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SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND SELF-IDENTITY

By Sydney Shoemaker
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empirical grounds. I think that there is a conclusive a priori argument against the possibility of self-acquaintance (if this is regarded as a perception of the "I" that entitles one to make first-person statements). But, as I shall argue in the following chapter, this argument can be directed with equal force against the bundle theory and its account of the nature of self-knowledge.

Three

The Self and the Contents of Consciousness

1. "Why do we regard our present and past experiences as all parts of *one* experience, namely the experience we call 'ours'?" [1] This question of Russell's is both a question about the nature of self-knowledge and a question about the nature of selves. There is the question of how I *know* of my present and past experiences that they are mine (and therefore the experiences of a single person), and there is the question of what *makes* a set of experiences mine (or the experiences of a single person). The second of these questions might also be expressed by asking what it *means* to say that certain experiences are mine (or are the experiences of a single person). Dividing Russell's question in another way, there is the question of how I know, and of what it means to say, that certain *past* experiences are mine (are the experiences of a single person), and

[1] Russell, "On the Nature of Acquaintance," p. 131.

the question of how I know, and of what it means to say, that certain *present* experiences are mine (are the experiences of a single person). The first of these two questions concerns what Broad calls the "longitudinal unity of the mind" [2] and what Hume calls "the principles, that unite our successive perceptions in our thought or consciousness." [3] It is, for example, the question of what distinguishes those series of experiences or mental events that constitute the mental history of a single person (e.g., the set of all the experiences I have ever had) from those that do not (e.g., the series consisting of the experiences I had before 1950 together with those that my wife has had since 1950). This question will be discussed, in connection with the problem of personal identity, in Chapter Four. It is with the second question, about present experiences, that I shall be concerned in the present chapter. This is, if generalized, a question about the nature of what Broad calls the "transverse unity of a cross section of the history of a mind." [4] The experiences or mental events occurring at a given time can be divided into classes in an indefinitely large number of different ways. What is it, then, that distinguishes those classes of contemporary experiences that constitute the experiences of a single person at a certain time, or constitute the "total temporary state" of a person's mind, from those that do not?

There would seem to be an intimate relationship between the question of how I know of a set of present experiences that they are mine (and therefore the experiences of a single person) and the question of what it means to say that an experience is mine, or that a set of experiences are "co-personal." What I mean when I say "I have a headache" must be what I know when I know that I have a headache. And if what I mean is that an experience belongs to a certain person (my-

[2] *Mind and Its Place*, p. 560. [3] *Treatise*, p. 636.
[4] *Mind and Its Place*, p. 560.

self), this must be what I know, and it must be explained how I can know this. If belonging to a certain person is being related in a certain way to a particular subject or substance, then when I say "I have a headache" I presumably must mean and know that a headache is related in that way to a particular subject or substance. If, on the other hand, belonging to a certain person is being related in such and such ways to certain other experiences, is being a member of a certain "bundle" or "collection" of experiences, then I must mean and know that a headache stands in a certain relationship (of "co-personality") to certain other experiences. Any theory of the self, if it holds that every such "first-person psychological statement" is a statement about a person and can be known by that person to be true, must explain how, given its account of what these statements assert, such statements can be known to be true.

2. Let us now develop further one of the problems about self-knowledge that was introduced in Chapter Two. And let us consider, to begin with, the question "How do I know that I see a tree?" The statement "I see a tree" seems clearly to be an empirical statement, so if one knows it to be true one apparently must know this on the basis of what one perceives or observes. So the question "How do I know that I see a tree?" gives rise to the further question "What must I observe if I am to know on the basis of what I observe that I see a tree?" The answer to this question seems obvious. I must of course observe a tree, and it seems obvious that a tree is *all* that I need observe—assuming that my view of the tree is sufficiently good to enable me to identify it as a tree. If I see a tree, and know that it is a tree, surely I am entitled to say "I see a tree."

But the statement "I see a tree" has the person-referring expression "I" as its subject, and is thus apparently a statement

about the person who asserts it. From this it can appear that in order to know this statement to be true one must observe something more than just a tree. Consider, for the moment, the statement "Jones sees a tree." This is clearly a statement about two things, Jones and a tree. And it is quite obvious that if I am to know the truth of this statement on the basis of what I observe, I must observe more than just a tree. There is no observable feature of any tree that could tell me that it is seen by Jones. If I observe that Jones sees a tree, part of what I observe will be that Jones's eyes are open and directed toward a tree. Jones, as much as the tree, will be among the objects I observe. Now it is natural to say that when Jones says "I see a tree" he is reporting the very same fact that we report when we say "Jones sees a tree." For his statement is true if and only if ours is. And since our statement about Jones is a statement about two things, the same would seem to be true of Jones's statement about himself. But if Jones's statement is a statement about two things, himself and a tree, how could he possibly know it to be true if he were only observing one thing? Trees are no different when Jones sees them than when he does not, so if Jones sees only a tree then what he sees does not entitle him to say that he sees a tree; otherwise we could see the same thing (a tree) and thereby be entitled to say that Jones sees a tree, and this is obviously not the case.

So we seem to be involved in a dilemma. On the one hand it seems absurd to suppose that in order to know that I see a tree I must observe more than a tree. On the other hand it seems impossible that I could know a statement asserting a contingent relationship between two things, myself and a tree, solely on the basis of an observation of one thing, a tree.

Now let us turn from the observation of material things, like trees, to the observation, or awareness, of "mental objects," like afterimages and pains. It is obvious that not everything that

I have said about the statements "Jones sees a tree" and "I see a tree" remains true if we substitute the word "image" for the word "tree" in these statements. We do not establish that Jones sees an image by observing a relationship between Jones and an image. Nevertheless, if the statement "I see an image" is a statement about a person (the person who makes it), the same dilemma seems to arise. On the one hand it seems obvious that in order to be entitled to say "I see an image" I need observe, or be aware of, only an image. But if this statement is a statement about myself, and if I know it to be true, it seems that I must observe or be aware of something in addition to an image, something that entitles me to say, not simply that there exists an image, but that *I see* an image.

Although it can seem obvious that one need observe only an image in order to be entitled to say "I see an image," to hold this seems to involve one in solipsism. The dilemma I have posed would not arise for a solipsist. The statement "I see an image," according to the solipsist, is entailed by the statement "An image exists," and the latter statement, it seems, is such that one can know it to be true if one perceives an image and nothing else. But unless one accepts solipsism one cannot allow that any such entailment holds, for one must allow that there may be images, namely those perceived by other persons, that one does not perceive. If solipsism is false, it seems, one must observe more than the mere existence of an image if one is to be entitled to say, on the basis of observation, that one sees an image.

3. "When I am acquainted with 'my seeing the sun,'" says Russell in *The Problems of Philosophy*, "it seems plain that I am acquainted with two different things in relation to each other. On the one hand there is the sense-datum which represents the sun to me, on the other hand there is that which sees

this sense-datum." [5] Russell seems to think that while I may perhaps see something without perceiving myself seeing it, I cannot *know* that I see something unless I perceive (am acquainted with) the subject that perceives it. He goes on to say "we know the truth 'I am acquainted with this sense-datum.' It is hard to see how we could know this truth, or even understand what is meant by it, unless we were acquainted with something which we call 'I' " [6] McTaggart makes a similar remark. Though admitting that, "if we merely inspect our experience, the fact that we are aware of the 'I' by perception is far from obvious," he contends that "it is impossible to know the 'I' except by acquaintance." [7]

The account suggested by these remarks of Russell and McTaggart would seem to be the simplest and most straightforward theory of self-knowledge. If one must observe something more than an image in order to know that one sees an image, it would seem that this "something more" should be that which sees the image, i.e., oneself. When I know that I see an image, on this view, I actually observe a self or subject seeing an image, and when I say "I see an image" I am simply reporting what I thus observe. This view goes together with the idea that the word "I" is a logically proper name in Russell's sense, i.e., a word that directly designates an object with which the speaker is "acquainted." Following Broad and others I shall refer to this as the "proper name theory of the self." [8]

Russell's theory of language provides a convenient way of classifying the theories concerning the nature of self-knowledge that I wish to consider in this chapter, for these theories can be regarded, and have sometimes been advanced, as theories

[5] Page 50. [6] Page 51.

[7] J. M. E. McTaggart, *The Nature of Existence* (Cambridge, 1927), II, 76.

[8] C. D. Broad, *Examination of McTaggart's Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1938), II, Pt. 1, 174.

concerning the meaning of the word "I." As is well known, Russell held that many expressions that function grammatically like names—i.e., are substantives, "singular terms," or "singular referring expressions"—are not genuine names. These he calls "incomplete symbols." Since it is essential to Russell's conception of naming that only objects of acquaintance can be named, it is clear that anyone who holds that there is no such thing as self-acquaintance, or acquaintance with a subject of experience, must hold that "I" is not a genuine name. If the proper name theory is false then, assuming the adequacy of Russell's theory of language, only two alternatives remain. The word "I" may be an abbreviation for a definite description denoting a particular that is known "by description" rather than "by acquaintance." If this is so, it should be possible to replace the word "I" in each of its occurrences by a descriptive phrase of the form "the self (or the thing) having such and such properties." One's knowledge of the statement "I see an image" would be explained on this view by saying that what one perceives provides one with evidence that a self having the appropriate description sees an image. This view has been termed (by Broad) the "disguised description theory of the self." Alternatively, the word "I" may denote no actual individual at all, neither one that is observed nor one whose existence can be inferred from what is observed. On this view, what Broad calls the "logical construction theory" and what we are familiar with as the bundle theory, statements "about persons," i.e., statements containing person-referring expressions, are analyzable in such a way that no person-referring expressions occur in their final analyses. This view, toward which Russell inclined in some of his writings (most notably in *The Analysis of Mind*), avoids the supposition that we are directly acquainted with anything that can strictly be called a self or subject, but it allows, as the disguised description theory ap-

parently does not, that first-person psychological statements can be direct reports of what the speaker directly perceives, as opposed to being inferences concerning unobserved, and perhaps unobservable, entities.

All three of these theories have been held by writers on the self; in fact, all have been held, at different times, by Russell. I shall try to show that none of these theories is coherent. Russell's theory of language, with the standard empiricist epistemology implicit in it, breaks down when applied to the problem of the self.

4. I shall begin by considering the proper name theory, or the view (of which the proper name theory is perhaps only one version) that one knows that one is aware of something, or that one is having a certain experience, because one observes oneself (or the subject of one's experience) being aware of it or having it.

This view gives rise to the question: Supposing that I observe *a* self (subject) perceiving an image, how do I know that this self is *myself*? Surely I must know this if I am to be entitled to say, on the basis of my observation that this self perceives an image, that *I* perceive an image. So if I know this, how do I know it? To put the question in another way: How do I identify an object of awareness as something, or as the thing, that I am entitled to call "I"?

It will perhaps be said that if I am aware of a self then it *must* be myself, since my own self is the only self that can ever be an object of direct awareness for me. But how, when I perceive a self, am I supposed to know that I *do* perceive it? This question seems no less legitimate than the question that the proper name theory attempts to answer, namely "When I perceive an image, how do I know that I perceive it?" But the proper name theory's answer to the latter question, namely

that I know that I perceive an image because I observe myself perceiving it, obviously cannot be given to the question of how I know that I perceive a self. If the self that I perceive is in fact myself, as it presumably must be if I directly perceive it, then for me to observe myself perceiving it would be for me to perceive it perceiving itself. But the fact that it perceives itself would not tell me that *I* perceive it unless I *already* knew the very thing in question, namely that it is myself.

It would appear that if I can identify a perceived self as myself I must identify it by the properties (relational and nonrelational) that I perceive it to have. Now if I can identify a self as myself by a certain set of properties, and if it is only a contingent fact that my self has (that I have) these identifying properties, then it must be explained how I have come to know this fact, i.e., how I discovered that the possession of these properties by a self is evidence that it is myself. Presumably I could not have discovered such a fact unless I already had a way of identifying a self as myself, a way that does not involve identifying it as myself by the possession of those contingent properties. And if this other way consists in using another set of contingent properties as an identifying set, it must be explained how I discovered that *those* properties uniquely characterize myself. And so on. To avoid an infinite regress, it seems, we must suppose that there are identifying properties the possession of which *makes* a self myself, and that what I *mean* in calling a self myself is that it has these properties.

Most properties, and most sets of properties, are capable in principle of characterizing more than one thing. To be sure, there are properties, e.g., the property of being the mother of John Kennedy, that it is logically impossible for more than one thing to possess. But I think that all properties that are uniquely predicable in this way are relational properties of a certain kind. We can distinguish two kinds of relational properties.

Being a mother of John Kennedy is an example of one of these kinds; having this property consists in standing in a certain relation to a particular specified thing. Being a mother is an example of a relational property of the second kind; having this property consists in standing in a certain relation, not to some specified thing, but to *something or other* of a certain kind. Relational properties of the second kind, like nonrelational properties, are capable of belonging to more than one thing. Only of relational properties of the first kind can it be said that they are incapable of belonging to more than one thing, nor can this be said of all such properties (it can be said of the property "being a mother of John Kennedy," but not of the property "being a child of John Kennedy"). So if one wishes to say that there is a set of identifying properties the possession of which makes a self myself (i.e., that the assertion that something has certain properties entails that it is myself), and wishes to avoid the absurdity of holding that there could be several selves each of which is myself, one must hold that at least some of the properties in this identifying set are relational properties of the first kind. It follows from this, however, that knowing that a self is myself involves knowing that it stands in a certain relation to some specified individual (and not simply to an individual of a certain kind). But supposing that I have established that a self stands in the appropriate relation to something of the appropriate kind, how am I to know that the thing to which it is so related is *the* particular thing to which a self must be so related in order to be myself? If to be myself something must stand in the relation R to a particular thing a, the question of how I am to identify a self as myself gives rise to another question of the same kind, namely the question of how I am to identify something as a. And if we try to answer the second question in the way in which it was proposed that we answer the first one, i.e., if we say that

I identify something as a by its possession of certain properties, we shall be on our way to a vicious infinite regress.

It will perhaps be said that the proper name theory avoids these difficulties, and avoids having to answer the question raised at the beginning of this section, by holding that "I" is a logically proper name. If "I" is a logically proper name in Russell's sense, it has no descriptive content, and in that case there can be no question of applying it, or refusing to apply it, on the grounds that something satisfies, or fails to satisfy, a certain identifying description. If "I" is a logically proper name, it may be said, it refers directly like the word "this," and it is senseless to ask what entitles one to call something "this."

But there are obvious differences between the use of the word "I" and that of words like "this" and "that." The possible referents of the word "this" form a heterogeneous class, whereas the word "I" can be used, as a first-person pronoun, to refer to objects of only one kind, namely persons or selves. And while I can use the word "this" to refer to different things on different occasions, the word "I," when used by me as a first-person pronoun, must always refer to the same thing, and must refer to the very thing (myself) that is using it to refer. This suggests that the word "I" could be *mis*applied in ways in which the word "this" cannot be and raises the question of how a person knows that he is applying it correctly, i.e., to the right thing. If it is part of the notion of a logically proper name that such a word has no descriptive content, i.e., that in correctly using the word to refer to an object one implies nothing at all about the nature of the object, then the word "I," since it can refer only to persons, is not a logically proper name.

It might be held, however, that the word "I" can be regarded as an abbreviation for the words "this self" or "this subject." Assuming that it is logically impossible for a person to be directly acquainted with any self or subject that is not his own

self or subject, then, since the words "this self" will always refer to a self with which the speaker is acquainted (if "this" is used as a logically proper name), these words, as used by any given person, will always refer to the same thing, and will always refer to the very thing (the speaker) that is using them to refer. Hence, it might be held that to regard the word "I" as synonymous with the words "this self" is to give it just the reference that it ought to have. Yet in using "I" (so defined) to refer to a self one would not have to *establish* that that self is the one he had referred to as "I" in the past and would not have to *establish* that it is the very self that is doing the referring. As long as one uses "this" as a logically proper name, and does not mistake a nonself for a self, one will never have an opportunity to misapply the words "this self" or the word "I." On this account the question "Is this self my self?" will be, as the proper name theorist presumably wants it to be, a senseless question.

In subsequent discussions of the proper name theory I shall assume the modification of it just suggested, i.e., I shall take the theory as holding, not that the word "I" is itself a logically proper name, but that it is equivalent to some phrase, like "this self," which refers to a self by use of a logically proper name and indicates further that the thing referred to is a self. It should be noted that on this theory a question that initially seems to require an answer—namely "When I perceive a self, how do I know that it is myself?"—cannot be significantly raised. We shall have to consider whether the same is not true of the very question that the proper name theory attempts to answer, namely "When I am aware of something, how do I know that I am aware of it?"

5. On the proper name theory I know that I perceive an image in essentially the way in which I can know by observa-

tion that Jones sees a tree, i.e., by observing two things and perceiving that one of them perceives the other. So let us consider more closely the case in which I know by observation that Jones sees a tree.

The relation that I can observe to hold between Jones and a tree is one that holds contingently. Otherwise it would make no sense to say that I can observe that it holds, i.e., know empirically that it holds. And I *could* observe that this relation does *not* hold between Jones and a tree; I could see Jones and a tree, and observe that Jones does not see that tree. Notice that in the last sentence I say ". . . Jones does not see *that* tree," not ". . . Jones does not see *a* tree." What I would know in this case would not be that Jones does not see a tree, i.e., that there is no tree that he sees, but that he does not see some particular tree, i.e., that a certain tree is not seen by him. And when I observe that the relation does hold, what I observe is that Jones sees a particular tree, or that a certain tree is seen by Jones. Roughly speaking, what I perceive is what might be expressed by saying "Jones sees this tree," the denial of which is "Jones does not see this tree." The statement "Jones sees this tree" entails the statement "Jones sees a tree," but the denial of the former statement, namely "Jones does not see this tree," does not entail the denial of the latter, namely "Jones does not see a tree." Now to say that I perceive that a certain tree is perceived by Jones, or that I am entitled on the basis of observation to say "Jones sees this tree," implies that I can identify the tree that Jones sees in such a way as to leave it an open question, one to be settled empirically, whether Jones sees it. And of course I can do this. For example, I might identify the tree as the tree *I* see, and this leaves it an open question whether *Jones* sees it.

In the light of this it certainly cannot be said that my knowledge that I perceive an image is essentially like the observa-

tional knowledge I can have that Jones sees a tree. For if we rewrite the preceding paragraph by substituting "my self" for "Jones," "image" for "tree," and "perceive" for "see," we almost immediately get a self-contradiction, and we eventually get a number of statements that are self-contradictory or conceptually false.

To begin with, we get the self-contradiction "I could perceive my self and an image, and observe that my self does not perceive that image." And self-contradictoriness of this seems to me to be sufficient reason for rejecting the proper name theory as absurd. The relation "perceives" (or "is perceived by"), if I can observe it holding between two things, must be an empirical relationship, and hence a contingent one. This being so, it seems apparent that if I can perceive a self and an image, and observe that the self perceives that image, then it ought to be possible for me to perceive a self and an image and observe that the self does *not* perceive that image. But clearly this is not possible. On the proper name theory selves are conceived as mental subjects, immaterial entities that are distinct from human bodies, so presumably I cannot perceive selves other than my own self at all (and of course, if it is claimed that one could perceive more than one self, the problem of how I identify a self as *my* self rears its head again). And it is self-contradictory to suppose that I could perceive an image and perceive, as a fact about it, that I do not perceive it. So the relation "perceives" (or "is perceived by"), if regarded as a relation holding between mental subjects and mental objects, cannot itself be a perceivable relationship. Being seen by Jones (in the ordinary sense of "see") is a relational property something can be observed to have, and it goes with this that it is a property something can be observed to lack. I can look to see whether a thing I observe has this property, and I can find that it does not have it. The statement "Jones sees this,"

if "this" has a definite reference, is falsifiable by experience. But the "relational property" of being perceived by me is not one that I could conceivably observe something to lack, and for just this reason it cannot be a property that I can perceive something to have. "I perceive this," if "this" is used demonstratively to refer to an object of experience, is not falsifiable by experience, and is not verifiable by experience; it does not even express a significant statement.[9]

It will perhaps be objected that in order for the property of being perceived by me to be an observable property it need not be possible for *me* to observe something lacking this property. All that is necessary, it might be said, is that it be possible for *someone* to observe that something lacks this property. But can anyone *at all* observe something and observe that it lacks the property of being observed by me? I cannot do this. And since my self is presumably something that only I can observe, no other person could observe my self and an image and observe that the one does not perceive the other. Can it perhaps be said that someone is entitled to assert that I do not perceive an image if he observes the image and does not observe my self perceiving it, and that this counts as observing that the image lacks the property of being perceived by me? If so, then if *I* perceive an image and do not perceive myself per-

[9] In 5.6331 of his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (trans. by D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuiness [London, 1961]) Wittgenstein says: "Really you do *not* see the eye. And nothing *in the visual field* allows you to infer that it is seen with an eye." From the context it is clear that what Wittgenstein here says of the eye he means also to apply to the "I." In 5.634 he goes on to say: "This is connected with the fact that no part of our experience is at the same time *a priori*. Whatever we see could be other than it is." It was these remarks of Wittgenstein's that originally suggested to me the line of argument developed in this section and the three sections following. See also Moore's "Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930–33," pp. 306–310, and Wittgenstein's *Investigations*, pp. 123–124.

ceiving it, then *I* am entitled to say that I do not perceive it —which is of course absurd.

Russell says that "we know the truth 'I am acquainted with this sense-datum,'" and offers the proper name theory as an explanation of how this "truth" is known. Now the negation of "I am acquainted with this sense-datum" is "I am not acquainted with this sense-datum." But the latter, on Russell's own theory, denies itself a sense. For Russell regards "this" as a logically proper name and holds that a logically proper name has meaning only if it refers to something with which the speaker is acquainted. So if "I am not acquainted with this sense-datum" were true the word "this" in it would be meaningless, since it would not refer to an object of acquaintance, and the sentence would itself be meaningless (and therefore, of course, *not* true). As Russell himself once said, "we can never point to an object and say: '*This* lies outside of my present experience.'" [10] So Russell is trying to explain how we can know empirically the truth of a statement ("I am acquainted with this sense-datum") which, on his own theory, has a meaningless negation and hence cannot itself be meaningful. Perhaps it will be said that "I am acquainted with this sense-datum" is tautologous rather than meaningless. But whether it is meaningless or tautologous, clearly it cannot be known empirically, as Russell's account supposes it to be.

The paragraph above, as it stands, is simply an *ad hominem* refutation of Russell. But it brings out an important point. The reason why the proper name theory leads to absurdities is that it is an attempt to answer a senseless question. The same, as we shall see later in this chapter, is true of other theories concerning the nature of the self and self-knowledge. We begin with a question like "When I see an image, how do I know that I do?" But it is supposed that this question is equivalent

[10] "On the Nature of Acquaintance," p. 134.

to, or essentially involves, the question "When I perceive an image, how do I know that I perceive *it*?" and it is questions of the latter sort that theories like the proper name theory attempt to answer. They try to explain how I can know of a certain mental object (an afterimage, a pain, or the like) that I perceive *it* (am aware of it, am acquainted with it), or that it is *my* experience (my afterimage, my pain). But when do I know of a particular mental object that I perceive it, or of a particular experience that it is mine? I am not denying (or affirming) that statements like "I see an afterimage" and "I have a headache" can legitimately be said to be known to be true by the person who asserts them. What I do wish to deny is that such statements assert, or express knowledge, that some particular afterimage is perceived by the speaker or that some particular headache belongs to the speaker. How could I identify a particular image or pain so as to be able to say of it that I perceive it or that it is mine? If I wish to identify a tree and say that Jones sees it I might identify it as the tree *I* see. But if I were to identify an image as "the afterimage I see" and then go on to say that I see it, I would not be reporting any fact that I have discovered about the object thus identified; I would simply be repeating part of my identifying description. Can I refer to an image as "this afterimage" and go on to say that I see it, or that it is mine? It is questionable, first of all, whether the word "this" can be used, as a demonstrative pronoun, to refer to mental objects like afterimages, since such entities cannot be pointed to. But let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that "attending to" a mental object can take the place of pointing. I can point to a material object that I do not see, so there are circumstances in which it would make sense to say "I don't see this tree," and therefore circumstances in which it would make sense to say "I see this tree." What Russell says about logically proper names, namely that they can

significantly be used to refer to an object only when the speaker is acquainted with that object, does not apply to "this" when it is used demonstratively to refer to material objects. But surely it does apply to "this" when (supposing this to be possible) this word is used demonstratively to refer to mental objects. For it is logically impossible, surely, to attend to an object with which one is not acquainted. So when the act of attending plays the role, in giving "this" reference, that is ordinarily played by pointing, the sentence "I am not aware of this" is surely senseless (or, if we regard "this" in such contexts as equivalent to the description "that to which I am attending," self-contradictory). And in such cases "I am acquainted with this" is either senseless or tautologous and cannot be a statement whose truth can be known empirically.

It now appears that the question quoted from Russell at the beginning of this chapter, namely "Why do we regard our present and past experiences as all parts of one experience, namely the experience we call 'ours'?" rests on a confusion, at least in so far as it concerns present experiences. Russell seems to be asking the question "What does it mean to say, and how is it known, that certain present experiences are mine?" But by whom is it ever said, and by whom is it ever known, that certain present experiences are mine? My wife knows that I have a headache, and (if we can speak of knowledge here) so do I. But neither of us knows of any particular headache that it is mine. My headache can, of course, be identified or referred to. I can refer to it as "my headache," and my wife can refer to it as "my husband's headache." But there is no way of referring to it that permits us to raise concerning it a question of the sort that the proper name theory (along with others) tries to answer. There is, to be sure, such a thing as coming to know that a certain headache is my headache. If Jones over-

hears Smith saying "His headache is growing worse," he might wonder whether it is my headache that Smith is talking about (whether a certain headache, the one Smith is talking about, is mine). He could find out whether it is by asking Smith to whom he was referring. In a similar case *I* could wonder, and try to find out, whether a certain headache is mine. But this would simply be a matter of wondering, and trying to find out, whether it is about me that someone is talking, and to the verification procedure for this such theories as the proper name theory have no relevance at all.

6. The arguments in the preceding section were directed primarily against the proper name theory and its contention that we have self-knowledge by being directly acquainted with a self or subject of experience. It will perhaps be thought that the other theories described in Section 3, the disguised description theory and the logical construction theory, avoid the difficulties I have raised by their denial that there is direct acquaintance with selves. I shall now try to show, however, that the grounds for rejecting the proper name theory are also grounds for rejecting the disguised description theory and the logical construction theory.

First let us consider the disguised description theory. According to this theory, the word "I" is an abbreviation for a definite description, not a proper name, and the object it refers to is known "by description" rather than "by acquaintance." Characterizations and criticisms of this theory are to be found in both McTaggart and Broad, but neither of these writers mentions any philosophical work in which this view is actually propounded. The only such work that I have been able to find is Russell's essay "On the Nature of Acquaintance," and it is his version of the theory that I shall discuss.

Russell claimed that "we may define the word 'I' as the subject of the present experience." [11] In this definition, he said, the phrase "the present experience," or whatever phrase is used in its stead, must be functioning as a logically proper name. And Russell's theory is most simply expressed by saying that the word "I" can always be regarded as an abbreviation for the description "the self that is acquainted with this," where "this" functions as a logically proper name of an object of acquaintance.

> The subject attending to "this" is called "I," and the time of the things which have to "I" the relation of presence is called the present time. "This" is the point from which the whole process starts, and "this" itself is not defined, but simply given. The confusions and difficulties arise from regarding "this" as *defined by the fact of being given*, rather than simply as given.[12]

Russell apparently thought that in order to know that *I* am aware of a given object, say an afterimage, I need not be acquainted with any object other than the afterimage. *Part* of what I know when I know that I see an afterimage is what might be expressed by the sentence "This is an afterimage." Now it would seem that if I know the truth of the statement "This is an afterimage," and define "I" as meaning "that which is acquainted with this," where "this" refers to the afterimage, there is still one more thing that I must know before I can be entitled to make the statement "I am acquainted with an afterimage": I must know that there is something that satisfies the description "that which is acquainted with this." But according to Russell I can know this. For he held that when one is acquainted with an object one can, without being acquainted with a subject or with any other object, be acquainted with the *fact* that something is acquainted with that object. "Our

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 165. [12] *Ibid.*, p. 168.

theory maintains that the datum when we are aware of an object O is the fact 'something is acquainted with O.'" [13] Being acquainted with this fact I know that something is acquainted with the object, and I simply use the word "I" to refer to this something.

Russell did not explain how one can be acquainted with the fact "something is acquainted with O" when the only object with which one is acquainted is O. Perhaps he held a view like one suggested by Broad. If we hold that we have "non-intuitive but non-inferential knowledge of a Pure Ego," according to Broad, we shall have to suppose that "each particular mental event which we become acquainted with in an introspective situation manifests in that situation the relational property 'being owned by something.'" [14] It is possible that Russell held that whatever is an object of acquaintance has an observable (introspectable) property that is the property of "being perceived by something." This view, however, is clearly open to objections of the sort raised against the proper name theory in Section 5. For if there were such an observable property, then, since this would have to be a contingent property, it ought to make sense to suppose that one might observe something and observe that it lacks this property. And of course it does not make sense to suppose that something could be observed to lack the property of being perceived. To put the difficulty in another way, if I can know by acquaintance with a certain thing that it is an object of acquaintance, I ought to be able to express what I know in the statement "Something is acquainted with this," where "this" refers to the object of acquaintance. And since this statement, being known by acquaintance, would be a contingent statement, its negation would have to be meaningful and contingent. But the negation of "Something is acquainted with this" is "Nothing is acquainted with this,"

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 164. [14] *Mind and Its Place*, p. 281.

and the latter statement, on Russell's own conception of meaning, cannot be meaningful.

There is another difficulty in Russell's theory, which I can best bring out by first considering an argument raised against the disguised description theory by McTaggart.[15] Broad has given a formulation of the argument which is somewhat clearer than McTaggart's, and it is essentially his version that I shall present.[16]

The argument is this. The first thing that is required if "I" is to stand for a definite description is a description such that there must be one and only one thing that satisfies it. We may grant, for the sake of argument, that this requirement is satisfied by any description of the form "the subject that is acquainted with this," where "this" is the logically proper name of an object of acquaintance. (We can perhaps improve on Russell's theory, though possibly not with his approval, by maintaining that it is a logical truth, rather than a truth known by experience, that any such description is uniquely satisfied.) If "I" is defined as "the subject that is acquainted with this," and "this" is the logically proper name of an afterimage, there seems to be no difficulty about how the speaker can know the proposition "I am acquainted with an afterimage"; if I know that *this* is an afterimage, and define "I" as meaning "that which is acquainted with *this*," I can easily deduce the statement "I am acquainted with an afterimage."[17] But suppose that I am acquainted with *two* things, e.g., an afterimage and a headache. How in this case am I to know the truth of the statement "I am acquainted with an afterimage *and* a headache"? Supposing "this" and "that" to designate, respectively,

[15] See McTaggart, *Nature of Existence*, II, 63 ff.

[16] See Broad, *Examination of McTaggart*, II, Pt. 1, especially pp. 197–199.

[17] Assuming that the two italicized tokens of "this" have the same reference.

the afterimage and the headache, we can assume that the descriptions "the subject acquainted with this" and "the subject acquainted with that" both refer uniquely, i.e., that each of these descriptions picks out one and only one subject. But how am I to know that both descriptions pick out *one and the same subject*? There is nothing in either of them that tells me this. No matter which of these descriptions I use as my definition of "I," I am faced with the question "How do I know that I am acquainted with *both* an afterimage and a headache?" I am faced either with the question "How do I know that the subject acquainted with this is also acquainted with that?" or with the question "How do I know that the subject acquainted with that is also acquainted with this?" Perhaps it will be said that here I can define "I" as meaning "the subject acquainted with *both* this afterimage *and* that headache." But how do I know whether there is anything that satisfies this description? It would seem to be a necessary truth that any experience or mental object has one and only one subject that is acquainted with it (though it is not clear that Russell regards this as a necessary truth). But it is certainly not a necessary truth that any *two* experiences or mental objects have the *same* subject. It would seem that on the disguised description theory I must, if I am to know the truth of such a statement as "I have a headache and see an afterimage," have some way of knowing that two experiences have the same subject. McTaggart maintains that if I know myself (the subject of my experiences) only by description, and never by acquaintance, I could never know this. I must, he concludes, be acquainted with myself; only by observing concerning two objects that both are perceived by this self can I know that both are perceived by me.

As it happens, Russell's essay, with which McTaggart may not have been familiar, contains an answer to the question

that McTaggart believes the disguised description theory to be incapable of answering. Russell says:

> We shall have to say . . . that "being experienced together" is a relation between experienced things, *which can itself be experienced*, for example when we become aware of two things which we are seeing together, or of a thing seen and a thing heard simultaneously. Having come to know in this way what is meant by "being experienced together" we can define "my present contents of experience" as "everything experienced together with *this*," where *this* is any experienced thing selected by attention.[18]

According to Russell, then, when I experience both an afterimage and a headache, I know that they are both experienced by the same subject because I observe, or experience, that they are related by the relation "being experienced together."

Russell's answer, while perhaps no worse than McTaggart's, is also no better, despite the fact that it does not posit acquaintance with a subject. For as I have said before, it is not intelligible to hold that a given relation can be experienced as holding (observed to hold) between two things unless one allows that one *could* experience two things and experience (observe) that this relation did not hold between them. But what should I say if I were to experience an afterimage and a headache and observe that the relation "being experienced together" did not hold between them? I should have to say that one or the other of them was not experienced by me! But as Russell himself says, "we can never point to an object and say: 'This lies outside my present experience.' " [19]

Since Russell defines "I" as meaning "that which is acquainted with this," it might seem that his theory has the virtue of making the question "How do I know that I am acquainted with this?" a senseless question. But in fact Russell does not regard this question as senseless. Adopting his definition, and replacing the second "I" in the question by its *definiens*, the question becomes "How do I know that the subject that is acquainted with this is acquainted with this?" Either the word "this" has the same reference in both its occurrences in this question or it does not. If it does not, e.g., if it refers in one place to an afterimage and in the other to a headache, then Russell would certainly regard the question as significant, for it is just the sort of question he is trying to answer in the account criticized in the preceding paragraph. Suppose, however, that the word "this" has the same reference in both its occurrences. Then, though the question looks senseless, it is equivalent on Russell's theory of descriptions to the question "How do I know that there is one and only one subject that is acquainted with this and that this subject is acquainted with this?"—which reduces, when we eliminate its redundancy, to the question "How do I know that there is one and only one subject that is acquainted with this?" And Russell clearly thinks that the latter question is a sensible one, for he is trying to answer it (or at least give a partial answer to it) when he says that when I am acquainted with an object *O* I am acquainted with the fact "something is acquainted with *O*."

I have not challenged, and am not concerned to challenge, the adequacy of Russell's definition of "I." If we suppose that "this" can be used demonstratively to refer to mental objects or contents (images, pains, and the like), it is clear that if the "this" in the description "the self that is acquainted with this" refers demonstratively to a mental content then the description will refer to the speaker and therefore to what the speaker refers to as "I." But assuming that Russell has shown that "I" can be regarded as an abbreviation of a definite description,

[18] "On the Nature of Acquaintance," p. 131. First italics mine.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 134.

he has not shown, and could not have shown, that one knows oneself "by description." Using Russell's definition of "I," to say that I know myself by description would be to say that I am entitled to use the word "I" in a statement by the fact that I have empirical evidence that there exists something that satisfies the description "the self that is acquainted with this." But nothing could be empirical evidence of this; if this description has the required sense, i.e., if the "this" in it refers demonstratively to a mental content, then it is senseless to suppose that the description might not be satisfied.

7. I turn now to the logical construction theory, or what I have sometimes called the bundle theory. If both the proper name theory and the disguised description theory must be rejected, only the logical construction theory seems to remain as a possible theory concerning the nature of the self and self-knowledge. But this theory, as we shall see, is no more satisfactory than the others.

Advocates of the logical construction theory, though they reject the notion of a subject, do not deny that statements like "I see an image" are in some sense statements about persons. Russell came to hold that the grammatical form of "I think" is misleading because it suggests that there is a subject. But he held that the form of "Jones thinks" is misleading for the same reason, and he can hardly have been denying that a sentence like "Jones thinks that it will rain" can express a statement about a person. If one holds that first-person psychological statements are statements about persons and are known on the basis of observation, one seems to be faced with the problem raised in Section 2, even if one abandons the idea that a person is a subject or substance. If "I see an image" is a statement about a particular person, it asserts something more than is asserted by the statement "An image exists," and,

it seems, something more than one is entitled to assert if one simply observes an image. So a problem seems to arise as to how this something more is known. The logical construction theory (the bundle theory) can be seen as an attempt to solve just this problem.

As I pointed out in Chapter Two, the denial that there is a subject seems paradoxical, or even self-contradictory, when it is coupled with the assertion that the "mental objects" with which first-person psychological statements deal are objects of acquaintance or perception. For surely, one wants to say, there cannot be objects of perception or acquaintance, or knowledge of objects "by acquaintance," unless there is something that perceives or is acquainted with these objects. The way in which the logical construction theory attempts to avoid this difficulty, and also (I think) to solve the problem raised in Section 2, is indicated by Ayer in a passage I have quoted before: "We do not deny, indeed, that a given sense-content can legitimately be said to be experienced by a particular subject; but we shall see that this relation of being experienced by a particular subject is to be analysed in terms of the relationship of sense-contents to one another, and not in terms of a substantival ego and its mysterious acts." [20] If this view is applied to first-person experience statements, it has the consequence that when one asserts a statement like "I see an afterimage" one is asserting that a sense-content (in this case an afterimage) is related to other sense-contents in a certain way. Ernst Mach says just this. According to Mach, "the primary fact is not the ego, but the elements (sensations). . . . The elements *constitute* the *I*." [21] And he goes on to say: "*I* have the sensation green signifies that the element green

[20] *Language Truth and Logic*, p. 122.

[21] *Contributions to the Analysis of Sensations*, trans. by C. M. Williams (New York, 1959), p. 23.

occurs in a given complex of other elements (sensations, memories)."

Mach and Ayer do not say, in so many words, that in order to make a statement like "I see an image" one must *observe that* a sense content (an image) is related in certain ways to certain other sense contents, or that it "occurs in a given complex of other elements." But this seems implicit in what they say. According to Ayer, "the considerations which make it necessary, as Berkeley saw, to give a phenomenalist account of material things, make it necessary also, as Berkeley did not see, to give a phenomenalist account of the self." [22] Here Ayer was anticipated by Hume, who said in the Appendix to the *Treatise* that "philosophers begin to be reconcil'd to the principle, *that we have no idea of external substance, distinct from the ideas of particular qualities.* This must pave the way for a like principle with regard to the mind, *that we have no notion of it, distinct from the particular perceptions.*" Hume's view is summed up in his statement: "When I turn my reflection on *myself*, I can never perceive this *self* without some one or more perceptions; nor can I ever perceive anything but the perceptions. 'Tis the composition of these, therefore, which forms the self." [23] And Ayer's reason for thinking we must give a "phenomenalist account" of the self is that "the substantival ego is not revealed in self-consciousness." [24] In calling his theory a phenomenalist account of the self Ayer certainly seems to be suggesting that what his theory does, or attempts to do, is to explain how we can know statements about selves by interpreting these statements as statements solely about "sense-contents." And since what led him to think such an account necessary is the fact that no "substantival ego" is revealed in self-consciousness, it would seem that he must in-

[22] *Language Truth and Logic*, p. 126.
[23] *Treatise*, pp. 635, 634.
[24] *Language Truth and Logic*, p. 126.

tend his phenomenalist account to do what, according to him, the substance (pure ego) theory cannot do, i.e., explain how one can have knowledge of one's *own* self. As I said in Chapter Two, the chief virtue that is claimed for theories of the Humean sort, of which Ayer's and Mach's are examples, is that they make the self something empirically knowable, rather than an unobservable entity such as a subject or substance is alleged to be. What such theories claim to do is to make each person's self empirically accessible *to himself*. Clearly they do not make one's self any more accessible to persons *other than* oneself than the substance theory does, for other persons cannot observe one's own sense-contents or "perceptions." If anyone observes that my image is related in certain ways to certain other sense-contents, it is I who observes this. And if the point of holding that my seeing (or being acquainted with) an afterimage consists in there being such a relationship between sense-contents is that this makes my seeing an image an empirically knowable fact, then surely anyone who holds this must maintain that I observe this relationship holding when I say "I see an image," and that it is by observing this that I know that I see an image.

Various difficulties can be raised concerning this view. We might ask, for example, how I identify certain sense-contents as *the* sense-contents to which an image must be related in the appropriate way in order to be my image. Presumably, the relationship I observe between an image and other sense-contents is a relationship of "co-personality." But even if I can observe that an image is co-personal with other sense-contents, this will not tell me that it is *my* image, or that I am aware of it, unless I already know that those other sense-contents are mine. And how, on this theory, do I know this?

But the main objection I wish to raise against this theory is essentially the same as that I raised against the proper name

theory in Section 5. If I can observe (be acquainted with) an image and observe that it stands in a certain empirical relationship to certain other sense-contents, surely it must make sense to suppose that I might observe an image and observe that it does not stand in that relationship to those other sense-contents. But if my seeing (being acquainted with) an image consists in its standing in that relation to other sense-contents, then for me to observe an image and observe that it is not so related to the other sense-contents would be for me to observe an image and observe that I do not see it (am not acquainted with it). Like the proper name theory, this theory makes the relational property of being perceived by me an empirical property that I can observe something to have. And this is absurd, for if I could observe something to have this property I could also observe something to lack it. Again, like the proper name theory, this theory attempts to explain what it means to say of a certain sense-content that it is experienced by a given person, and how one can know of a particular sense-content that one perceives (is acquainted with) it. And this, as I argued in Section 5, is a fundamentally misguided enterprise. When I say that I see an image, I am not saying, and cannot normally be said to know, that some particular image is seen by me.

8. I want now to discuss another theory which, like the logical construction theory, rejects the notion that a self is a substance or subject. This theory has been advanced, or at any rate sympathetically entertained, by Ian Gallie and J. R. Jones.[25] While rejecting the subject, this theory holds that there is such a thing as awareness and that things can be said to be objects of awareness. What it tries to do is to analyze

[25] See Ian Gallie, "Mental Facts," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, N.S. XXXVII (1936–1937), 191–212, and J. R. Jones, "The Self in Sensory Cognition," *Mind*, LVII (1949), 40–61.

the notion of "being an object of awareness" into the notion of "occurring in a sense-field" and in this way, it is thought, dispense with the need for positing the existence of a subject. Each of us, it is said, "has" a sense-field corresponding to each of the external senses; we each have a visual field, an auditory field, a tactile field, and so on. In addition to these we each have a "somatic field." The somatic field plays an important role in this theory; roughly, a person *is* his somatic field in a sense in which he is not, but only has, his other sense-fields. The theory is that when I say that I am aware of something I am saying *either* (1) that something is now occurring in my somatic field, which, as Jones puts it, "I designate '*this* somatic field,' using 'this' as a logically proper name," [26] *or* (2) that something is now occurring in some other sense-field, say a visual field, which is related in a certain way to what I call "this somatic field." As Gallie puts it,

> When I report that I am experiencing a certain somatic sensation —e.g., that I am feeling cold—the fact recorded by this statement is simply the fact that some region of this present somatic field is pervaded or occupied by a certain sensible quality, and . . . in general the notion of a bodily sensation being experienced by a particular subject reduces to the notion of the spatio-temporal inclusion of a somatic sense-datum within a somatic field.

There is a sense, he says, in which my visual field is spatially and temporally continuous with my somatic field. And he suggests that "the statement 'I am now seeing a red patch' simply records that 'this somatic field is partially continuous . . . with a contemporary visual field, which is pervaded in some part by a certain shade of red.' " [27]

The expressions "this somatic field" and "my somatic field" are synonymous, according to this theory, and the statement

[26] "The Self," p. 53. [27] "Mental Facts," pp. 199, 202.

"This somatic field is my somatic field" is a tautology. But the expressions "this visual field" and "my visual field" are not synonymous, and the statement "This visual field is my visual field" apparently expresses a contingent truth, namely that the visual field referred to stands in an empirical relationship, some sort of spatiotemporal contiguity, to the somatic field that the speaker refers to as "this somatic field." My first objection to the theory is that this cannot be so. If "this" is used as a logically proper name to refer to sense-fields, it can refer to a sense-field only if the speaker is "acquainted with" that sense-field. Presumably, however, a person cannot be acquainted with a sense-field that is not his *own* sense-field. So the statement "This visual field is my visual field" must be as much a tautology as the statement "This somatic field is my somatic field."

But can "this" be used as a logically proper name to refer to a sense-field? According to this theory it can, for "my somatic field" is analyzed as meaning "this somatic field," where "this" is used as a logically proper name. But the notion of a logically proper name, at least as Russell introduced it, is the notion of an expression that can significantly be used to refer to something only if the speaker is acquainted with, or directly aware of, that thing. So if I use the word "this" as the logically proper name of a sense-field, I must be directly aware of the sense-field. But this theory proposes to analyze the notion of being an object of awareness into the notion of being included within a sense-field. So if I am aware of a sense-field, it must be included within a sense-field, presumably some sense-field other than itself. But the sense-field in which it is included would have to be a sense-field of mine (since it is I that am aware of the sense-field included in it), and therefore (on this theory) a sense-field that I can designate "this sense-field." So I would have to be aware of it as well, which

means (again on this theory) that it would have to be included in still another sense-field. And so on ad infinitum. Clearly something has gone wrong here. Just because anything that one perceives must be included in a sense-field, a sense-field cannot itself be perceived, or be an object of awareness or acquaintance, in the sense in which its contents can. It is tautologically true that whatever I see is included in my visual field, and it is senseless to say that I see my visual field in the sense in which I see its contents. The same goes for the other senses and their sense-fields. To say that I perceive, or am aware of, a sense-field makes sense only if it is an elliptical way of saying that I perceive, or am aware of, the particular contents of a sense-field.

Because of what I have just said, the analysis of the expression "my sense-field" as meaning "this sense-field" will not do. But another point of importance emerges. Paradoxical though this may seem, sense-fields are no more observable than the subjects or substances that Gallie and Jones reject on the grounds that they are unobservable. The contents of sense-fields are observable, but that is another matter. The point is that by analyzing awareness in terms of the notion of occurrence in, or inclusion in, a sense-field, Gallie and Jones do not succeed in making the fact expressed by a statement like "I see an afterimage" any more empirically accessible than does the view that awareness consists in a certain two-term relationship holding between an object of awareness and an unobservable subject.

It is not clear whether this theory holds that I am justified in asserting the statement "I am aware of a pain" (for example) because I am aware of a pain and observe, as a fact about it, that it lies within the somatic sense-field I call "this." If it does hold this, it is certainly mistaken, for the same reasons that the proper name theory and the logical construc-

tion theory are mistaken. I have said that sense-fields cannot be perceived in the sense in which their contents are perceived. The important thing to be seen is that it makes no sense to speak of perceiving the *boundaries* of a sense-field. Gallie says that a person's somatic sense-field has a boundary, an "outer surface," which is, "in normal circumstances" coincident with the surface of the person's skin.[28] And he speaks as though one can observe that one's pains, feelings of hunger, and the like lie within this boundary. Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that I can in some sense observe that a pain lies within the area enclosed by my skin. This implies that I *could* feel a pain and observe that it lies outside that area, i.e., that I could have a pain and locate it outside the area enclosed by my skin. And in fact, a person who has had a limb amputated will sometimes locate a pain outside his body; he will locate it in the place where his missing limb would be if he still had it. But Gallie holds that in such cases one's somatic sense-field extends beyond the area enclosed by one's skin; in such a case the circumstances are no longer "normal circumstances." It is pretty clear, indeed, that there is nothing that Gallie would count as someone's feeling a pain that lies outside the boundaries of his somatic field. As long as one thinks of one's somatic field as the area enclosed by one's skin, there is some plausibility in the view that in reporting that I have a pain I am reporting, as an observed fact about a pain, that it lies within my somatic field. For that a pain lies within the area enclosed by one's skin does seem to be something one can know by experience; it is natural to say that one can in some sense observe that one's pain is *here*, in one's arm, and not *there*, in the table. But this plausibility begins to dissolve once it becomes apparent that if I did feel a pain in the table, supposing this to be possible, this would not show that the pain was not felt by me, but would show instead that my somatic

[28] Page 198.

field extends beyond the area enclosed by my skin, and encompasses the area occupied by the table. It becomes apparent that I cannot locate the boundary of my somatic field and then observe that something lies within it. There is no sense in which I can establish empirically that the boundaries of my somatic field exclude a certain area. And to say that I have established empirically that the boundaries of my somatic field do not exclude a certain area is simply to say that I have felt a somatic sensation and located it in that area. It is my statement "I feel a pain there" that establishes that the place referred to lies within my somatic field. It cannot be the case, therefore, that I am entitled to say "*I* feel a pain there" on the grounds that the place in which the pain lies is part of *my* somatic field.

My main point can be expressed as follows. I could only observe that something lies within a sense-field of mine if I could observe the boundaries of that sense-field. But it makes no sense to say that I could observe the boundaries of a sense-field, for that would be to say that the boundaries themselves lie within the sense-field, i.e., that they lie within themselves. If the boundaries were in the sense-field, then part of the field would lie outside the boundaries (for a boundary must have two sides), and would therefore *not* be part of the sense-field. I cannot observe a sense-field at all if "observing a sense-field" means anything more than observing the particular contents of a sense-field, and I cannot observe that something lies within a sense-field if "observing that a sense-datum lies within a sense-field" means anything more than "observing a sense-datum."

Before leaving this theory I must make one more comment about it. Gallie and Jones propose their theory as an alternative to the view that there is a subject of experience, a view they regard as too metaphysical. It occurs to me, however, that their theory is much closer to the subject theory than they realize. There is a sense in which it is trivially true that there is a

subject of acquaintance. And it is trivially true that anything one sees is included in one's visual field, and, in general, that anything of which one is aware is included in some "sense-field." Now if one sets about to represent pictorially the fact that a person is acquainted with, say, a set of visual sense-data, one may at first be inclined to think that a picture like that in Figure 8, where the visual field is represented along with the

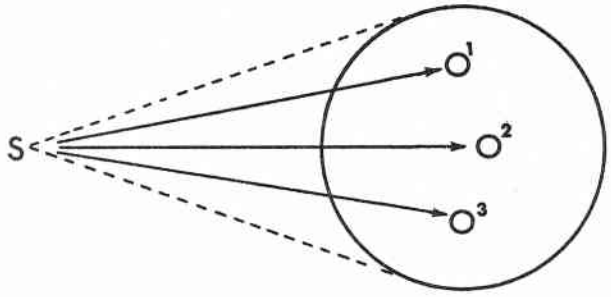

Figure 8

subject and the objects, is the best way to represent this fact. But it becomes apparent on slight reflection that there is

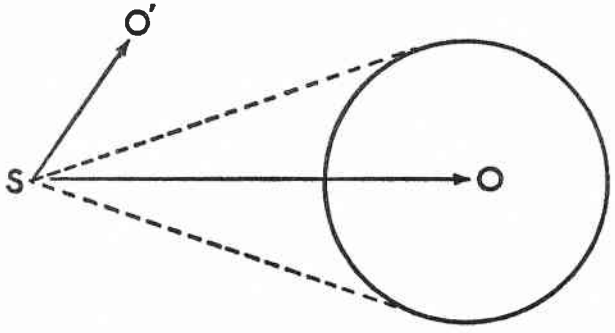

Figure 9

something wrong with this picture. It lacks the right multiplicity for representing the fact at hand. For the fact that an ob-

ject is perceived by the person is represented both by the fact that the O which represents the object is connected by an arrow to the S which represents the subject, and by the fact that the O is contained in the circle which represents the boundary of the visual field. If we allow both the subject and the visual

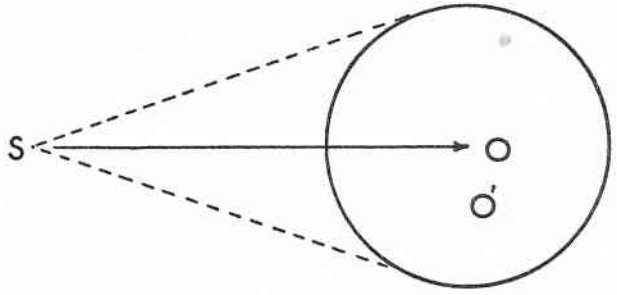

Figure 10

field to be represented in the same picture it will be possible to construct pictures that are, as it were, self-contradictory. Thus Figure 9 and Figure 10. Both these pictures represent the object *O'* as being both perceived and not perceived by the person. It seems, then, that either the *S*, representing the subject, or the circle, representing the boundary of the field of vision, should be deleted from the picture. And it does not matter in the least which we delete. Either diagram in Figure 11 will serve to represent the fact that certain objects are perceived by a certain person. Nor does it matter what we call the element which, in addition to the elements representing the objects, we leave in the picture. We could, if we like, keep the circle in the picture, but say that it represents the subject and that the relation of acquaintance is represented in the picture by the relation of inclusion in the circle. There is no reason why in Figure 11 one diagram is not just as good a picture of the subject-object relationship as the other. So

one could say that Gallie and Jones have not really rejected the subject at all, but have simply proposed a different way of picturing the subject-object relationship.

But whatever picture one uses, and whatever words one uses to describe it (i.e., whether one uses the word "subject," the words "sense-field," or what you will), the important point to be seen is this: If what is represented in the picture is the fact that a certain person is perceiving (aware of, acquainted with)

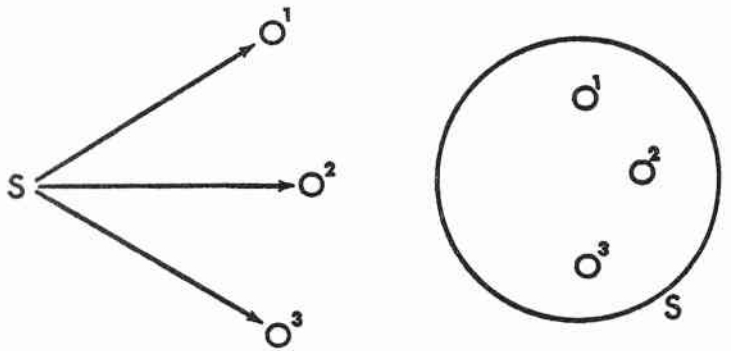

Figure 11

certain objects, it cannot be allowed that the person himself perceives anything that corresponds to the picture as a whole. If we use the circle, for example, then whether we let it represent a subject or the boundary of a visual field, we cannot allow that anything corresponding to the circle, or to the fact that something is included in this circle, is perceived by the person himself. To put this in a different way, while these pictures can be used to represent the fact that a person is aware of certain objects, they cannot be used to represent what the person is aware of when he is aware of those objects. This is just another way of putting the point that one cannot answer the question "How do I know that I see an image?"

by supposing that in addition to an image one is aware of something else which tells him that he sees the image.

9. One further point should be made concerning theories of the sort I have been considering. It is assumed by these theories that one cannot be entitled to say "I perceive an X" unless one perceives something more than an X. And this idea derives much of its plausibility from what sounds like a truism, namely that when I assert something on the basis of observation it is *what* I observe that entitles me to assert what I assert, or justifies me in asserting it. From this apparent truism it seems to follow that if I am entitled to say "I perceive an X" I must either observe that I perceive an X or observe something from which it can be inferred that I perceive an X.

Here, I think, we are led astray by careless usage. Strictly speaking, *what* I observe never entitles me to say anything. Suppose that I observe that *P* (e.g., that my typewriter is on my table). What I observe is that *P*, or that it is the case that *P*. But does this, the fact that *P*, entitle me to assert that *P*? Certainly not, for it can be the case that *P* without my being entitled to assert that *P*. If it is the case that *P*, but I am not in a position to observe that *P* and have no grounds for believing that *P*, then I am not entitled to assert that *P*. When I do observe that *P*, I am certainly entitled to assert that *P*. But what entitles me to assert this is not the fact that *P* but the fact that I observe that *P*. This does not mean that the latter fact is my grounds for saying that *P* in the sense of being evidence from which I conclude that *P*. It means simply that if in fact I do observe that *P* then I am entitled to assert that *P*.

What is it, then, that entitles me to say that I perceive an X, e.g., to make the statement "I see a tree"? If anything can be said to entitle me to say this, it is the fact that I perceive an X (a tree). Here the fact that "justifies" me in making my

statement is the very fact that "corresponds" to the statement, i.e., the very fact that makes the statement true. In this respect the statement "I see a tree" differs from the statement "My typewriter is on my table" when the latter is made on the basis of observation; what makes the latter statement true is the fact that my typewriter is on my table, whereas what entitles me to assert the statement is the different fact that I observe that my typewriter is on my table. And this difference goes together with another one, for the statement "I see a tree," unlike the statement "My typewriter is on my table," is not a description of *what* I observe. But in one respect these cases are alike; in neither case does *what* I observe entitle me to make the statement. When I see a tree, what I observe is a tree, and it is senseless to say that a *tree* entitles me to say anything. If we are puzzled as to how I can make the statement "I see a tree" without observing the fact that entitles me to make this statement, we should also be puzzled as to how I can make the statement "My typewriter is on my table" without observing the fact that entitles me to assert it.

And this can seem puzzling. Partly, perhaps, this is because we are inclined to regard all statements of the form "The fact that Q entitles me to assert that P" as elliptical for statements of the form "My knowledge of the fact that Q entitles me to assert that P." And then it seems that if it is the fact that I observe that P that entitles me to assert that P, I must know that I observe that P before I can be entitled to assert that P. And one wants to ask how I can know this. But there is certainly a confusion here. One regards the statement "It is the fact that I observe that P that entitles me to assert that P" as being of the same kind as the statement "It is the fact that he is coughing up blood that entitles me to say that he has tuberculosis." But these are different sorts of statements; the latter gives one's evidence for something, whereas the former

does not. And while the latter statement is elliptical, namely for the statement "It is my knowledge of the fact that he is coughing up blood that entitles me to say that he has tuberculosis," the former statement is not elliptical.

But to reveal this confusion is not completely to dispel the puzzle. For one is still inclined to say: "When I know that P because I observe that P, surely I cannot be *ignorant* of the fact that I observe that P. And if I am not ignorant of this fact, surely I must *know* it. So *how* do I know it?" Now it is not at all clear that it follows from my not being ignorant of a fact that I know that fact. However, let us suppose that I cannot be entitled to assert that P on the basis of observation unless I know that I observe that P. And let us further suppose, as a proper name theorist might, that the only way in which I can know that I observe that P (no matter what proposition P is) is by observing myself observing that P (or observing the "fact" that I observe that P). These suppositions clearly lead to an infinite regress. If I know that P I am certainly entitled to assert that P, and if I am not entitled to assert that P then I do not know that P. So to know that P, on the account being considered, it is not sufficient that I observe that P; I must also know that I observe that P, and to know this I must observe that I observe that P. But now we can let "P'" be the statement "I observe that P," and give the same argument again. To know that P' I must observe, not simply that P', but also that I observe that P', i.e., that I observe that I observe that P. Letting "P''" be the statement "I observe that I observe that P" (or "I observe that P'"), the same argument can be given again. And so on ad infinitum.

But how, if not by observation, can I know that I observe that P? When I am entitled to assert that P on the basis of observation, it seems that I am entitled to assert, not only that P, but also that I observe that P. So what entitles me to say that

I observe that *P*? The answer, I think, is that if anything entitles me to assert that I observe that *P* it is the very fact that entitles me to assert that *P*, namely the fact that I observe that *P*. One might even say that it is a distinguishing characteristic of first-person-experience statements (like "I see a tree," "I observe that it is raining," and "I have a headache") that it is simply their *being* true, and not the observation that they are true, or the possession of evidence that they are true, that entitles one to assert them. Of course, whereas the statement "I observe that *P*" is an answer to the question "How do you know that *P*?" it would hardly be given as an answer (except in exasperation) to the question "How do you know that you observe that *P*?" But this is because the latter question, when it makes sense at all, is not the question it may initially appear to be. It is not the question "How do you know that it is *you* (as opposed to someone else) that observes that *P*?" or the question "How do you know that you *observe* (as opposed to knowing in some other way) that *P*?" but the question "How do you know that what you observe is that *P*?" or "What justifies you in describing what you observe as the fact that *P*?" ("What justifies you in saying that you observe *that it is raining*?—Perhaps someone is sprinkling water from the roof.") Likewise, if it is asked how I know that I see a tree, what is being asked is not how I know that it is *I* that sees a tree, or that I *see* a tree, but how I know that what I see is really a *tree*.

Four

Self-Identity and the Contents of Memory

1. In Chapter One I argued that a major source of the problem of personal identity is the fact that persons make what appear to be identity statements about themselves, namely memory statements about their own past histories, without having or needing the sorts of evidence we use in making identity judgments about persons other than ourselves. Since one can make such statements about oneself, and know them to be true, without first knowing the facts that would justify an assertion about the identity of one's body, it appears that bodily identity cannot be the criterion of personal identity and is at best only contingently correlated with it. The knowledge expressed in such statements appears to be the most direct knowledge of personal identity there is, and it would seem that the fact in which the truth of such a statement consists must be directly accessible to whoever has direct knowledge of the truth of the statement. So one is easily led to