. Even though from Russell’s analysis it is not clear when the recent past is no longer considered recent, and it becomes, in turn, remote, we know that yesterday was twenty-four hours away from the present moment. We can easily place our memories about yesterday in sequence.

Beyond the immediate past, however, all the events remembered are “simply past, and their greater or lesser distance from the present is a matter of inference” (*TK*, p. 171). Thus, the objects of remote memory bear the characteristic of general pastness, that is, we know that they are in the past (we may even know their precise past moment, as in the case of well-documented historical knowledge), but they do not have the characteristic of *experienced* pastness. What Russell wants us to believe, then, is that objects of remote memory are *not* known directly, and that, therefore, knowledge of the remote past is knowledge by description (*TK*, pp. 72, 170–2). In this sense, the objects of remote memory are derivative from the objects of immediate memory. As he argues, there is an “absolute gulf” between acquaintance-memory (immediate or sensational memory) and remote memory that cannot be bridged (*TK*, pp. 170–1). The question, then, is whether this outcome of the analysis of remote memory jeopardizes the status of memory in general, in the theory of cognition, as a source of certain (i.e., direct and non-inferred) knowledge? The textual evidence, laid out below, shows that in fact it does.

Toward the end of *Theory of Knowledge*, Russell digs deeper into the analysis of memory. First, in the case of remote memory, he states that we have to distinguish between knowledge of the past which is given to us by acquaintance, and knowledge of the past where the object is given to us again by acquaintance but acquaintance which involves no time-relation to the subject and is thus erroneously judged to belong to the past when it belongs, in fact, to an imagined past. “It is only through the addition of a judgment that it [the latter case of remote memory] becomes an object of remote memory” (*TK*, p. 171). In fact, Russell was so concerned with remote memory that he distinguishes four types of remote memory, depending on whether the pastness is

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given (in acquaintance) or judged (by description): “perceptive acquaintance memory”, “perceptive descriptive memory”, “judgment-acquaintance-memory”, and “judgment-descriptive memory” (*TK*, p. 171). Judgment-descriptive memory is, as Russell puts it, “peculiarly fallacious” since we may confuse an imagined event for a descriptive memory (*TK*, p. 172). Remote memories, such as those of childhood, belong to this type of memory. As he remarks, “prudent people” put very little reliance on such memory. It is more difficult, Russell admits, to find an instance that illustrates the judgment-acquaintance type of memory. But what is true for both types of remote memory is that in reality we have no criterion for asserting whether either of those two types has occurred. In other words, we cannot distinguish either of them from imagination.

To continue, perceptive-descriptive memory occurs only when it is *self-evident* that the image represents a past event. Russell writes, “This is the sort of experience which we might describe by saying that our image gives us a ‘feeling of pastness’” (*TK*, p. 173). This type of memory is what remote memory is all about. The subject perceives the “time-complex”, or the temporal distance, but this perception is done in a brief moment which is replaced by a judgment of memory which is more easily revived and thus is more stable than the brief perception of the temporal distance. The feeling of pastness, which is missing from the previous two types of memory, but which accompanies perceptive-descriptive memory, makes me know that the objects I remember belong, indeed, to the (physical) past, and not just to the imagined past. This type of memory brings certain knowledge since it originates in the faculty of perception. But since it looks very similar to judgment-descriptive memory, it is often mistaken for it. Perceptive-acquaintance memory is actually what Russell earlier called immediate memory. Its objects do not extend beyond the immediate past. This is the only memory of the four aforementioned types whose objects are past sense-data and not images. It may also happen, Russell continues, that in rare cases the objects of perceptive-acquaintance memory extend further into the past than the objects of immediate memory normally do. Then it seems that, except for perceptive-acquaintance memory, it is only through some sort of judgment—a belief, perhaps a self-evident one—such as what Russell calls the “feeling of pastness” (which ends up playing an important role in his account of memory in the neutral monist period) that we know that the

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object which is before my mind is an object of remote memory, and not an object of the imagination.

The point is that so far Russell's theory of memory under acquaintance, understood as direct knowledge, encounters difficulties beyond the conditions of the present sensation or perception of objects.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, based on textual evidence from the period 1910–21 (until Russell published his first neutral monist book, *The Analysis of Mind*), he expressed a constant worry about his account of memory and repeatedly attempted to “get it right”.<sup>15</sup> In light of the continuous worry about memory, Russell modifies certain aspects of it, which sometimes leads to ambiguity in interpreting what he means by a given notion. One example is what he writes about memory at the end of *Theory of Knowledge*. Even though he had already said that there is an absolute gap between immediate and remote types of memory, he is quick to suggest that there is a way to bridge the seemingly absolute gap between them. In the image of a past event, Russell argues, “there is a gradual transition” from acquaintance to remote memory (*TK*, p. 173). What seems to happen is that as more time passes, the images that resemble past sense-data become less and less *like* them. Thus, what looks like a fading acquaintance is “really acquaintance with an image growing progressively less like the past but known throughout to be ‘representative’ of the past” (*TK*, p. 174). If images were to bridge the gap between immediate and remote memory, however, should we not worry that, in *all* cases of memory proper, we are acquainted with images which only resemble sense-data? They would resemble them in different degrees, depending on how distant they are from the present moment. In other words, in light of the latter statement, it seems that we could interpret Russell saying that the objects of both types of memory are actually images (with which we are acquainted), but in the context of immediate memory, they are labelled “past sense-datum”, while in the context of remote memory, they are labelled “image of the past sense-datum”.<sup>16</sup> Even the not-so-

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<sup>14</sup> For an interesting discussion on acquaintance and externalism with regards to mental states, see FARIA, “Memory as Acquaintance with the Past”, pp. 167–71.

<sup>15</sup> To the point that in “Manuscript Notes” (1918), he wrote that he must come up with a new account of memory (*Papers* 8: 261).

<sup>16</sup> *TK*, p. 173. Unfortunately, Russell does not elaborate here on what this feeling of pastness is. It is to be noted here, however, that the feeling of pastness acquires a significant status in *The Analysis of Mind* where the neutral monist theory of memory

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vigilant reader of Russell would notice that his commitment to direct realism in the period would not allow him to entertain this possibility. However, the fact remains that in the period between 1914 and 1918, his account of acquaintance kept undergoing slight changes and was eventually abandoned in favour of neutral monism. One such change (with significant consequences) is Russell's definitive conclusion in Part One of *Theory of Knowledge*, "On the Nature of Acquaintance", that the subject is an inferred entity and not something I am directly acquainted with (*TK*, p. 36). This, however, would entail that acquaintance is a cognitive relation not all of whose terms are directly given.

David Pears has provided the most comprehensive commentary on Russell's account of memory in both periods. In two articles, "Russell's Theories of Memory" (1975) and "The Function of Acquaintance in Russell's Philosophy" (1981), he articulates some of the same concerns about acquaintance with the past. For Pears the problems with the faculty of memory lead to questions about the status of knowledge by acquaintance in general. The main problem with the faculty of memory, as he sees it, is that Russell's insistence that certain types of memory (immediate or sensational) belong to knowledge by acquaintance creates a dilemma for him. If knowledge by acquaintance is what Russell wants it to be, then it is vital for him to maintain that the subject refers directly to objects that go beyond the specious present. Memory is the most obvious example of such an extension of knowledge by acquaintance. When we have acquaintance with objects which are in the past, however, there is always a doubt, or at least a hesitation, concerning the identity and even the actual existence of the object.<sup>17</sup> Pears divides Russell's views of memory during the acquaintance and post-acquaintance periods into Theory I and Theory II. Theory I is unfolded in *The Problems of Philosophy* and *Theory of Knowledge* while Theory II is presented in *The Analysis of Mind* (1921). Theory I deals with the cognitive faculty of memory as acquaintance with past particulars. Theory II presents memory as a series of images

is presented for the first time. David Pears also worries about the possibility that in 1913 Russell was beginning to modify his theory of memory so that all objects of memory were seen as images of the actual past sense-data. I will comment on Pears' concern later; it is sufficient to say here that I do not fully agree with his interpretation.

<sup>17</sup> PEARS, "The Function of Acquaintance in Russell's Philosophy", p. 227.

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occurring in the present time. Pears admits that the move from Theory I to Theory II is a big change accompanied by many other changes in Russell's philosophical views and leading to serious consequences for Russell's theory of knowledge. According to Pears, Russell was already moving away from Theory I as early as 1913 when he was struggling with the notion of remote memory in *Theory of Knowledge*. Pears argues that the time duration of an object of immediate memory is, according to Russell's own account, around thirty seconds.<sup>18</sup> Thus, in immediate memory we are related to our past "in the most direct possible way", just as we are related to our present sense-data.<sup>19</sup> Pears points out that in *The Problems of Philosophy* Russell described all memory as acquaintance with the past, thus placing both immediate and remote memory in the framework of "knowledge by acquaintance".<sup>20</sup> In *Theory of Knowledge*, however, Pears claims that Russell hesitated about remote memory. As seen from the textual evidence, Russell is inclined to believe that the objects of remote memory are known by description. (On the one hand, remote memory requires not only acquaintance with images of past sense-data, but also with the correspondence between them, while on the other hand it involves a belief of some sort, such the "feeling of pastness".<sup>21</sup>)

Even if we do not take Pears' comment about the duration of immediate memory seriously, as I am inclined to do, we have to admit that in *Theory of Knowledge* Russell was not explicit whether all our memories are, *in fact*, images that resemble sense-data in varying degrees. Neither was he explicit about how precisely, *if* some memory objects are past sense-data and some are images, the cognitive subject moves from one state of remembering to another without becoming disjointed and, for example, suffering a loss of personal integrity. I believe this is to be an indication that in 1913 Russell is hesitant about

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<sup>18</sup> PEARS, "The Function of Acquaintance in Russell's Philosophy", pp. 226–7. Pears refers to Russell's description of immediate or direct memory as presented in Chapter II of *The Problems of Philosophy*.

<sup>19</sup> PEARS, "Russell's Theories of Memory", p. 225.

<sup>20</sup> Pears remarks that even though in *The Problems of Philosophy* Russell talks about memory in general as giving us the sense of "past", the examples that follow on pp. 115–17 (of *PP*<sub>2</sub>) refer only to memories of recent past events.

<sup>21</sup> Also, the objects of remote memory are images, which makes knowledge of the remote past mediated knowledge, and this goes against the definition of knowledge by acquaintance as direct, unmediated knowledge.

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the place of memory in the theory of knowledge and whether knowledge of the past is as certain as perceptual knowledge, as he originally wished or hoped for. For Pears the reason why Russell was hesitant about knowledge of the past lies in the fact that he pushed the analogy between memory and perception too far. “Russell’s logical analysis of acquaintance was worked out for perception, but extended to immediate and ... remote memory.”<sup>22</sup> What I am inclined to make of Pears’ analysis of Russell’s theory of memory in 1913 is that Russell should have been more worried about fleshing out more carefully the distinction between immediate and remote types of memory, and between memory and imagination. I am not inclined to accept, however, Pears’ suggestion that in 1913 Russell was beginning to lose faith altogether in the account of memory as knowledge by acquaintance.<sup>23</sup> I find this suggestion rather speculative and as reading too much into what comes much later for Russell.<sup>24</sup> I suspect that Pears’ inclination to bring the end of the acquaintance theory of knowledge much closer to *Theory of Knowledge* is inspired, at least partially, by the fact that Russell’s theory of judgment at the time was subjected to Wittgenstein’s harsh criticism, which put Russell’s philosophical confidence on shaky grounds. As we now know from Russell’s correspondence with Lady Ottoline Morrell, this criticism caused him much distress. While I do not doubt that Russell was honest in questioning his own competence at the time, we should not forget that his philosophy has always been multilayered and multifaceted. Thus, while his theory of judgment was under serious attack in 1913, the textual evidence suggests that as far as the epistemological project goes, Russell did hold on to the picture of cognition described above for a number of years before the shift to neutral monism (while, as I will argue, retaining some key features even after the shift<sup>25</sup>).

<sup>22</sup> PEARS, “Theories of Memory”, p. 233.

<sup>23</sup> FARIA, in “Russell’s Theories of Memory”, argues that Russell tried to hold on to all costs to the notion of acquaintance, especially retained acquaintance (i.e., memory), well into 1914 (i.e. in the *TK* chapters published as “On the Nature of Acquaintance”). The cost was that acquaintance had to be modified so as to lose some of its “directness” (see n. 26 for more on the issue).

<sup>24</sup> I find support in this contention from FARIA, who points out that in 1914 (i.e., 1913) Russell was still very much into salvaging acquaintance despite the looming difficulty with the cognitive subject. See “Russell’s Theories of Memory”, p. 522.

<sup>25</sup> FARIA, in “Russell’s Theories of Memory”, makes a good point regarding the continuity in Russell’s account of memory from the acquaintance to the neutral monism

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## III. MEMORY IN THE NEUTRAL MONISM PERIOD

In *The Analysis of Mind*, the first full-fledged neutral monist text, Russell declares that memory is what makes our experience of the world *integral* because it connects knowledge of the present with knowledge of the past. Thomas Baldwin is one of the few scholars who fully recognize the importance of memory for Russell's epistemology in the theory of knowledge in the neutral monist period. Baldwin believes that, according to Russell, we should study memory in the light of the relation between the stimuli and the response of our minds, which means that "memory's content should match its cause". This places the neutral monist theory of memory among the causal theories of memory.<sup>26</sup> Before we continue with the analysis of memory in the neutral monist period, a few things need to be highlighted. First, to

period. Faria's claim is that the literature often overlooks the shift in the interpretation of acquaintance that occurred *circa* 1913 when Russell maintained that I am acquainted with myself but the self, or "I", is inferred; and so I am acquainted with an inferred term. This shift, Faria argues, allows Russell to transition from a relational to a non-relational account of experiential knowledge in the neutral monism period, where there is not only no subject of experience but no object either. Faria concludes that memory of past images can be consistently interpreted as "a vestigial form of the retained acquaintance of the earlier theory" (pp. 522, 525). I agree with the conclusion, but I am not sure that "non-relational" is the right way to describe Russell's account of knowledge in the neutral monist period. I will return to this point in section v. What I think Faria is referring to here is the disappearance of the earlier split between subject, object, and act of cognition. This division is obviously gone in the neutral monist period. However, I do not see why this would eliminate the relational nature of knowledge *per se*.

<sup>26</sup> BALDWIN, "From Knowledge by Acquaintance to Knowledge by Causation" (2003), p. 442. I do not dispute the claim that Russell had a causal theory of memory. In 1921 Russell did believe that the difference between memory-images and imagination-images is that memory-images have physical prototypes (are caused by sensations) while imagination-images do not. However, I would point to two things with regard to Baldwin's interpretation of Russell's account of memory. First, it is true that in *The Analysis of Mind* Russell compares the working of memory to the working of a thermometer, but he does not end the story there. In the chapter on truth and falsehood, he writes that whether our minds should be compared, as far as knowledge is concerned, to (scientific) instruments such as thermometers and barometers is "important *but not exhaustive* of the nature of knowledge" (italics added; *AMi*, p. 254). This leads me to believe that in 1921 Russell's theory of memory was not based exclusively upon the stimulus-response causal theory, as Baldwin believes. Second, more evidence against Baldwin's claim is Russell's contention that the causes of memory-beliefs are often obscure, and it is not easy or even always possible to investigate them (*AMi*, pp. 178–9). In light of the latter claim, it is psychology rather than physics that should lend a helping hand in the analysis of memory.

reiterate, that the results reached from the analysis of memory in the acquaintance period are not limited to knowledge of the past but have a significant impact on Russell's overall theory of knowledge. It is clear that the accurate description of memory is vital for understanding how the other (experiential) cognitive faculties work. Second, even in 1921 Russell's struggle with the faculty of memory that began in the acquaintance period was far from over. Hence my goal in this section is twofold. First, to show that, regardless of all the metaphysical and epistemological differences between the two periods, the continuous importance of memory was one of the visible threads connecting acquaintance with the neutral monist theory. This will tie into my general thesis that memory played an important role in the shift from acquaintance to neutral monism, from the dualistic to the monistic picture of knowledge, which, in turn, means that the analysis of memory could be used to explain the occurrence of the shift in the first place. Third, we should not forget that Russell did not, suddenly, convert to neutral monism. In 1913 (in *TK*) Russell seriously considers James' version of neutral monism (although he demonstrates good knowledge of Ernst Mach's neutral monism as well as Ralph Barton Perry's). The ground for his consideration is mainly Occam's razor, one of Russell's favourite principles. Neutral monism proves very attractive as it allows him to reduce the number of entities to manipulate. I believe it was the commitment to direct realism and anti-representationalism at the time that kept Russell away from neutral monism.

However, the difficulties with the notion of acquaintance, followed by the dismantling of the subject (and as a result, the epistemic uselessness of the faculty of introspection), as well as the search for a psychologically more plausible account of experiential knowledge, slowly but surely moved Russell in the direction of neutral monism. On that note, it needs to be kept in mind that Russell's version of neutral monism was not a direct import of Mach or James's theories.<sup>27</sup> At the very least, Russell held a structuralist view of physics and a monistic view of perception<sup>28</sup> which he developed in detail in the 1927

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<sup>27</sup> For more on the history of neutral monism, see ERIK BANKS, *The Realistic Empiricism of Mach, James, and Russell: Neutral Monism Reconceived* (2014).

<sup>28</sup> Structuralism about physics is the view that the science of physics describes the world only abstractly and not as something that we have direct access to. Monism about perception is the view that percepts such as patches of colour are the only things

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book, *The Analysis of Matter*.<sup>29</sup> Whatever the features of Russell's neutral monist theory were, it is clear that Russell's agenda was epistemological and not metaphysical, which allowed him to *reconstruct* (as opposed to *construct*) mind and matter.<sup>30</sup> It is precisely this epistemological agenda that inspired Russell to search for "true memory" which will bring us knowledge of the past<sup>31</sup> that is absolutely indispensable for our integral experience of the world.

The foundational principle of neutral monism that "the elements of the world are of the same fundamental type" is, of course, anti-dualistic. As far as the account of knowledge goes, the neutral monism that Russell adopts (from James) implies that the object and the subject of cognition are different only depending on how the given theory incorporates them within its own conceptual apparatus and goals. In Russell's own words, "[T]he ultimate constituents of the world do not have the characteristics of either mind or matter as ordinarily understood: they are not solid persistent objects moving through space, nor are they fragments of 'consciousness'" (*AMI*, p. 124). As James puts it, experience (or knowledge) has no "inner duplicity" of being separated into a subject and an object; there is only "pure experience", which is the primal neutral stuff of the world, within which things and thoughts are only points of emphasis.<sup>32</sup> In other words, the same entity, which is neither inherently physical, nor inherently psychological, can be used for different purposes and in different contexts. Put simply, the first thing Russell does after he deems knowledge by acquaintance unsustainable is to dispense completely with the subject of cognition.

This new view of knowledge affects the classification of the cognitive faculties. Memory is still modelled after perception. However, perception is what Russell calls "integral experience of things in the

whose intrinsic nature we know.

<sup>29</sup> Donovan Wishon argued recently that Russell held not one but three different types of neutral monism from 1921 onwards. For more detail, see WISHON, "Russell on Russellian Monism" (2015).

<sup>30</sup> I am not alone in my conviction. Leopold Stubenberg, for example, supports this contention. See STUBENBERG, "Russell, Russellian Monism, and Panpsychism" (2015).

<sup>31</sup> This "true" memory is what both Pears and Lindsay Judson call "paradigmatic memory". True memory is contrasted by Russell with habit memory. See *AMI*, pp. 167–8, and JUDSON, "Russell on Memory" (1987–88), p. 65.

<sup>32</sup> See WILLIAM JAMES, "Does 'Consciousness' Exist?" (1904), p. 480.

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environment, out of which sensation is extracted by psychological analysis” (*AMi*, p. 157). This integral experience is explained in terms of habit, association, belief, and image (where “habit” and “association” are sometimes used as though they mean one and the same thing). A brief mention of the role of habit is called for. Habit is a concept that involves the occurrence of similar events at different times. It is true, Russell admits, that habit transforms sensory experience into experience which can be remembered, associated, imagined, or expected, but it is unwise to argue that habit (without beliefs) can explain anything concerning memory. As Russell contends, behaviourists who believe that habit explains how memory works do so because they *already* trust memory without really knowing or explaining why (i.e., without exploring its mechanisms). To understand how, according to Russell, habit or association work toward building our integral experience, we need to consider the concept of “fact of past experience”. Facts of past experience contain cognitive and non-cognitive elements. The non-cognitive elements are sensations, which is a departure from the account of sensation under acquaintance. In the interest of precision, when the sensation fades, it is called an “akoluthic sensation”.<sup>33</sup> Akoluthic sensations gradually turn into full-fledged images where there is no trace of the stimulus that gave rise to the sensation.<sup>34</sup> The take away from this is that images are the cognitive elements which produce knowledge of the past; as such, they deserve a central place in our current analysis.<sup>35</sup>

As stated earlier, images are representations of sense-data not located in a spatio-temporal continuum. This immediately suggests that in the neutral monist period Russell did subscribe to a representational view of knowledge, which he had tried very hard to avoid in the acquaintance period.<sup>36</sup> Because they are not anchored in space and

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<sup>33</sup> Russell borrows the term from Semon, who defines “akoluthic sensations” as fading sensations (*AMi*, p. 175).

<sup>34</sup> *AMi*, p. 166. Russell borrows the analysis of knowledge-memory (which he compares to habit-memory) from BERGSON’s *Matter and Memory* (1911).

<sup>35</sup> In the interest of brevity I will side-step the whole issue of scepticism and the infamous five-minute argument that Russell proposes in *The Analysis of Mind*. I will resort to a mere mention later in the section how the new account of memory allows Russell to deal with false memories.

<sup>36</sup> Banks claims that Russell always had a representational theory of knowledge. It is simply that in the neutral monist period he opted for “image-propositions”, i.e.,

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time, mere images alone cannot convince us of the authenticity of memory. As Russell puts it, all imagination-images and remote memory-images are vague. Vagueness occurs occasionally in perception-images as well.<sup>37</sup> Thus, mere images need to be accompanied by something else which will guarantee that they are representations of a genuine past, i.e. a unique event whose content I can recollect without hesitation. This something else is belief.

Russell often speaks of “belief” and “feeling of belief” (or “belief-feeling”), especially as far as memory is concerned, as though they are interchangeable terms. It becomes clear, however, as the theory progresses, that certain feelings—such as the feeling of familiarity or the feeling of pastness, and the sense of recognition—which accompany memory-images are thought by Russell to be characteristic of the images themselves, while still not quite qualifying as beliefs.<sup>38</sup> The feeling of pastness, first introduced in 1913, and the feeling of familiarity accompany all memory-images, and help us form habit-memory, which is a type of memory that both humans and animals possess. Habit-memory, he is quick to add, is not the same as knowledge-memory.<sup>39</sup>

complexes of images which are still representational units of knowledge. The motivation, according to Banks, was psychological realism (see BANKS, p. 123). I disagree. In the acquaintance period Russell wanted to avoid the representational “middle man”, hence the insistence on direct, unmediated, knowledge. It became evident to Russell only a few years later that this project was unsustainable due to the difficulties outlined in my paper as well as those deriving from the theory of judgment, which eventually led Russell to believe that direct knowledge and propositional knowledge (belief complexes) are irreconcilable. Hence the notion of direct knowledge was abandoned. If we are to carefully distinguish between representational and propositional knowledge, it could be argued that Russell always had a propositional theory of knowledge—although it seems to be that in the acquaintance period, it was really quasi-propositional.

<sup>37</sup> In cases of extreme fatigue, for example, even the face of a close friend may appear blurry.

<sup>38</sup> *AMi*, pp. 161–2. Here is how Russell defines “feeling”: “... I use the word ‘feeling’ in a popular sense, to cover a sensation or an image or a complex of sensations or images or both ...” (*AMi*, p. 187).

<sup>39</sup> *AMi*, p. 166. As Russell points out, *in practice* it is often difficult to distinguish between habit-memory and true memory, since the way we describe the recollection of a unique event—by using the same words every time—turns it into habit-memory. “A gramophone,” he continues on the same page, “by the help of suitable records, might relate to us the incidents of its past; and people are not so different from gramophones as they like to believe.” What is more, on p. 167, Russell states that “knowledge of past occurrences [true memory] is not proved by behaviour which is due to past experience.” The fact that someone can recite a poem, thereby exemplifying

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Knowledge-memory requires memory-belief. Memory-belief, then, involves belief-feeling, in addition to memory-image. Here is how, toward the end of the chapter on memory, Russell defines memory-belief: “a specific feeling or sensation or a complex of sensations, different from expectation or bare assent in a way that makes the belief refer to the past; the reference to the past lies in the belief-feeling, not in the content believed” (*AMi*, p. 186).

When Russell uses “belief” and “belief-feeling” interchangeably, he uses “belief” in a popular way, since technically speaking, the belief-feeling is only one of the components of belief. In the technical sense, as he points out in *The Analysis of Mind*, belief, *unlike presentation*, should be analyzed in terms of having three elements—the act of believing, the object (or the content) of belief, and the objective of the belief.<sup>40</sup> The act of believing is a feeling. The content of belief is an image or a word, that is, a present event.<sup>41</sup> The objective of belief is the past event which is not present before the mind. As Russell notes at the end of the chapter on memory in *The Analysis of Mind*, “When I speak of a *feeling* of belief, I use the word ‘feeling’ in a popular sense, to cover sensation or an image of a complex of sensation or images or both” (*AMi*, p. 187). He adds later in the book that belief (meaning belief-feeling) is a “special positive feeling” (*AMi*, p. 249). Belief-feeling is characterized by different attitudes toward the same content. For example, if the content of our belief is an image of a breakfast-

habit-memory, does not mean that she can remember any previous occasions on which she recited it—that is, that she has true memory of past events.

<sup>40</sup> In 1919 Russell argued that both the analysis of presentation and of belief should lead to the “collapse” of the act and object of cognition into one thing. In 1921, however, he argued that we should get rid of the act and the object altogether, but only as far as the analysis of presentation is concerned. The analysis of belief should distinguish between the act, the object and the objective of the belief. The reason Russell offers has to do with the act of belief. The act of belief is an actual experienced feeling and not something postulated as is the case with the act of presentation. My interpretation is that Russell has not actually changed his mind about belief since 1919. In 1921 he simply analyzed belief in greater depth than he did in 1919, and realized that we need to distinguish between the analysis of belief and the analysis of presentation, because the act of presentation is a logical fiction, while the act of belief is an actual experienced feeling.

<sup>41</sup> Russell argues that the content of our belief may consist of words only, or of images only, or of a combination of images and words, or of either or both together with sensations (*AMi*, p. 236). It is also the case that sometimes images associated with sensations overcome us with such force and spontaneity that the untrained mind cannot distinguish between the images and the sensations (*AMi*, p. 237).

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table, “[Y]ou may expect it while you are dressing in the morning; remember it as you go to your work; feel doubt as to its correctness when questioned as to your powers of visualizing; merely entertain the image, without connecting it with anything external, when you are going to sleep; desire it if you feel hungry, or feel aversion for it if you are ill” (*AMi*, p. 243). To illustrate how the feeling of belief works, Russell provides the following example. I enter a familiar room and notice that there is a picture hanging on the wall that I have not seen before. My feeling of belief tells me that the wall was blank the last time I was in the room. My present perception of the room, however, tells me that there is a picture on the wall. So, there is a clash between my feeling of belief and my perception of the object in question. Russell appears to believe that this clash between my present perception and my memory of the room is what distinguishes remembering from imagining. If I had only imagined, and not remembered, the room with the bare walls, then I would not have had a feeling of belief to tell me that the last time I saw the room, there was no picture on the wall. This feeling of belief brings the feeling of “reality” to us which no image, taken on its own, can bring. This feeling of reality, he argues, is like the feeling of respect, something that comes to us without the participation of volition. In other words, the feeling that accompanies our memories makes us believe that what we remember now is not a pure fabrication of our minds but is something that has occurred in the past, something that has a perceptual, that is, a “real” (e.g., physical) prototype (*AMi*, p. 186).

#### IV. NOTE ON “BELIEF”

In the interest of thoroughness and in consideration of the last two paragraphs, I would like to shed some light on the complexity of the notion of belief that Russell espouses in the period after the shift. In the 1922 paper, “Physics and Perception”, he classifies beliefs into inferred and non-inferred. Even though, he admits, it is difficult to explain precisely what is meant by “inferred” and “non-inferred” belief, he suggests that we regard knowledge as composed of beliefs that are either derivative (from sensations and other beliefs), or non-derivative.<sup>42</sup> He illustrates derivative beliefs with the following example.

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<sup>42</sup> Since we should not be able to derive anything from a sensation because sensations

When a tree falls, we expect to hear the crash that inevitably follows it. This expectation is derived from (i.e., is a response to) our previous sensations of other falling trees. If we are challenged on our perception of a given fact, in order to justify our perceptual belief, we can fall back on what we have sensed (seen or heard) before and of which we have established a habit.<sup>43</sup> Even though he does not give a strict definition of non-derivative beliefs, he says that non-derivative beliefs are, generally, of three kinds—perceptions, memories (retained past sensations), and logical principles.<sup>44</sup> From here, Russell argues that, although on the face of it, memory-beliefs should not be included among non-derivative beliefs (because they are *copies* of earlier sensations and often rely on habit), there are cases when we remember something that we have not noticed at the time of the occurrence of our perception. In those cases, memory-belief has the same right to be regarded as non-derivative as any belief that participates in perception. (Perceptions, in turn, consist of two things—a core of sensations and images, and beliefs “called up by the sensation through the influence of past experience”.<sup>45</sup>) This digression demonstrates how complex the issue of cognition has become in the neutral monist period.

#### V. RETURN TO MEMORY IN NEUTRAL MONISM

One thing should be clear from the analysis thus far: if images are the main cognitive elements, then belief is the only tool available to Russell at this point in addressing the challenge of how present images

are considered to be non-cognitive in the neutral monist period, we could assume that what Russell means by “derivative” here is “in response to”. This is confirmed by the example, discussed in the paragraph to follow, which illustrates what derivative beliefs are.

<sup>43</sup> At first glance, Russell’s theory of memory is based on Hume’s copy principle by which memories are copies of preceding perceptions. However, if we remember something which we have not noticed at the time of perception, it becomes difficult to explain how we can remember it at all. In this case, Russell, like Hume, has to rely on habit. Even if we do not notice (that is, retain) all the events that go through our senses, it is because we have established a mechanism of habit (and expectation) which allows us to remember things that we have not perceived (in the sense that we have not retained them in memory as registered in perception).

<sup>44</sup> Perhaps what Russell had in mind for non-derivative beliefs is something similar to G. E. Moore’s belief “I have a hand”—which is a belief that, although the subject cannot support it with any inference, is nonetheless a justified belief.

<sup>45</sup> RUSSELL, “Physics and Perception” (1922), *Papers* 9: 129.

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relate to past sense-data. (This is precisely the problem to which the earlier, non-representational and, hence, non-causal theory of memory, was immune.) Belief allows me to recognize a (false) *déjà vu* from a genuine memory. This belief is expressed with the judgment, "this has existed before" (*AMi*, p. 170). As Faria aptly notes, "this" in the proposition seems to refer "ambiguously to the present image and the past occurrence". This ambiguity is essential for the formation of memory-beliefs and also for distinguishing between false and genuine memories.<sup>46</sup> For Russell even the simplest memory image comes with the judgment "this occurred" where "this" covers both the present image and its original (see *AMi*, p. 179), and guarantees us the recollection of a unique event which we can call true remembering.

In parallel with the first section of the paper and in light of the fact that Pears is one of the commentators who has paid careful attention to Russell's account of memory in both periods, I will return to his criticism of the theory of memory in the neutral monist period. Pears has identified a problem of a paradoxical nature. Memory-belief is at the same time a product of the memory-image and its cause, which makes it lose its explanatory power. His argument is that the feeling of belief was intended by Russell to make us *understand* what pastness actually is, something that he took for granted in the acquaintance theory. Put otherwise, the introduction of belief-feeling is an attempt to generate a kind of *primitive understanding* of the concept of "past" (which comes before the *conceptual* understanding of what pastness is). For Pears this attempt is a failure since no matter how primitive our understanding of something, that understanding will always be conceptual in nature—which means that it cannot be derived from a feeling as such. Pears offers an alternative solution if the idea of primitive understanding is to be salvaged, a solution which, however, he dismisses as problematic. It goes along these lines: there are certain characteristics in *some* images that make us believe that they correspond to past experiences. Pears identifies several problems with this alternative. Without going into detail, the main issues Pears identifies are the following. Even if we accept that certain memory-images are accompanied by a feeling of familiarity which triggers the belief-feeling and eventually turns it into a memory-belief, the feeling of familiarity, according to Russell's theory, is a general feeling; and that is

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<sup>46</sup> FARIA, "Russell's Theories of Memory", p. 525.

why, taken on its own, it cannot guarantee that something is a true memory (a recollection of a unique past event) and not a sheer delusion. What Pears appears to be saying is that, from this point on, it would require a further step to turn the feeling of *general* familiarity (or general unfamiliarity) into a feeling of *concrete* familiarity (which is what we are looking for when accounting for a unique past event). And, according to him, Russell does not include this additional step. What Russell does do, however, is to suppose that any memory claim “implicitly involves a stipulation about its own causation.”<sup>47</sup> In other words, any time I receive an image that I identify as a memory-image, the feeling that accompanies this image is actually caused by a past experience of mine. If that is all that Russell’s theory of memory relies on, Pears asks, then what happens if the image that struck me as familiar is familiar for a different reason? From the example previously discussed, I discover that the room that has the picture hanging on the wall is familiar to me, that is, I assume that I have seen it before; however, the truth is that I have not seen this particular room but another room in another house which is very similar to this one.

Pears is right to criticize Russell for not fleshing out better the mechanism of memory-images and feeling of familiarity since this feeling is the one guaranteeing true memory, or memory-knowledge. However, we must not forget that Russell was aware of the problem. He truly believed that certain images carry with them, or trigger, the feeling of familiarity which leads to a belief.<sup>48</sup> I am not alone in making this contention. Lindsay Judson’s recent paper, “Russell on Memory”, makes a serious effort to respond to Pears’ criticism.<sup>49</sup> Judson not only offers

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<sup>47</sup> PEARS, “Russell’s Theories of Memory”, p. 136.

<sup>48</sup> When discussing various theories of belief, Russell admits that he has a lot to say in favour of James’ understanding of belief. James’s account of belief, as Russell presents it, is that there is no need of a special feeling (the belief-feeling) which makes belief what it is. The mere existence of images, which are not inhibited by anything else (such as disbelief, or doubt), yields belief. Russell does not endorse this view, but admits that it has a “dynamic power” and that it can explain simple phenomena in the realm of beliefs, such as hallucinations and dreams (*AMi*, pp. 247–9).

<sup>49</sup> Judson’s paper responds to more of Pears’ concerns than I cover here. For example, she focuses a few sections on Pears’ concern that Russell conflates types of memory such as “memory-images based memory” as well as “simple judgment memory”, and “answer memory”. Put otherwise, for Pears, Russell conflates habit memory where the memory-images function as *symbols* and episodic memory where the memory-images serve as *data*. Only the episodic type of memory can be called paradigmatic. Judson’s two main lines of defence are the very broad use of “habit” by

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an alternative to Pears' reading of Russell's theory of memory in the neutral monist period but also manages to bridge the two periods. Her concluding claim is that Russell viewed episodic or image-based memory as a paradigmatic source of knowledge of the past just as acquaintance with past sense-data was in the earlier period.<sup>50</sup> This type of memory, as it turns out, has epistemic primacy. Hence paradigmatic memory is not about reproducing the object of recollection, but about having the past experience before the mind. In this sense, if I am able to recognize that "this" in the proposition, "This is past", points to a specific event in the past that I have witnessed or participated in, then I will be able to "predict" in the future that other such propositions will indicate genuine knowledge of the past.

#### VI. CONCLUSION

It has become clear that, despite its originality, Russell's theory of memory under acquaintance suffered from serious problems outlined in this paper. Some of them were overcome by the new theory of memory under neutral monism. Once Russell abandons (albeit not entirely, as I hope to have shown) direct realism with regards to knowledge of the past and adopts a representational and causal account of memory, the tension—so troublesome in the acquaintance period—between present and past sense-data disappears. The representational model brings its own challenges, the biggest one being the explanation of the connection between present images and past events. Russell overcomes it by proposing that images, the cognitive units of "true" memory, are not sufficient, on their own, to bring about knowledge of the past. This allows him to develop a more nuanced account of belief, by including various belief-feelings accompanying memory images. We have to admit that such an account was lacking in the acquaintance theory.

It needs to be emphasized again that the transition to neutral monism was a rather gradual affair, preceded by modifications of the notion of acquaintance itself. Hence there was the tendency toward

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Russell as well as the fact that he should be read as trying, not to pinpoint the genealogy of paradigmatic memory, but rather to explain what, precisely, constitutes the occurrence of the paradigmatic memory itself (see JUDSON, "Russell on Memory" (1987–88), pp. 72–6).

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

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holism in the neutral monist period, where an all-encompassing philosophical view would champion an epistemological picture accounting for an integral, as opposed to a rule-rigorous but fragmented, experience of the world. Once certainty of knowledge was a matter of degrees (which Russell allowed even in the acquaintance period), and once neutral monism was finally embraced on the basis of philosophical economy and psychological plausibility (which he had been in search of since at least 1910), there were enough bridges with the acquaintance theory to ensure that direct realism was preserved in some way. For example, in the neutral monist theory of memory, Russell considered image-based (episodic) memory to have epistemic primacy over any other type of memory, as well as to be directly accessible to the rememberer (a main feature of memory by acquaintance). Both of these were modelled on perception. In the case of Russell's theories of memory, echoes from the acquaintance period in the form of a vestigial dualism or directness of knowledge are unavoidable. His concerns were always, as I have tried to show, primarily epistemological as opposed to metaphysical.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> I agree with Banks' assessment of Russell's version of neutral monism in comparison to James' and Mach's in that the former retains a form of dualism not present in the latter. Banks sees Russell's neutral monism fraught with "a lingering dualism between psychology and physics" which is not present in either Mach or James (see BANKS, p. 115). Banks calls it "lingering" because Russell's intention with the shift was to "unify the data of physics and psychology in a more parsimonious way than the assumption of two categories, the mental and the physical [as per the account in the acquaintance period]"—a shift that was not fully completed (*ibid.*). While I do not dispute this claim, I would not call the traces of dualism in Russell's version of neutral monism "lingering". My main reason comes from the contention I have tried to present in this paper, namely, that there always is a red thread of connection going through Russell's shifts, the biggest one being from acquaintance to neutral monism.

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