

1 Russell's Representationalism About Consciousness: Reconsidering His 2 Relationship to James

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4 Abstract

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6 150 Words:

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8 While Russell famously rejected the pragmatist theory of truth, recent scholarship portrays his
9 post-prison accounts of belief and knowledge as resembling James's. But deeper divisions in fact
10 persisted between Russell and James concerning the nature of mind. I argue 1) that Russell's
11 neutral monist approach to consciousness in *The Analysis of Mind* constitutes an early form of
12 representationalism in that he took states to be phenomenally conscious partly in virtue of (truly)
13 representing an antecedent (typically just-passed) sensation; 2) that although James also saw
14 representation (typically of expected kinaesthetic sensation) as a crucial component of
15 consciousness, he contended that representation is a matter of affording future-directed action
16 control that aligns with the agent's interests; and 3) that what divides these contrasting
17 approaches to consciousness and representation is precisely what Russell would continue to
18 reject in the pragmatist theory of truth, namely the productive role James assigned to an agent's
19 interests.

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21 99 words:

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23 In this paper, I argue 1) that Russell's neutral monist account of consciousness constitutes an
24 early form of representationalism in that he took states to be phenomenally conscious in virtue of
25 representing antecedent sensation; 2) that James (who influenced Russell) also portrayed
26 representation as central to consciousness, though James analyzed representation in terms of
27 future-directed action control that aligns with the agent's interests; and 3) that what divides these
28 contrasting approaches to consciousness and representation is precisely what Russell would
29 continue to reject in the pragmatist theory of truth, namely the productive role James assigned to
30 an agent's interests.

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32 1. Introduction

33 In 1908 and 1909, Bertrand Russell published what are easily among the most influential
34 criticisms of pragmatism ever.¹ Focusing his crosshairs on James, Russell argued that
35 pragmatists mistake a mere "sign" that an idea might be true—namely, an idea's utility—for the
36 very "meaning" of truth itself. It is easy to think of useful ideas that are not really true, or true

¹ See especially the 1908 "William James's Conception of Truth" (*Papers* 5: 465–85) and the 1909 "Pragmatism" (*Papers* 6, p. 257–84).

37 ideas that seem to have no utility whatsoever. Russell would come to hold that truth is instead a
38 matter of correspondence, not mere utility.² And his celebrated takedown of James cemented for
39 generations his reputation as *the* anti-pragmatist par excellence.

40 By 1918 (about a decade after his major attacks had appeared), Russell had taken a major
41 shift towards James. The shift culminated in Russell’s 1921 book, *The Analysis of Mind*. His
42 transformation did not concern truth—it had to do with the metaphysics of perception. Here is
43 Russell reflecting back on his shift years later:³

44 I had regarded perception as a two-term relation of subject and object, as this had made it
45 comparatively easy to understand how perception could give knowledge of something
46 other than the subject. But under the influence of William James, I came to think this
47 view mistaken, or at any rate an undue simplification. (MPD, p. 13)

48 Perhaps we remember pragmatism as James’s central philosophical contribution. But he had also
49 developed a metaphysical view about the relationship between the mental and the physical. That
50 metaphysical view was surprisingly influential in its own day, and Russell became a champion of
51 it.

52 It was Russell who popularized the label “neutral monism” for the view he came to share
53 with James.⁴ The view portrays all reality as fundamentally composed of particulars that are

² It is noteworthy that in 1908 Russell himself was in the middle of his conversion to a correspondence theory of truth, having defended a so-called “identity” theory up till roughly that time (SULLIVAN AND JOHNSTON, “Judgements, Facts, and Propositions” (2018), p. 150). The role of Russell’s thinking about pragmatism in his initial conversion is a topic that demands further investigation, but that I cannot take up here.

³ Russell is describing his shift from the explicit rejection of neutral monism in “On the Nature of Acquaintance” (1914), to the *Logical Atomism* lectures (1918), which “expressed doubt” that acquaintance is a two-place relation between a subject and an object, to finally professing in “On Propositions” (1919) that “William James had been right in denying the relational character of sensations” (this sequence, along with the quotations, are drawn from *My Philosophical Development* (1959, p. 134). The 1921 *The Analysis of Mind* lectures carry out this neutral monist project in more detail. The *Logical Atomism* lectures briefly discuss neutral monism (PLA, pp. 240–2). With respect to this view, Russell says “I do not know whether it is true or not.” For more detailed accounts of Russell’s shift to neutral monism, see LANDINI, Russell (2011), pp. 280–84, WISHON, “Russell’s Neutral Monism and Pansychism” (2020), pp. 88–91).

⁴ Russell adapted the phrase from Edwin B. Holt. In *The Concept of Consciousness* (1914) (per Russell 1921/1995, p. 117), Holt had written: “Both mind and matter are neutral aggregates, and on the basis of such a monism we may hope to deduce a consistent definition of consciousness” (p. 131). And: “The fact is that both minds and physical objects are and are ‘real’ and they are composed of one and the same substance—neutral stuff. Such, I conceive, is the true monism” (*ibid.*, p. 124). In the preface of the book, Holt credits Henry Scheffer (of Scheffer-stroke fame) with coining the term “neutral” in this connection (*ibid.*, p. xiv). This helps explain why Russell credits Scheffer

54 themselves neither mental nor physical, but are instead something “neutral” between the two
55 (*AMi*, p. 6). *The Analysis of Mind* calls these neutral particulars “sensations.” Russell offers an
56 illustration: “the sensation that we have when we see a patch of colour simply *is* that patch of
57 colour, an actual constituent of the physical world” (*AMi*, p. 142). But sensation can equally be a
58 constituent of the mental world as well, on this view (*AMi*, p. 144). Like a single point that can
59 lie at the intersection of two lines, sensations are physical when placed in one set of relations,
60 and mental when placed in another set.⁵ Of all the various claims Russell defends in *The Analysis*
61 *of Mind*, this is the one that is most obviously indebted to James.⁶

62 You might think this shift towards James is interesting, but little relevant to the older
63 dispute between the two philosophers about pragmatism. After all, neutral monism is, by James’s
64 own reckoning, “logically independent” of his pragmatism.⁷

65 And yet some recent scholarship has vigorously challenged the received view of Russell as
66 an arch anti-pragmatist, based on considerations like the following.⁸ Particularly in *The Analysis*
67 *of Mind*, Russell adopted not just neutral monism, but also philosophical commitments that

with coining the phrase “neutral stuff” (WISHON, “Radical Empiricism” [2021], p. 137, n. 38). Wishon also points out that Russell’s old teacher James Ward had used the phrase “neutral monism” even earlier, in WARD, “Naturalism and Agnosticism” (1899), see e.g., vol. II, p. 110. Russell read and commented on this book before it went to press (PINCOCK, “Richard Semon” [2018], p. 331, n. 3), but for whatever reason Russell credits his usage ultimately to Scheffer.

⁵ More precisely, minds and bodies turn out to be “logical constructions” built from these neutral particulars (*AMi*, p. 141–2). As Landini emphasizes, mental events are not concrete particulars, according to Russell’s neutral monism, but logically complex facts (*Russell* [2011], p. 282). Russell now treats subjects—minds, in other words—as constituted by series or classes of neutral sensations. And objects are understood to be constituted by different kinds of classes of sensations (*AMi*, p. 307–8). What Russell calls “perception” (he now generally drops the term “acquaintance”) amounts to a complex causal relationship between instantiations of these two kinds of sets—between subjects and objects (*AMi*, pp. 136).

⁶ Russell says James first developed his neutral monism in a series of papers in 1904–1905, starting with “Does ‘Consciousness’ Exist?” (*MPD*, p. 134). The key papers were posthumously collected in (JAMES, *Essays in Radical Empiricism* [1912/1976]). This is the usual view of how that doctrine developed, but I note that James had already articulated a view that looks largely like neutral monism in his 1895 paper, “The Knowing of Things Together” (for a discussion, see KLEIN, “Hatfield on American Critical Realism” [2015]). And I have argued elsewhere that the view is in any case a consequence of some basic methodological commitments of James’s earlier research in psychology (KLEIN, “The Death of Consciousness? James’s Case against Psychological Unobservables” [2020]).

⁷ See JAMES, *Pragmatism* (1907/1975), p. 6. James had called his view “radical empiricism,” or sometimes his “philosophy of pure experience,” but I will continue to use Russell’s more familiar name for this position.

⁸ For example, ACERO, “Mind, Intentionality, and Language” (2005), BALDWIN, “From Knowledge by Acquaintance” (2003), LEVINE, “Russell” (2018a), MISAK, *Cambridge Pragmatism* (2016); “James” (2018).

68 appear to be at the very heart of pragmatism. For instance, in that book Russell warms⁹ to a
69 behaviorist-style account of belief as that upon which we are prepared to act.¹⁰ This is an account
70 of belief of which Peirce says pragmatism is “scarce more than a corollary.”¹¹ Russell also now
71 insists that linguistic meaning must be derived from linguistic usage (“the use of the word comes
72 first,” he says; *AMi*, p. 197). This is a fundamental commitment of pragmatism as well. The key
73 influences on Russell here were apparently James, F. C. S. Schiller, and (via Lady Welby)
74 Peirce. (Incidentally, one might think Russell derived this view from Wittgenstein. But
75 Wittgenstein is not known to have advanced such a view until a decade later in the *Blue Book*.)
76 Finally, Russell would even claim that for a belief to constitute knowledge, it must not only be
77 accurate, but also display “appropriateness, i.e. suitability for realizing one’s *purpose*” (*AMi*, p.
78 261, my italics). Russell thereby introduces a measure of teleology that the pragmatists also
79 thought essential to understanding cognition.¹²

80 So though he would never accept the pragmatist account of *truth*, Russell’s philosophical
81 drift towards pragmatism in other respects was, by 1921, remarkable. Indeed, this helps bring

⁹ I use the ambiguous word “warms” deliberately. Russell first considers and rejects a behaviorist-style view, according to which belief is to be defined in terms of “efficacy in causing voluntary movements.” This is roughly the view that the Scottish philosopher-psychologist Alexander Bain had pioneered. On this sort of view, believing that P requires “readiness to act” as though P is true (also see BAIN, *The Emotions* [1859], p. 568; “Belief” [1868a], p. 7). This is the construal of belief that Peirce saw as a spur to pragmatism (FISCH, “Alexander Bain and the Genealogy of Pragmatism” [1954]). Russell does say this account of belief is “suggestive of truth, and not so easily refutable as it might appear to be at first sight” (*AMi*, pp. 245), but he finds the view untenable because some beliefs figure into what Russell calls “thinking” without causing any bodily action at all (*AMi*, p. 246). But as Thomas Baldwin points out in his introduction to the Routledge edition of *The Analysis of Mind* ([1921/1995], pp. xiii – xiv) and as we shall see below, Russell’s preferred account goes on to depict beliefs as having *contents*, and contents get cashed out partly in terms of causing bodily action. So even if beliefs *themselves* are not dispositions to bodily action, the *content* of a belief does bear a close affinity with Bain’s account. More on Russell’s accounts of belief, content, and meaning below.

¹⁰ See *AMi*, Lecture 12. And for James’s influence on behaviorism, see KLEIN, “The Death of Consciousness” (2020).

¹¹ See PEIRCE, *Collected Papers* 1931–1958, 5.12). Russell also says the behaviorist account of belief “makes their [James and Dewey’s] pragmatism a perfectly rational account of truth and falsehood” (*PLA*, p. 193).

¹² An important spur to my thinking on Russell’s pragmatism is James Levine (“Russell, Pragmatism, and the Priority of Use over Meaning” [2018a]). For Levine, the priority of use over meaning is central to Russell’s purported shift towards pragmatism, which coincided (in Levine’s view) roughly with Russell’s 1918 prison term. The observation about Wittgenstein, and the claims about links with James, Schiller, Welby, and Peirce, are also due to Levine.

82 into focus Frank Ramsey’s otherwise incredible (1927) statement: “My pragmatism is derived
83 from Mr. Russell.”¹³

84 But how far did Russell’s turn towards pragmatism go? Through the end of his career, he
85 continued to hold that truth is a matter of correspondence (*HK*). And he always rejected the
86 pragmatist account of truth, particularly as James had articulated it (Russell 1953-1955). Was the
87 pragmatist account of truth like the final cookie in a bag that Russell simply couldn’t finish? Or
88 is his enduring resistance to the pragmatist account of truth indicative of deeper, more systematic
89 differences?

90 I will argue for the latter view. Russell had an enduring commitment to the notion that truth
91 involves a correspondence relation between a belief, which is “in the nature of a picture,” and a
92 fact (*HK*, p. 139). He rightly saw this view as anathema to pragmatism. My aim in this paper is
93 to show that this disagreement over truth is not local—it reverberates in the broader theories of
94 mind on offer from Russell and James, even during their respective neutral monist periods. For
95 Russell, this period begins around 1918, when he was imprisoned at Brixton; for James, this
96 period begins around 1895, though I shall also take his psychological work on consciousness into
97 account because it informed his formulation of neutral monism.

98 I will focus specifically on their respective neutral monist theories of consciousness. Neutral
99 monists agree that consciousness is not a fundamental feature of nature, but must somehow be
100 constructed out of a “stuff” that is more metaphysically basic.¹⁴ But I will show that despite
101 (eventually) sharing this metaphysical framework, Russell’s and James’s respective
102 constructions of consciousness differ in complex and fundamental ways.¹⁵

¹³ Ramsey is quoted in Misak, *Cambridge Pragmatism* [2016], p. 173. A growing interest in understanding Ramsey’s pragmatism has driven some of the scholarly attention to Russell’s relationship to the pragmatist tradition; e.g., see ACERO (2005); MISAK, *Frank Ramsey* (2020); MISAK, *Cambridge Pragmatism* (2016); SULLIVAN AND JOHNSTON, “Judgements, Facts, and Propositions” (2018).

¹⁴ As Koç-Maclean points out, the neutral particulars are not substances, for Russell, but event-particulars (*Bertrand Russell’s Bundle Theory of Particulars* [2014], p. 121).

¹⁵ The literature on Russell’s philosophy of mind is growing rapidly, so foregrounding this issue is no longer uncommon in Russell scholarship generally; e.g., see BANKS, *The Realistic Empiricism of Mach, James, and Russell* (2014), HATFIELD, “Sense-data and the Philosophy of Mind” (2002); “Sense-Data and the Mind-Body Problem” (2009), “Perception” (2013a), “Psychology” (2013b), LANDINI, *Russell* (2011), ch. 6, KOÇ-MACLEAN, ch. 5; WISHON, “Russell’s Neutral Monism” (2020); “Radical Empiricism” (2021). There is also a considerable literature

103 James Levine has emphasized that Russell often complained about the pragmatists' refusal
104 to distinguish considerations concerning how we humans come to judge a belief true from
105 considerations concerning what *makes* a belief true. This is the supposed confusion between the
106 criterion and the meaning of truth. As Russell had put it in a letter to Lady Ottoline, he thought
107 (correctly) that the pragmatists' position made truth itself something manufactured in the context
108 of human inquiry rather than something "greater than Man," and he thought this position
109 objectionably subjective.¹⁶ This thought is a key to which we will return, since subjective interest
110 also plays a crucial role in James's theory of consciousness, and not in Russell's.

111 I will begin by examining what Russell has to say about consciousness in *The Analysis of*
112 *Mind*. There, Russell conceives of truth as involving a correspondence between facts and mental
113 "pictures," with mental "pictures" treated as conscious states. I will argue: 1) that Russell's
114 approach to consciousness constitutes an early form of what we would today regard as
115 *representationalism*, in that he thinks a state is phenomenally conscious in virtue of (truly)
116 representing a (typically just-passed) sensation; 2) that although James also sees representation
117 (typically of expected kinaesthetic sensation) as a crucial component of consciousness, he
118 contends that representation is a matter of affording future-directed *action control* that aligns
119 with the agent's interests; and 3) that what divides these contrasting approaches to consciousness
120 and representation is precisely what Russell would continue to reject in the pragmatist theory of
121 *truth*, namely the productive role James assigns to an agent's interests.

on a position that has more recently been dubbed "Russellian Monism." The phrase comes from Chalmers ("Moving Forward on the Problem of Consciousness" [1997]), and the book that is invariably cited as the inspiration for this view is Russell's 1927 *The Analysis of Matter*. I will set this more recent discussion aside because Russellian monists have generally not had historical interests, primarily (e.g. ALTER AND NAGASAWA *Consciousness in the Physical World* [2015], p. 424)—they typically have not been concerned to show that Russell himself, as a historical matter, was a Russellian monist. My interests here are more directly historical. For two important historical essays that do offer careful (albeit contrasting) views on when and whether Russell would have counted as a Russellian monist in our contemporary sense, see STUBENBERG, "Russell, Russellian Monism, and Panpsychism" (2015); WISHON, "Russell on Russellian Monism" (2015). In any case, the literature on Russell's pragmatism (cited in fn. 8, above) understandably has focused predominately on epistemological issues, so my emphasis on mind as a way to unpack the dispute over pragmatism is unusual.

¹⁶ LEVINE, "Russell, Pragmatism, and the Priority of Use over Meaning" (2018a), p. 121.

122 I shall conclude by suggesting that Russell and James can be regarded as two respective
123 fountainheads of important trends in philosophy of mind today. Russell is a progenitor of
124 representationalism, which is arguably the dominant approach to consciousness today. He is also
125 a progenitor of a long-standing trend of employing conceptual analysis as a tool for making
126 progress in the philosophy of mind. For his part, James can be regarded as a progenitor of a now
127 widespread brand of naturalism that draws heavily from empirical psychology and
128 neurophysiology in addressing philosophical questions about mind. He is also an important
129 pioneer of ideo-motor theory, and can be regarded as a progenitor of predictive processing
130 approaches in cognitive psychology.

131 In section two, I offer a close reading of Russell's theory of consciousness from *The*
132 *Analysis of Mind*. And in section three, I offer a quick and necessarily abbreviated sketch of
133 James's approach to consciousness.

134

135 2. Russell's Representationalism about Consciousness

136 2.1 Russell's Definition of Consciousness

137 Russell's neutral monism has become the subject of an invigorated secondary literature.¹⁷
138 Let me begin by setting aside several questions related to Russell's shift that have already been
139 addressed in some detail by others, and that I will not be discussing.

140 One theme in this literature has been whether or not Russell remained a neutral monist in
141 the 1927 *The Analysis of Matter* and later. Nothing I have to say will turn on this question, as I
142 will confine myself to his initial adoption of this doctrine, particularly in the 1921 *The Analysis*

¹⁷ In addition to secondary literature cited in fns. 18 and 19 below, major, recent contributions to the study of Russell's neutral monism include three important papers by Robert Tully in the late 80's and early 90's (TULLY, "Russell's Neutral Monism" [1988b], "Three Studies of Russell's Neutral Monism" [1993a], "Three Studies of Russell's Neutral Monism, Concluded" [1993b]). More recently, Hatfield has examined Russell's neutral monism in the context of broader trends in late modern philosophy of mind, trends that have had an unheralded (in Hatfield's view) impact on the future development of analytic philosophy (HATFIELD, "Sense-data and the Philosophy of Mind" [2002], "Sense-data and the Mind-Body Problem" [2004], "Russell's Progress" [2013c]). And Banks (*The Realistic Empiricism of Mach, James, and Russell* [2014]) has sought to place Russell's work into a broader historical tradition of neutral monism that includes not just James, but also Ernst Mach.

143 *of Mind*.¹⁸ Neutral monists offer two different kinds of analyses—analyses of the mental and the
144 physical (respectively) into component neutral stuff. *The Analysis of Mind* is rightly regarded as
145 the high-point of Russell’s neutral-monist construction of the *mental* parts of reality. In later
146 work (starting especially with *The Analysis of Matter*), he focuses more heavily on constructing
147 the *physical* parts.

148 A second issue has been what the *cause* of Russell’s shift to neutral monism was. The
149 consensus is that Russell was largely driven to neutral monism in response to Wittgenstein’s (as
150 he saw them) devastating criticisms of his multiple-relation theory of judgment, especially in the
151 1913 *Theory of Knowledge* manuscript.¹⁹ I will not be concerned with this issue, either.

152 Third, I will not pursue the question of whether Russell really succeeded in reducing
153 consciousness, without remainder, to neutral particulars. One justification for my approach is
154 that Russell (after 1918) and James (after 1904) are largely working within a shared
155 metaphysical framework. But neither theory of consciousness is a logical consequence of the

¹⁸ In his contribution to the Schilpp volume, Stace claimed that *The Analysis of Matter* (which he mistakenly dates to 1928) “belongs on the whole to a later phase of Russell’s thought,” a phase to be characterized in terms of “scientific realism” instead of neutral monism (STACE, “Russell’s Neutral Monism” [1944], p. 355.n). Ayer similarly regarded *The Analysis of Matter* as involving a shift away from neutral monism, a shift that he thought would grow ever more pronounced, through Russell’s 1948 *Human Knowledge* (AYER, *Russell and Moore* [1971], p. 122–24). In his response in the Schilpp volume, Russell himself expressed surprised disagreement with Stace’s reading (“Reply to Criticisms” [1944], p. 706–7); and similarly, in an interview with Elizabeth Eames, Russell had said in 1964: “I am conscious of no major change in my opinions since the adoption of neutral monism” (EAMES, *Bertrand Russell’s Theory of Knowledge* [1969], p. 108). Subsequent scholarship has tended to side with Russell on this front. Most notably, Lockwood (“*What Was Russell’s Neutral Monism?*” [1981]) accused these earlier interpreters of misinterpreting neutral monism as a form of phenomenalism, in particular by running the neutral particulars of *The Analysis of Mind* together with Russell’s earlier notion of sense-data, which Russell had in fact abandoned. Other scholars who have, at least in outline, concurred with Lockwood’s (and Russell’s own) claim that Russell never abandoned neutral monism include Banks (*The Realistic Empiricism of Mach, James, and Russell* [2014]) and Tully, “Russell’s Neutral Monism” [1988b], p. 220) who sees more continuity than is usually supposed going all the way back to the 1914 *Our Knowledge of the External World*.

¹⁹ There is a dispute about just how narrowly we should construe the epistemological reasons for Russell’s rejection of his earlier approach to judgment (and, in turn, for his subsequent adoption of neutral monism). A defense of a narrower interpretation, according to which Wittgenstein’s famous, critical letter of 1913 gave Russell forceful and direct reasons for abandoning the old approach to judgment, is Griffin (“Wittgenstein’s Criticism of Russell’s Theory of Judgment” [1985b]), and the letter is quoted at p. 142; also see GRIFFIN, “Russell’s Multiple Relation Theory of Judgment” [1985a]). Tully has instead suggested that Wittgenstein’s objection was not by itself as devastating as he thinks Griffin and others believe (Tully, “Forgotten Vintage” [1988a]). And in a rejoinder, Griffin makes clear that he sees Wittgenstein’s objection as devastating not by itself, but in light of Russell’s underlying, philosophical motivation *for* his older theory of judgment (Griffin, “Was Russell Shot or Did He Die?” [1991], esp. p. 550). Either way, it remains a consensus that quite a large measure of (both biographical and epistemological) responsibility for Russell’s shift is to be attributed to Wittgenstein’s criticism (e.g., see BALDWIN, “Introduction” [1995], pp. ix–x, BANKS, *The Realistic Empiricism of Mach, James, and Russell* [2014], pp. 3, 114).

156 framework itself. Neutral monism places constraints on the theory of mind, but there are many
157 different, incompatible theories of mind that are each consistent with neutral monism. I think this
158 is precisely the situation with Russell and James.

159 What is more, the task of logically constructing the mental out of neutral stuff is evidently
160 left incomplete in *The Analysis of Mind*.²⁰ But the book is still full of interesting analyses that
161 deserve philosophical attention in their own right, including Russell’s analysis of consciousness.
162 Accordingly, I now turn to this issue more directly.

163 The final lecture of the *The Analysis of Mind* returns to the big question Russell had set
164 himself early in this work, namely: “What is it that characterizes mind as opposed to matter?”
165 (*AMi*, p. 287). To begin addressing this, he proposes to consider whether *consciousness* is the
166 “essence” of mind, as many people have held (*ibid.*). (Though they are not mentioned in this
167 connection, Descartes and James both shared such a view; Klein, “The Death of Consciousness”
168 [2020].) Russell had already rejected the notion that all mentality is conscious earlier in the book,
169 on grounds that psychoanalysis shows (he thinks) that many of our beliefs and desires are
170 unconscious (*AMi*, p. 32–3). But he now says “we must find a definition of” consciousness “if
171 we are to feel secure in deciding that it is not fundamental” (*AMi*, p. 288). He eventually
172 concludes that “Consciousness is a complex and far from universal characteristic of mental
173 phenomena” (*AMi*, p. 308; also see *OP*, p. 299), thus not the “essence” of the mental.

²⁰ Most notably, Russell sees minds as composed of two distinct kinds of entities, sensations and images. But he only regards sensations as neutral—as the kind of “stuff” that can get counted as either mental or physical, depending on the relations in which it is placed. Images are always strictly mental (*AMi*, pp. 297, 302), and Russell grants quite outright that he is unsure whether they can be “reduced” to sensations. In what is characterized as a “reprint” of *The Analysis of Mind* that appeared a year after the book’s original publication, Russell added the following material to the end of his chapter on sensations and images: “I am by no means confident that the distinction between images and sensations is ultimately valid, and I should be glad to be convinced that images can be reduced to sensations of a peculiar kind. I think it is clear, however, that, at any rate in the case of auditory and visual images, they do differ from ordinary auditory and visual sensations, and therefore form a recognizable class of occurrences, even if it should prove that they can be regarded as a sub-class of sensations” (RUSSELL, *The Analysis of Mind* [1921/1922], p. 156). I take it that a *completed* metaphysic of neutral monism would require images (which are mental) to be logically constructed out of neutral sensations. *The Analysis of Mind* does not claim to have carried out this latter task.

174 Here is the passage that comes closest to giving his considered definition.²¹ I will call this
175 the “Definition Passage,” as I will have occasion to refer back to it. Russell writes:

176 I should define “consciousness” in terms of that relation of an image or a word to an
177 object which we defined, in Lecture XI, as “meaning.”²² When a sensation is followed by
178 an image which is a “copy” of it, I think it may be said that the existence of the image
179 constitutes consciousness of the sensation, provided it is accompanied by that sort of
180 belief which, when we reflect upon it, makes us feel that the image is a “sign” of
181 something other than itself. ... The belief must be of that sort that constitutes objective
182 reference, past or present. An image, together with a belief of this sort concerning it,
183 constitutes, according to our definition, consciousness of the prototype of the image.
184 (*AMi*, pp. 288–9, my underlines)

185 I have underlined technical terms that Russell has already analyzed at length, at this point in the
186 book. So to get a grip on this important passage, we need to go through some of that underlined
187 terminology. But before doing that, given the complexity of his account, it will be helpful to give
188 an outline of how all this hangs together.

189 On my reading (of *AMi*, pp. 288–9), Russell thinks that for me to be *conscious* of a
190 sensation, I must have an image that meets both of the following two conditions. Each condition
191 in turn has its own nested conditions.

- 192
- 193 1. The image must *mean* the sensation. In order to *mean* the sensation, the following two
194 conditions are jointly necessary and sufficient:
 - 195 a. The image must *resemble* the sensation. (*AMi*, p. 154)
 - 196 b. The image must share some causes and/or effects with that sensation. (*AMi*, p.
197 208)

²¹ Pincock also highlights the importance of this passage, saying that it tells us “what consciousness amounts to” for Russell in 1921 (Pincock, “Neutral Monism” [2018], pp. 327–8).

²² The reference to Lecture XI is a little curious, because Russell’s extensive discussion of meaning comes in Lecture X, which is entitled “Words and Meaning.” Lecture XI is on “General Ideas and Thought,” and though there are a few remarks there on the meaning of abstract words and images, respectively, these remarks don’t alter the fundamental account (already given in Lecture X) of what meaning itself is. I will accordingly focus on Lecture X in examining Russell’s analysis of meaning in *The Analysis of Mind*.

- 198 2. The image must be accompanied by a *true belief*²³ about the past, present, or likely future
199 occurrence (*AMi*, p. 250) of the sensation. A *belief* about a sensation’s occurrence must
200 consist of elements (i) and (ii) below, and these elements must be related in the manner of
201 (iii) (*AMi*, p. 250–1):
- 202 i. A complex *content*. This consists of determinately-related images, words, and/or
203 sensations, from whose *meaning* the *objective referent* of the belief (this is the
204 thing that makes the entire belief either true or false) can be derived. (*AMi*, pp.
205 236–9)
 - 206 ii. A *belief-feeling*. This is a possibly unanalyzable, possibly unconscious sensation
207 that amounts to an attitude of assent towards the content. (*AMi*, p. 251, “On
208 Propositions”, p. 35)
 - 209 iii. The content must be what the belief-feeling is directed at. (*AMi*, p. 251)

210 In what follows, I will walk through each part of the above analysis. I begin in section 2.2
211 with an overview of Russell’s distinction between sensation and image. In section 2.3, I will
212 examine the notion of *meaning* at play in *The Analysis of Mind*, and in section 2.4, I will
213 examine what is involved in *belief*. In 2.5, I draw the strings together and contend that Russell is
214 offering an early form of representationalism about consciousness.

215

216 2.2 *Sensation and Image*

217 The first two terms to discuss are “sensation” and “image.” Russell says that all mental
218 phenomena are built from two kinds of elements: “sensations,” and “images” that bear a
219 “resemblance” to those prior sensations. These are akin to Humean impressions and ideas,
220 respectively (*AMi*, pp. 144–6, 154).

221 Though the distinction itself is indebted to Hume, Russell rejects Hume’s way of drawing it
222 (*AMi*, pp. 145–8). While sensations are *typically* more “vivid” (to use Hume’s phrase) than
223 images, Russell does not think this is always so in cases like dreams and hallucinations. So
224 instead, Russell contends that we must distinguish sensations from images in terms of their
225 different *causes*.²⁴ Sensations are caused by the stimulation of bodily organs, whereas images are

²³ The requirement that the belief actually be *true* is introduced immediately after the Definition Passage (*AMi*, p. 290).

²⁴ James had developed a similar view (in 1912/1976), which Russell approvingly acknowledges (along with acknowledging a similar view from Stout, at *AMi*, p. 149).

226 caused by sensations or by other images (*AMi*, p. 150). That is, images are linked with sensations
227 and with one another by an entirely distinct set of causal laws as compared with sensations.

228 To be more precise, Russell says that images are produced through what he calls “mnemic
229 causation,” following the psychologist Richard Semon.²⁵ Russell defines “mnemic phenomena”
230 as “those responses of an organism which, so far as hitherto observed facts are concerned, can
231 only be brought under causal laws by including past occurrences in the history of the organism as
232 part of the causes of the present response” (*AMi*, p. 78). Images turn out to be only one of six
233 classes of mnemic phenomena Russell recognizes (*AMi*, pp. 79–83). So it will not do to say that
234 images are what is produced through mnemic causation because many other things that are not
235 images are produced through mnemic causation (for example, habits). And so we have reason to
236 suspect that Russell’s way of distinguishing sensations from images is not adequately worked
237 out, at least in *The Analysis of Mind*.

238 In any case, one important example of psychological causal laws (the kind that govern
239 images) are the laws of association. These supposed mental laws were prominent in much
240 Anglo-American psychology of the 19th century. For instance, consider the so-called “law of
241 contiguity.” Suppose you often smell honey-roasted nuts when walking around New York City.
242 This law says that you are apt to have mental images of those city streets whenever you smell
243 honey-roasted nuts, even if you smell them when you are (say) off in a cabin in the woods.²⁶ This
244 is an example of a psychological causal law—the kind of law that governs the flow of images.

²⁵ An extremely helpful account of Semon’s significance for Russell is Pincock (“Richard Semon and Russell’s Analysis of Mind” [2006]).

²⁶ It is hard to say whether the laws of association are supposed to be one type of mnemic causal law among many, or whether mnemic causation itself is supposed to reduce to a law of association. When he first discusses association, Russell describes it as one among six “classes” of mnemic phenomena (*AMi*, pp. 79, 80–1), emphasizing the continuity of association and bodily habit, the latter of which is presented as a different class. But when he comes around to articulating the one *substantive* law of mnemic causation that is currently knowable, Russell is plainly making use of a law of association. He puts his substantive law of mnemic causation this way: “*If a complex stimulus A has caused a complex reaction B in an organism, the occurrence of a part of A on a future occasion tends to cause the whole reaction B*” (*AMi*, p. 86, italics original). But this is only a minor reworking of what associationists had called “the law of contiguity.” Here is Bain on the law of contiguity, as approvingly quoted by James: “Actions, Sensations, and States of Feeling, occurring together, or in close succession, tend to grow together, or cohere, in such a way that when any of them is afterwards presented to the mind, the others are apt to be brought up in idea” (BAIN, *Mental and Moral Science* [1868b], p. 85, quoted at JAMES, “Brute and Human Intellect” [1878/1983], pp. 3–4).

245 Now, sensations can be linked with one another by these same psychological laws that
246 govern images; but they can also be linked with one another by the laws of physics (*AMi*, p. 26).
247 Remember that a sensation is metaphysically neutral, so that qua red patch of paint on the wall, it
248 will behave according to physical laws, but qua item in what Russell calls a subject's
249 "biography" (*AMi*, p. 83; James uses the same phrase in the same way),²⁷ it can alternatively
250 behave according to psychological laws.

251 When an image arises via the psychological law of contiguity, we tend to get what Russell
252 calls an "imagination-image." I have an *imagination*-image of New York City streets when I
253 smell honey-roasted nuts in the cabin, for example.

254 But Russell also talks about "memory-images," and these are more central to his discussion
255 of consciousness. Memory images are direct copies of prior sensations, as when I have a mental
256 image of my breakfast table later in the day (*AMi*, p. 175).²⁸ I want to focus on the *copying*
257 relation between sensations and memory-images. Russell writes that images "are said to be
258 'copies' of sensations, always as regards the simple qualities that enter into them, though not
259 always as regards the manner in which these are put together" (*AMi*, p. 154). This is Russell's
260 version of what Hume scholars call the "copy principle."²⁹ Hume had written that "[a]ll our
261 simple ideas in their first appearance are deriv'd from simple impressions, which are
262 correspondent to them, and which they exactly represent."³⁰ It's worth taking a moment to talk
263 about Hume's copy principle, as Russell makes (I want to suggest) similar use of it.

264 Hume had insisted not just that ideas come from impressions, but that there is a
265 *correspondence* or (as he also put it) "resemblance" between ideas and impressions. What is
266 more, this correspondence enables *representation*. Here is Hume again:

²⁷ JAMES, *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (1912/1976), p. 8.

²⁸ Russell emphasizes that memory-images are not *just* copies of sensations; they are copies of sensation accompanied by a true belief in the actual occurrence of the past sensation as represented in the memory-image itself (*AMi*, p. 176).

²⁹ GARRETT, *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy* (1997), p. 41.

³⁰ The passage is from HUME, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739/1978), p. 4, I.i, italics original. Russell quotes the passage at *AMi*, p. 155.

267 The first circumstance, that strikes my eye, is the great *resemblance* betwixt our
268 impressions and ideas in every other particular, except their degree of force and vivacity.
269 ... When I shut my eyes and think of my chamber, the ideas I form are exact
270 *representations* of the impressions I felt. (*Ibid.*, pp. 2 – 3, I.i)

271 Just after quoting Hume’s copy principle, Russell makes a similar point—that this *resemblance*
272 relation enables *representation*. Here is how Russell puts it: “It is this fact, that images resemble
273 antecedent sensations, which enables us to call them images ‘of’ this or that” (*AMi*, p. 155). Like
274 Hume, Russell holds that resembling an antecedent sensation is necessary for an image to count
275 as representing it.

276 Now let us return to the issue of consciousness. Recall from the Definition Passage that a
277 necessary condition for an image to constitute “*consciousness* of a sensation” is that the image is
278 a “copy” of that sensation. So copying is necessary for consciousness; but we have just seen that
279 copying is also necessary for *representing*, according to Russell. In other words, he portrays an
280 image’s resemblance to a prior sensation as necessary for *both* consciousness *and* for
281 representation of that sensation. The question is how Russell sees the relationship between
282 consciousness and representation.

283 My answer is that Russell sees consciousness as one kind of representation. Two of the
284 most important sorts of things Russell thinks can represent are words and images. He would not
285 say that a *word* is conscious of an object it represents.³¹ But the thrust of the Definition Passage,
286 I contend, is that an *image* can give rise to consciousness of an object in virtue of representing
287 that object. Consciousness, in short, is to be analyzed as a form of representation—and indeed,
288 Russell says it may be the most theoretically basic form of representation there is.³²

³¹ The Definition Passage contains an ambiguity that we need to take care with. It says: “I should define ‘consciousness’ in terms of that relation of an image *or* a word to an object which we defined, in Lecture XI, as ‘meaning.’” I take it he is saying that “meaning” is a relationship that can join *either* images *or* words to objects, not that *words* are conscious of the objects they mean. For the Definition Passage immediately goes on to apply the “meaning” relationship to images and prior sensations, not to words.

³² Russell makes a considerable effort to explain how a *word* can mean an object. But he says *image*-meaning “seems more primitive” than word-meaning (*AMi*, p. 207). However, it should be noted that he had backed away from this view by 1926. In his review of Ogden and Richards’ *Meaning of Meaning*, Russell would write: “...I now hold that the meaning of words should be explained without introducing images” (*Papers* 9, p. 142).

289 Russell is more apt to speak of an image's "meaning" (as in the Definition Passage) rather
290 than its "representation." "Representation" is my word, not his. I use it because I want to draw
291 out some important similarities between Russell's view and contemporary forms of so-called
292 "representationalism" about consciousness.

293 But first, we do well to examine Russell's own account of how an image can *mean* an
294 object. After all, in the Definition Passage Russell says (again): "I should define 'consciousness'
295 in terms of that relation of an image ... to an object which we defined ... as 'meaning.'" Now
296 resemblance is necessary for an image to have meaning, as I have said, but resemblance is not
297 sufficient. For an image to *mean* a sensation—and so for an image to give rise to *consciousness*
298 of that sensation—the image must share causes and effects with the sensation. Let us now
299 examine his conception of meaning a bit more closely.

300

301 *2.3 Meaning*

302 When Russell writes about consciousness of a "sensation," it is worth keeping two
303 peculiarities in mind. First, sensations are (again) the stuff out of which everything is built,
304 according to Russell's neutral monism. When I am "conscious" of a prior sensation, the
305 sensation of which I am conscious can be taken as either something mental (a visual sensation of
306 blue), or as something physical (a blue patch of paint on the wall). In other words, when I am
307 conscious of a sensation in the latter sense, I am directly conscious of a physical thing.

308 Second, Russell holds that all consciousness is consciousness *of* something else. We would
309 today say that Russell only accepts the existence of "transitive," not "intransitive," consciousness
310 (*AMi*, p. 288). And as we have seen, this consciousness arises partly in virtue of the *meaning*
311 relation obtaining. But presumably because sensations do not have meanings, Russell does not
312 count *them* as conscious (*AMi*, p. 292). Of all basic mental entities,³³ only images give rise to

³³ I intend "basic" to exclude constructed mental entities like beliefs and desires, which Russell thinks *can* be conscious, though they need not be (*AMi*, pp. 31, 242). But he does not include these as basic elements of mind (*AMi*, p. 121).

313 consciousness because only images have meanings. Note that strictly speaking, and as Russell
314 acknowledges, I am not actually conscious of my sensation of the blue patch at the moment I am
315 having it. Russell thinks I may *become* conscious of a sensation immediately after having it
316 (*ibid.*).

317 We have already seen that resemblance is necessary for image meaning. But it is not
318 sufficient because images often bear only *vague* resemblances to their objects. Russell offers this
319 example:

320 When we call up an image of a friend's face, we are not likely to reproduce the
321 expression he had on some one particular occasion, but rather a compromise expression
322 derived from many occasions. And there is hardly any limit to the vagueness of which
323 images are capable. In such cases, the meaning of the image, if defined by relation to the
324 prototype, is vague: there is not one definite prototype, but a number, none of which is
325 copied exactly. (*AMi*, p. 207)

326 He is tacitly alluding to so-called *composite portraiture*, a 19th-century technology pioneered by
327 Francis Galton.³⁴ Galton would photograph sets of people or objects from the same distance and
328 angle. He devised a photographic apparatus for then projecting all the resulting negatives on
329 precisely the same spot of one photographic plate. This produced a “composite”—a single
330 portrait that depicted all the subjects blended together, in one image.

331 You might think such a composite would produce only a blurry image, but when these
332 are executed well, the result is sharp where the facial features of the subjects coincide, and blurry
333 where they do not. For instance, if ten subjects have noses of similar shapes, but eyes that are
334 differently set (some wide apart, some close together), then their composite portrait will look like
335 an image of a face with a sharply-defined nose but rather blurry eyes. Galton himself contended
336 that these images provided a visual representation of both similarity and variation in a group—
337 sharpness indicates similarity, blurriness indicates variation.³⁵ See figure 1.

³⁴ Composite portraiture crops up more explicitly elsewhere in *The Analysis of Mind* (pp. 184–5).

³⁵ GALTON, “Generic Images” [1879a], pp. 161–2.

338

339

340 [IMAGE 1 about here]

341

342 *Figure 1: A set of composite portraits, on the left, of boys who are individually pictured on the right, courtesy of the Wellcome*
343 *Collection.*³⁶

344

345 Because of this, many philosophers had come to regard composite portraits as concrete
346 illustrations of what it is for a mental image to be abstract. The hypothesis—which Galton
347 himself had advocated³⁷—is that we form an abstract general idea of a house, say, by mentally
348 superposing a group of individual houses we have seen on different occasions into one,
349 composite mental image. This composite mental image can then play the role of an abstract
350 general idea in virtue of the similarities it bears to group members. Philosophers who expressed
351 sympathy with this sort of account of abstract general ideas include Peirce, James, and
352 Wittgenstein³⁸—also Richard Semon and Russell himself.

353 But given this model of abstraction, Russell faces the challenge of distinguishing ideas that
354 are merely *vague* from those that are genuinely *abstract*. I have a vague image of what the gears

³⁶ Galton was an advocate of eugenics. He claimed that these kinds of images can be used to depict ethnic “types.” Here we have the “Jewish type” (ominously). He also created such portraits of criminals, patients with different diseases, and so on. These depictions are plainly chilling. And although Russell himself would give his own qualified support for eugenics (HEATHORN, “Explaining Russell’s Eugenic Discourse” [2005]), composite portraiture would not have seemed to readers of the era to be an exclusively eugenicist tool. Galton really did offer up his composite portraiture as a way pictorially to represent similarity and dissimilarity, constructing many such pictures of inanimate objects that lacked a connection to eugenics (such as ancient coins, as at Galton, “Generic Images” [1879b]). In the photo in the text, E is the composite of the five portraits marked with small *e*; F is the composite of the *f*’s; G is a co-composite of E and F reversed, and thus represents all the ten components on the right (from GALTON, “Photographic Composites” [1885]).

³⁷ Galton says that composite portraits are “strictly analogous” to abstract general ideas (“Generic Images” [1879a], p. 164).

³⁸ For instance, see HUXLEY, *Lessons in Elementary Physiology* (1879/1914), pp. 112–4; JAMES, “On Some Omissions of Introspective Psychology” (1884), pp. 4, 16; ROBERTSON, “Mr. F. Galton on Generic Images” (1879), although crucially for my story, note that James denies Huxley and Galton’s claim that these blended images by themselves represent in virtue of similarity. Instead, they represent only if they are accompanied by a “fringe” sense of what is “about to come”; see JAMES, *ibid.*, p. 18, and *The Principles of Psychology* (1890/1981), p. 451, n. 17. On Peirce, see HOOKWAY, “A Sort of Composite Photograph” (2002). On Wittgenstein, see CONANT, “Family Resemblance” (2005).

355 inside my watch look like, but (not being a watchmaker) I certainly lack the abstract ideas
356 associated with the various parts one finds in there. What is the difference?

357 Russell's answer involves what he calls an image's "causal efficacy" (*AMi*, p. 207–8). In
358 effect, he introduces a second condition to help disambiguate what an image "means." The
359 second condition is that the image must share "some of the effects which the object would have."
360 He offers examples such as when an imagination-image of St. Paul's creates the same desire to
361 go inside the cathedral that one might feel upon actually being confronted with St. Paul's itself.
362 And he holds that the image can also share *causes* with its object. For instance, my hunger for
363 honey-roasted nuts might cause an *image* of honey-roasted nuts; but it might also cause me to
364 procure actual honey-roasted nuts. In short, images share at least some causes and/or effects with
365 the objects that they "mean."

366 Thus, Russell thinks the following two conditions are jointly necessary and sufficient for an
367 image to *mean* a sensation: a) the image must resemble the sensation, and b) the image must
368 share "some of the effects"—and/or some of the same causes—"which the object would have."

369 The second condition helps distinguish vague images from abstract images in the following
370 way. Suppose I have what Russell calls a "nondescript" image of a dog. If that image shares
371 associated causes and effects that any dog would have, regardless of breed, then this is an
372 abstract image of a dog. But if the image shares associations that only spaniels would have, then
373 this is an abstract image of a spaniel. And if the image only shares associations with some
374 particular dog (perhaps it's a vague mental image of Ruby, my own dog at home)—then this is
375 merely a vague image of an individual.³⁹

376

377 *2.4 Belief*

378 Again, Russell thinks that to be conscious of a sensation, I must have an image that means
379 the sensation. In order to mean the sensation, the image must both resemble the sensation and

³⁹ Russell's discussion of the spaniel example is at (*AMi*, p. 209).

380 share some causes and/or effects of that sensation. We must now look at the second condition—
381 to be conscious of a sensation, the image must also be accompanied by a *true belief* about that
382 sensation.

383 Russell adds this condition because he holds that we can only be conscious of something
384 that actually exists (*AMi*, p. 290). He wants to rule out, say, an image that means a unicorn from
385 counting as a consciousness of a unicorn. He accomplishes this by adding that consciousness
386 arises when we have an image that means a sensation, *and* when reflection leads us to believe in
387 the actual existence of the sensation that is meant. When both of these conditions are met,
388 Russell says that we have “consciousness of the prototype of the image” (*ibid.*).

389 This is not the place to get deeply into Russell’s rich account of belief. But we can briefly
390 draw some distinctions to at least get the gist of his view as it stood in 1921.

391 First of all, beliefs are truth-apt in that they depict what Russell calls a “fact.” The *fact* of
392 Lance Armstrong’s past actions is what makes my belief that he engaged in blood-doping either
393 true or false. Russell calls the particular fact that makes a given belief true or false that belief’s
394 “objective” (*AMi*, p. 232).

395 Recall that Russell uses the term “meaning” to characterize the relationship in virtue of
396 which an image represents some sensation. But beliefs do not bear a *meaning* relationship to
397 their objects—instead, they bear a relation that he calls “reference,” or sometimes “objective
398 reference.” For example, my belief that Columbus sailed for the New World in 1492 bears the
399 reference relation to its objective, which is Columbus’s actual crossing (per *AMi*, p. 232).

400 Unlike in the relationship between an image and the sensation that it “means,” there is a
401 third entity that intercedes between a *belief* and its *objective*. For in the case of Columbus
402 crossing the Atlantic in 1492, the *objective* of my belief is far removed from me in both time and
403 space—that event cannot itself be present to my current belief. So Russell holds that beliefs have
404 *contents* that are present to them; strictly speaking, the *contents* are what represent some
405 objective—that is, some fact that may be distant in time and/or space (*AMi*, p. 234).

406 The contents of a belief can consist of images, words, and/or sensations. A content is always
407 “complex” in that it must consist of a collection of words, images, or sensations, and these items
408 must bear “definite relations” to one another (*AMi*, p. 235–6). We can think of the *content* of a
409 belief as the kind of representation that would normally be expressed by a “that” clause: the
410 belief *that* the earth is warming, the belief *that* Ontario is north of New York. And so on.

411 Reference is an importantly different relation from meaning because reference comes in two
412 varieties—true reference and false reference (*AMi*, pp. 232). Russell sometimes speaks of true
413 reference as pointing *towards* its objective, and false reference as pointing *away* from its
414 objective (*AMi*, p. 272). He understands the truth of a belief, of course, to be a matter of its
415 “correspondence” with the facts, at least in the simplest cases. To use his familiar example, my
416 belief that the window is to the left of the door may be a “feeling” of assent (*AMi*, p. 233)
417 directed at an image of the window and door that corresponds to the window’s actually being to
418 the left of the door (*AMi*, pp. 273–4).⁴⁰

419 In short, to be conscious of a sensation, there must be an image that *means* the sensation,
420 and the image must be accompanied by a belief about—i.e., a distinctive, emotional feeling of
421 *assent* towards—a content, and the content must bear the *true reference* relation to the sensation.

422

423 2.5 Representationalism

424 Is Russell’s account of consciousness a form of representationalism? I take
425 representationalism about consciousness to be the view that phenomenal properties arise in virtue
426 of representational properties.⁴¹

427 What are “phenomenal” and “representational” properties, respectively? The properties of a
428 mental state in virtue of which it is like something to be in that state are called the state’s
429 *phenomenal properties*. These properties might include the bitter-taste qualia associated with my

⁴⁰ For discussion, see LEVINE, “Russell, Pragmatism, and the Priority of Use over Meaning” (2018a), p. 143. Note that Russell actually distinguishes between three types of belief-feelings—assent, memory, and expectation. I confine myself to assent in the text for ease of exposition, and Russell suggests that each of these three feelings play the same structural role in his account (*AMi*, p. 250).

⁴¹ HELLIE, “Consciousness and Representationalism” (2006).

430 mental state when I drink coffee, or the clanging-sound qualia when a streetcar is passing.
431 Mental states can also have *representational properties*. These are the properties in virtue of
432 which a mental state is said to be “about” something else. For instance, I can have a desire for
433 grapefruit; whatever properties *make* my desire point to grapefruit are that desire’s
434 representational properties.

435 There are many disagreements about just how to further cash out the concepts of
436 phenomenal and representational properties. But for our purposes, what is important is the broad
437 approach to consciousness called “representationalism.” Representationalists claim that it is in
438 virtue of a mental state’s representational properties (the properties that make it a representation
439 of, say, the coffee as having a bitter taste) that the state has phenomenal properties (the properties
440 that give it a subjective, something-it-is-like feeling of tasting the bitter coffee). One common
441 argument for representationalism is an argument from theoretical convenience. Where once
442 philosophers of mind had been troubled by two fundamental problems (phenomenality and
443 representation), the representationalist proposes to solve two problems at once.⁴²

444 I would now make several points about Russell’s analysis of consciousness. First, it is at
445 least *necessary* that a state represents an object for that state to count as conscious, on Russell’s
446 view; and in that sense his view is clearly at least a *weak* form of representationalism.⁴³ (Strong
447 representationalism says, in contrast, that representational properties are both necessary *and*
448 *sufficient* for consciousness). And representation figures into Russell’s view twice over. For a
449 mental image to be conscious of an object it must mean—represent—the object. And it must be
450 accompanied by a belief concerning a complex content that must be directed at—again, that must
451 represent—the object. So Russell clearly offers at least what we would today call a “weak” form
452 of representationalism.

⁴² LEVINE, "Russell, Pragmatism, and the Priority of Use over Meaning" (2018a), p. 175.

⁴³ A referee asks whether Russell really thinks images are necessary for consciousness, or whether other states can give rise to consciousness as well. A passage on the page following the Definition Passage shows that Russell indeed thinks images are necessary for consciousness. He writes: “[T]he question arises as to whether we can be conscious of images. If we apply our definition to this case, it seems to demand images of images” (*AMi*, p. 290). Consciousness indeed requires images, for Russell.

453 What is more, for a state (like an image) to give rise to consciousness, the state must
454 involve a content with a proposition-like structure (*AMi*, p. 240–1). For we have seen that
455 Russell thinks consciousness is a mental image that not only *means* its object, but the image must
456 also be accompanied by a feeling of belief (assent) towards a *content*, and these belief-contents
457 must be structured in a proposition-like way—assent *that* the apple is on the table, or *that* the
458 apple is yellow. That means that Russell offers (at least) a (weak) representationalism that insists
459 that conscious experience always has some propositional content.⁴⁴ On this view, one is never
460 simply conscious of an apple full-stop. One is conscious *that* the apple looks delicious (or
461 whatever).

462 I think Russell in fact demurs from *strong* representationalism though. For conscious states
463 (as he sees them) also involve beliefs *concerning* the content, and beliefs get cashed out in terms
464 of some kind of pro-attitude towards that content. Are these pro-attitudes—*assents*,
465 paradigmatically—simply more representations?

466 It seems not. Russell concludes his analysis of belief this way:

467 The view of belief which I have been advocating contains little that is novel except the
468 distinction of kinds of belief-feeling such as memory and expectation. Thus James says:
469 “Everyone knows the difference between imagining a thing and believing in its existence,
470 between supposing a proposition and acquiescing in its truth. . . . *In its inner nature,*
471 *belief, or the sense of reality, is a sort of feeling more allied to the emotions than to*
472 *anything else*” (*Psychology*, vol. ii, p. 283. James’s italics). He proceeds to point out that
473 drunkenness, and, still more, nitrous-oxide intoxication, will heighten the sense of
474 belief. . . . (*AMi*, p. 252)

475 And in fact this sort of emotion-based account of assent is demanded by one of Russell’s deeper
476 commitments about the contents of belief. This is his view that the same content can be believed,

⁴⁴ Russell in fact speaks of the kinds of images involved in belief-contents as “image-propositions.” He distinguishes these from “word-propositions,” writing: “We may identify propositions in general with the contents of actual and possible beliefs, and we may say that it is propositions that are true or false” (*AMi*, p. 241). Also see “On Propositions,” pp. 29–30.

477 doubted, or merely considered, and an account of belief should be able to distinguish between
478 these (*AMi*, p. 250). This means that the difference between a content we believe and a content
479 we doubt is not to be found in the content—in the representation—itsself. The difference is to be
480 found in the attitude we take *towards* the content, and as we see above Russell regards such
481 attitudes as kinds of feelings or emotions.

482 In any case, it is not hard to see why Russell might have liked a representationalist approach
483 to the mind. For it promises at least partly to reduce questions about subjective experience to
484 questions about representational content, and these latter are questions to which the tools of
485 logical analysis are well suited.

486 Let me step back for a moment. It has often been said that *The Analysis of Mind* is Russell's
487 attempt to marry James's neutral monism with Watson's behaviorism. In his important study,
488 Levine has argued that Russell's lingering commitment to mental images in that work marks a
489 failure to bring these strands together satisfactorily; and Levine thinks Russell's enduring
490 opposition to the pragmatist theory of truth "helps explain the role that images play in his post-
491 prison philosophy."⁴⁵ This is because image-propositions are essential to his post-prison theory
492 of belief, and because image propositions are truth-apt in a correspondence sense (*ibid.*, 143 –
493 144). Levine concludes that "countenancing images affords the post-prison Russell a way... to
494 defend a correspondence theory of truth,"⁴⁶ presumably in that Russell can claim to have built
495 out a robust, consistent, image-based theory of belief from his correspondence theory.

496 That is a helpful observation, but we can use it to bring out some further differences
497 between Russell's post-prison theory of mind and James's. If Russell's theory of belief depends
498 on both a theory of image meaning and on a correspondence theory of truth (per Levine), then
499 Russell's theory of consciousness depends on all three—on his theory of belief, his theory of
500 image meaning, and his theory of truth, as we have just seen.

⁴⁵ LEVINE, "Russell, Pragmatism, and the Priority of Use over Meaning" (2018a), p. 135.

⁴⁶ LEVINE, "Russell, Pragmatism, and the Priority of Use over Meaning" (2018a), p. 144.

501 It should not be surprising, then, to find that the fundamental incompatibility on truth
502 between Russell and James creates more profound differences at the level of the theory of
503 mind—more profound, in fact, than some of the aforementioned literature on Russell’s purported
504 pragmatism has recognized. I will now try to bring some of these central differences to light by
505 comparing Russell’s account of consciousness to James’s.

506 This is not the place to develop a full picture of James’s analysis of consciousness, which is
507 also remarkably complex.⁴⁷ But I will try to indicate in general terms why his approach might be
508 thought seriously incompatible with Russell’s blend of behaviorism and representationalism.

509

510 3. *James on Consciousness, Action, and Belief*

511 James wrote voluminously on the subject of consciousness, first in an evolutionary-
512 psychological vein, and then in a more metaphysical capacity when he later developed his
513 neutral monism. Despite that consciousness is no longer taken as metaphysically basic in the
514 neutral monist phase, many of James’s core, psychological ideas about consciousness are
515 nevertheless preserved there.⁴⁸ Accordingly, I now offer a brief overview of James’s neutral-
516 monist account of consciousness, paying special attention to the role of representation in that
517 account. Then I show that James’s account of representation is rooted in his earlier,
518 psychological work on willing. I conclude the section by identifying some respects in which
519 James’s volitional account of representation stands in tension with Russell’s non-volitional
520 account. Thus, even though both see representation as central to consciousness, their rival
521 conceptions of representation ultimately make for two incompatible forms of neutral monism
522 about consciousness.

523 We have seen that for Russell, sensations (the fundamental “neutral-stuff”) are not
524 themselves conscious. Consciousness requires an “image” that represents a sensation. James also

⁴⁷ I examine James’s evolutionary-psychological account of consciousness at length in *Consciousness Is Motor: Warp and Weft in William James* (forthcoming-a).

⁴⁸ KLEIN, “The Death of Consciousness?” (2020).

525 presented his neutral monism about consciousness in terms of a division between two kinds of
526 states, one fundamental and the other derivative. In one of his earliest articulations of this
527 position,⁴⁹ James distinguished between “acquaintance” states where we know an object
528 “immediately” or “intuitively,” and states that constitute “representative knowledge.” James’s
529 acquaintance states are similar to Russellian sensations—when I am acquainted with a piece of
530 paper before my eyes, the “thought-stuff and the thing-stuff are ... indistinguishably the same in
531 nature” (James 1895, p. 105). James would later substitute the phrase “pure experience” for this
532 “primal stuff or material ... of which everything is composed.”⁵⁰

533 Images (for Russell) and representative-knowledge states (for James) both represent
534 something absent. For Russell, images represent a past sensation—he calls the past sensation a
535 “prototype” (*AMi*, p. 179), and as we have seen resemblance and causal co-variation are jointly
536 necessary and sufficient for representation (recall 1a. and 1b. above). For James, something like
537 an image is also at play in representative knowledge. But here the representation is future-
538 directed, and it is (often) a kinaesthetic image.

539 Let us look at the future-directed piece first, which comes out nicely in one of James’s most
540 famous examples of representative knowledge, a thought of tigers in India.⁵¹

541 The pointing of our thought to the tigers is known simply and solely as a procession of
542 mental associates and motor consequences that follow on the thought, and that would
543 lead harmoniously, if followed out, into some ideal or real context, or even into the
544 immediate presence, of the tigers. It is known as our rejection of a jaguar, if that beast
545 were shown us as a tiger; as our assent to a genuine tiger if so shown. It is known as our
546 ability to utter all sorts of propositions which don't contradict other propositions that are
547 true of the real tigers. It is even known, if we take the tigers very seriously, as actions of

⁴⁹ JAMES, “The Knowing of Things Together,” (1895/1978); for a discussion, see KLEIN, “Hatfield on American Critical Realism” (2015).

⁵⁰ James, “Does Consciousness Exist?” (1912/1976), p. 4.

⁵¹ In this passage James is borrowing a phrase from Shadworth Hodgson, who sought definitions in terms of what some phenomenon or other is “known as.” Readers unfamiliar with this turn of phrase can loosely think of James as asking for something like what we might today call an operationalization of a concept. For example, James says that all the “substance” of a piece of chalk is “known-as” is its “whiteness, friability, etc.” (*Pragmatism* [1907], p. 46).

548 ours which may terminate in directly intuited tigers, as they would if we took a voyage to
549 India for the purpose of tiger-hunting and brought back a lot of skins of the striped rascals
550 which we had laid low. In all this there is no self-transcendancy in our mental images
551 taken by themselves. They are one physical⁵² fact; the tigers are another; and their
552 pointing to the tigers is a perfectly commonplace physical relation, if you once grant a
553 connecting world to be there.⁵³

554 A state represents something absent, for James, in virtue of the actions it enables in the future,
555 both linguistic and bodily. James had a detailed account of how a thought can support bodily
556 action specifically, as we shall see, and he tended to emphasize navigation to a distant object as
557 the paradigmatic variety of representation. Thus in the first instance, mental “pointing” amounts
558 to there being a possible (not necessarily actual)⁵⁴ chain of “mental associates and motor
559 consequences” connecting one neutral state with another.⁵⁵

560 Neutral monism characteristically provides a deflationary account of consciousness in terms
561 of a more metaphysically fundamental, “neutral” stuff. For Russell, the deflation is logical—he
562 replaced dubious entities like subjects and conscious states with “logical constructions” out of
563 neutral sensations (*AMi*, pp. 5, 307).⁵⁶ James also denied that conscious states are made of any
564 metaphysically distinctive stuff. But for him the deflation is causal-functional, replacing what we
565 call “consciousness” with “a function” some bits of pure experience play with respect to other
566 bits. He calls this function “knowing,”⁵⁷ a word he typically uses to mean what we would call

⁵² James substituted the word “phenomenal,” which he apparently intended to be more metaphysically neutral, for “physical” in this passage when he reproduced parts of the 1895 article in his later essay collection *The Meaning of Truth* (JAMES, *The Meaning of Truth* [1909/1978], p. 34).

⁵³ JAMES, “The Knowing of Things Together,” (1895/1978), p. 108.

⁵⁴ See JAMES 1895, p. 108. n.

⁵⁵ I provide a more detailed discussion of James’s views on representation in “William James” (2023).

⁵⁶ We can see Russell’s deflationary attitude towards consciousness in passages like this: “It is therefore natural to suppose that, whatever may be the correct definition of ‘consciousness,’ ‘consciousness’ is not the essence of life or mind. In the following lectures, accordingly, this term will disappear until we have dealt with words, when it will re-emerge as mainly a trivial and unimportant outcome of linguistic habits” (*AMi*, p. 40). In light of the analysis I have offered above, Russell may regard consciousness itself as “trivial” in the sense of not being metaphysically basic. But his *account* of consciousness is not “trivial,” at least not in the sense of being simple or obvious.

⁵⁷ JAMES, *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (1912/1976), p. 4.

567 intentionality or representation.⁵⁸ Thus at least in the case of what common sense might call
568 conscious thoughts of what is absent, James’s neutral monism replaces consciousness with a
569 future-directed, causal-functional account of representation. In the paradigmatic case,⁵⁹ a thought
570 (or one bit of pure experience) represents an object (another bit of pure experience) in virtue of
571 enabling “motor consequences” that “lead harmoniously” to the object.⁶⁰

572 In his earlier psychological work, James had offered a detailed, quasi-physiological story⁶¹
573 of how exactly a thought performs this leading function—how a thought, in other words, initiates
574 and guides action. A brief review of that account is therefore in order.

575 According to James’s so-called “ideo-motor” principle, every conscious thought naturally
576 brings about some bodily response or other⁶²—and in particular, “*every representation of a*
577 *movement awakens in some degree the actual movement which is its object; and awakens it in a*
578 *maximum degree whenever it is not kept from so doing by an antagonistic representation present*
579 *simultaneously to the mind.*”⁶³ He goes so far as to declare: “All consciousness is motor.”⁶⁴

580 But because conscious creatures (especially those with highly articulated brains) have a
581 capacity to think of “absent objects” (more on this phrase in a moment) while simultaneously
582 undergoing normal sensation and perception, rivalries can arise between different thoughts that
583 cannot all be put into action at once. Will is the subject’s “fiat”⁶⁵ that one among these several
584 conflicting thoughts shall be allowed to be put into action.⁶⁶ Attention is the basic mechanism of

⁵⁸ For instance, in seeking a philosophical account of “knowing” the tigers, he derides other philosophers for making “a great mystery . . . of this peculiar presence in absence,” also using the “scholastic” phrase “intentional inexistence” (JAMES, “The Knowing of Things Together” [1895], pp. 107–8).

⁵⁹ On James’s tendency to explain by offering paradigmatic examples rather than by offering necessary and sufficient conditions, see JACKMAN, “James, Intentionality, and Analysis” (2020).

⁶⁰ Also see JAMES, *The Meaning of Truth* (1909/1978), p. 62.

⁶¹ I call James’s earlier account “quasi” physiological because it is cast in dualistic terms, with thoughts explicitly portrayed as non-physical states caused by the brain (JAMES, “Are We Automata?” [1879], p. 6, and *The Principles of Psychology* [1890/1981], 6).

⁶² JAMES, *The Principles of Psychology* (1890/1981), p. 18.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 1134, italics original.

⁶⁴ JAMES, *Psychology: The Briefer Course* (1892/1984), p. 321.

⁶⁵ JAMES, *Essays in Psychology* (1983), pp. 44–5, 86.

⁶⁶ Russell surprisingly endorses James’s account of volition, and seems to recognize the central role these idea-rivalries can play; see *AMi*, p. 285.

585 willing, guided by subjective “interest”—we pick between rival thoughts by attending to one and
586 ignoring the others.⁶⁷

587 Just as in his later, neutral monist account, James’s earlier psychological account of
588 consciousness also placed a heavy emphasis on representation, understood as a capacity to lead
589 to “absent objects,” or in other words as a capacity to entertain what he called “remote
590 sensations.”⁶⁸ His evidence for the central role of representation of absent objects in
591 consciousness came principally from vivisection experiments. Living frogs that have been
592 decerebrated (but who have all other brain structures intact, up to and including the optic
593 thalami, which are just posterior to the cerebrum) apparently behave in ways that are largely
594 indistinguishable from their intact peers; the key difference, according to James, is that they only
595 respond to *present* stimuli (such as a poke), and almost never *initiate* behavior of their own
596 accord. This can be explained, James argued, if the cerebrum gives rise to a capacity to entertain
597 ideas other than what the senses are presenting. These are the so-called absent sensations.⁶⁹
598 Based on brain damage evidence in humans and dogs, James held that consciousness was seated
599 in the cerebral hemispheres,⁷⁰ and so he held decerebrated frogs cannot be conscious. He thus
600 conjectured that the ability to represent absent objects was a central, perhaps defining feature of
601 consciousness.

602 Remote sensations are what represent absent objects. One variety of these are especially
603 important for his account of action initiation and guidance (and thus for his account of
604 representation): what he called “*anticipatory images*” (similar to a “response image” in today’s
605 terms), which are effectively an agent’s internal representation of goals. Anticipatory images are
606 (in brief) representations of expected future sensations a movement would cause. These images
607 directly trigger motions that have been linked, in past experience, with these expectations, James

⁶⁷ JAMES, *The Principles of Psychology* (1890/1981), p. 1166.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 32. Jamesian remote sensations anticipate an aspect of more modern forms of representationalism—the notion that “decouplability” of a mental state from occurrent sensory stimulation is important for guiding intelligent behavior (CLARK AND GRUSH, “Towards A Cognitive Robotics” [1999], cf. GRUSH AND MANDIK, “Representational Parts” [2002] for the related notion of “independent targetability”).

⁶⁹ JAMES, *The Principles of Psychology* (1890/1981), p. 32.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 74–5.

608 held. For instance, we have gotten ourselves physically up and out of bed in the past. This led to
609 the kinesthetic experience of being upright. When we are now in bed and think of this feeling of
610 being upright, we are entertaining an anticipatory image. This image directly triggers (according
611 to James’s ideo-motor principle) the getting-out-of-bed sequence, unless there is a rival thought
612 we are entertaining at the same time.⁷¹ This is why representations often involve future-directed
613 *kinesthetic* images⁷²—we navigate through an environment by thinking of (and continually
614 updating our expectations about)⁷³ what we expect it to feel like to move in such-and-such a
615 way.

616 What is perhaps most distinctive about James’s approach is that anticipatory images are
617 (typically) internally *generated* mental states.⁷⁴ These internally-generated states tend to trigger
618 behavior. So for James, some behaviors—what he calls the “ideo-motor actions”—are not
619 elicited by externally-presented stimuli. They originate internally.

620 In sum, both in his earlier, psychological writing and in his later neutral monism, James saw
621 the representation of absent objects as a core “function” of (what we call) consciousness.⁷⁵ A
622 thought (or bit of pure experience) represents an absent object in virtue of supporting appropriate
623 future conduct towards the object—paradigmatically, in virtue of affording a capacity to navigate
624 to the object and “operate on” it⁷⁶ in ways that accord with the agent’s goals. James’s theory of
625 ideo-motor action provides an account of how an idea triggers those appropriate actions.⁷⁷

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1132–333.

⁷² When it comes to feelings we might expect upon the performance of an action, James distinguishes kinesthetic and other body feelings from visual and auditory experiences that portray something distal (*The Principles of Psychology* [1890/1981], p. 1100). For James, I can turn on the light by thinking of what my arm will have felt like when I raise it up to flick the switch. But I can also turn on the light by thinking of seeing the light in the room turn on. These distal representations can also trigger bodily action, for James, if habit has connected a bodily routine (such as moving my arm a certain way) with a distal effect (such as the light turning on).

⁷³ Thus James’s theory of representation has been portrayed as a forerunner to predictive-processing models in cognitive science (BUCKNER, “A Forward-Looking Theory of Content” [2022]), a reading with which I am very sympathetic.

⁷⁴ JAMES, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (1897/1979), pp. 185–7.

⁷⁵ Representation of absent objects is part of a larger mechanism for behavior regulation, in James; for more details, see my *Consciousness Is Motor* (forthcoming-a).

⁷⁶ JAMES, “On the Function of Cognition” (1885), p. 38.

⁷⁷ For a historical overview of the history of ideo-motor theory that highlights James’s role, see STOCK AND STOCK, “A Short History of Ideo-Motor Action” (2004); and for a survey of the more recent revival of ideo-motor theory, see SHIN, PROCTOR, AND CAPALDI, “A Review of Contemporary Ideomotor Theory” (2010).

626 Now what do James's conceptions of consciousness and action have to do with pragmatism,
627 or with Russell? Take pragmatism first. Although James did not begin publicly discussing
628 pragmatism until 1898, we can see roots of that philosophical movement in some of his early
629 reflections on consciousness and will, such as in this telling 1881 passage:

630 The structural unit of the nervous system is in fact a triad, neither of whose elements has
631 any independent existence. The sensory impression exists only for the sake of awaking
632 the central process of reflection, and the central process of reflection exists only for the
633 sake of calling forth the final act. All action is thus *re*-action upon the outer world; and
634 the middle stage of consideration or contemplation or thinking is only a place of transit,
635 the bottom of a loop, both whose ends have their point of application in the outer world.
636 If it should ever have no roots in the outer world, if it should ever happen that it led to no
637 active measures, it would fail of its essential function, and would have to be considered
638 either pathological or abortive. The current of life which runs in at our eyes or ears is
639 meant to run out at our hands, feet, or lips. The only use of the thoughts it occasions
640 while inside is to determine its direction to whichever of these organs shall, on the whole,
641 under the circumstances actually present, act in the way most propitious to our welfare.
642 The willing department of our nature, in short, dominates both the conceiving department
643 and the feeling department; or, in plainer English, perception and thinking are only there
644 for behavior's sake.⁷⁸

645 This passage is from a lecture to theologians, and it nicely expresses James's basic orientation
646 towards the mind—that what is conscious is part of a larger mechanism for adjusting the
647 organism's behavior to its dynamic environment. This much would have been in keeping with
648 later behaviorist thinking.

649 But there are at least two important differences both from pure behaviorism and from
650 Russell's brand of neutral monism, I submit. One is the role of an interested will in affording

⁷⁸ JAMES, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (1897/1979), p. 92.

651 endogenous control of behavior. Remember, for James consciousness is a kind of theater in
652 which occurrent sensory experience is continually compared with absent sensations. And it is
653 will—construed as a faculty that brings the agent’s interests to bear in choosing which sensation
654 shall be acted upon—that is ultimately responsible for planning and controlling action. This is
655 the sense in which will “dominates” the mental, for James.

656 A second, related difference is the *endogenous initiation* of behavior. Ideas are the
657 proximate causes of actions according to James’s ideo-motor theory. But ideas are not always
658 elicited by sensory stimulation. Some of them are “brain-born,” as James puts it, the result of
659 “spontaneous” activity rather than sensation.⁷⁹ In contrast, behaviorism took its cue from an
660 older, sensorimotor tradition in psychology that portrayed all behaviors as reflexive responses to
661 sensory inputs.⁸⁰ This tradition explained the difference between simpler responses and more
662 goal-directed actions (those we would typically call “voluntary”) by appealing to increasingly
663 complex, and increasingly educated, reflexive responses. James retained a notion of reflex action
664 for responses like wincing; but his ideo-motor model of volition marks a crucial departure from
665 sensorimotor theory in that James gives a central role in both action induction and motor control
666 to *endogenously*-generated goal-representations (viz., anticipatory images).⁸¹

667 It would not be a stretch to say that for James, action control is the natural fountain of
668 epistemology. What I mean is that James does not portray cognition as a matter of whether an
669 image (or behavioral response) *matches* the sensation from which it is copied (or the stimulus
670 that prompted it), as Russell does (*AMi*, p. 255–6).⁸² James regards cognition as a matter of

⁷⁹ JAMES, *The Principles of Psychology* (1890/1981), pp. 1234–5, and *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (1897/1979), pp. 185–7.

⁸⁰ For example, see HUXLEY, *Lessons in Elementary Physiology* (1866), pp. 16–7, 192–3, 285–6; “On the Hypothesis That Animals Are Automata” (1874/1894), p. 218; Clifford, “Body and Mind” (1874/1886), pp. 251–2).

⁸¹ I owe the division of approaches to action in late 19th century psychology into two traditions—the sensorimotor and the ideomotor—to Wolfgang Prinz; see *e.g.* PRINZ, “Experimental Approaches to Action” (2003), especially pp. 165–7).

⁸² It is true that in *The Analysis of Mind*, accuracy of match is necessary, but not sufficient, for knowledge. Appropriateness to purpose is also needed; but purpose gets cashed out in a purely behaviorist fashion—in terms of whatever it is that in fact terminates a “behaviour-cycle” (*AMi*, p. 65)—rather than in terms of some endogenous *interests* or *goals* that drive the behavior in the first place. In fact, he quite explicitly rejects the latter view, that we can understand *purpose* in terms of an internal mental state (*AMi*, p. 58–62).

671 whether the agent’s active control of her own behavior produces a successful policy for
672 navigating the environment—understanding “control” as a function of an interested and
673 productive will.

674 Another passage from the aforementioned 1881 article, reproduced in *The Principles of*
675 *Psychology*, illustrates the prominent role James gave to interest and volition:

676 The conceiving or theorizing faculty works exclusively for the sake of ends that do not
677 exist at all in the world of the impressions received by way of our senses, but are set by
678 our emotional and practical subjectivity. It is a transformer of the world of our
679 impressions into a totally different world, the world of our conception; and the
680 transformation is effected in the interests of our volitional nature, and for no other
681 purpose whatsoever. Destroy the volitional nature, the definite subjective purposes,
682 preferences, fondness for certain effects, forms, orders, and not the slightest motive
683 would remain for the brute order of our experience to be remodelled at all. But, as we
684 have the elaborate volitional constitution we do have, the remodelling must be effected,
685 there is no escape. The world’s contents are *given* to each of us in an order so foreign to
686 our subjective interests that we can hardly by an effort of the imagination picture to
687 ourselves what it is like. We have to break that order altogether, and by picking out from
688 it the items that concern us, and connecting them with others far away, which we say
689 ‘belong’ with them, we are able to make out definite threads of sequence and tendency, to
690 foresee particular liabilities and get ready for them, to enjoy simplicity and harmony in
691 the place of what was chaos.⁸³

692 James’s brand of pragmatism is built on a conception of mind according to which to be
693 conscious is to continually represent the world in terms of action possibilities, actions that either
694 suit or undermine the agent’s interests.

⁸³ JAMES, *The Principles of Psychology* (1890/1981), p. 1231.n.

695 One key aspect of the *The Analysis of Mind* that commentators have regarded as pragmatic
696 is its functionalist account of knowledge, according to which the human mind can be conceived
697 of as a measuring “instrument” making relatively more or less reliable responses to its
698 environment.⁸⁴ But the mental measuring instrument, as Russell conceives it, is backwards-
699 looking in the sense that “accuracy” is defined in terms of a match between behavioral output
700 and *prior sensation* (*AMi*, pp. 255–6). That is to say that what the cognitive measuring
701 instrument measures, for Russell, is past, inflowing sensation.

702 This approach to knowledge fits neatly with Russell’s account of consciousness in terms of
703 images that represent sensory prototypes. This is consciousness as *detector* (ultimately) of what
704 one has come into contact with in the environment. What is more, the mental measuring
705 instrument certainly makes no substantive contribution to the incoming stimulus signal or to the
706 outflowing behavioral response. Thus even after his post-prison shift towards pragmatism in
707 some important respects, Russell nevertheless rejects a conception of cognition as involving a
708 creative agent whose endogenous interests add something fundamental to the functional, in/out
709 connection between stimulus and response.

710 James also portrays knowledge in terms of coordinating behavior—but for him, the
711 coordination is between the behavior and the agent’s goals (which we can also call “subjective
712 interests”). I am interested in finding Memorial Hall, and whether I have an accurate idea of that
713 building is a question of my future success at pursuing my goal.⁸⁵

714 Here we see a deep mismatch between Russell and James, despite their shared neutral
715 monism. For Russell, consciousness has a *detecting* function, and for James its function is
716 *action-guidance*.

⁸⁴ I use “reliable” as a shorthand for a response that balances what Russell calls “accuracy” and “appropriateness.” For an account that treats Russell’s reliabilism in *The Analysis of Mind* as basically pragmatistic, see BALDWIN, “Introduction” (2003), p. 445. Russell himself later characterized this functionalist account of knowledge as “pragmatist,” without committing to the view that this account of knowledge is “the only possible one”; see *OP*, p. 97.

⁸⁵ JAMES, *The Meaning of Truth* (1909/1978), pp. 62–3.

717 I suggest that this mismatch amounts to an amplification of Russell’s enduring hostility to
718 the pragmatist view of truth. Let us revisit his 1909 criticism:

719 But when once the question has arisen concerning some actual belief, “Is it a true or a
720 false belief?” how do we in fact decide the question? The answer of pragmatism is that if
721 the belief furthers the purpose which led us to ask the question, it is regarded as a “true”
722 belief; if it fails to further the purpose it is regarded as a “false” belief. This, therefore,
723 according to pragmatism, is the meaning of the words “true” and “false”. “True” means
724 “furthering the purpose which led to the question”. Or, more explicitly: When, in
725 pursuing any purpose, a belief is entertained which is relevant to the purpose, the belief is
726 “true” if it furthers the achievement of the purpose, and “false” if it does not do so.
727 (*Papers* 6, pp. 267–8).

728 And from later in the same article, he says that for pragmatists:

729 There is no such thing as ‘mere’ knowing, in which we passively apprehend the nature of
730 a merely ‘given’ object. All knowing is bound up with doing and everything that we
731 know has been in some degree altered by our agency. (*Papers* 6, pp. 277–8)

732 Suppose I am right that James portrays endogenously-generated goals—*purposes*—as essential
733 to the proper functioning of consciousness. Russell’s contention that James also sees purposes as
734 playing an essential role in *cognition* would then pass the test of *prima facie* plausibility, at least.
735 I do not take myself to have fully articulated James’s theory of truth or of cognition more
736 generally, much less to have defended either. But Russell’s charge, that for pragmatists
737 “everything we know has been in some degree altered by our agency,” strikes me as entirely in
738 keeping with James’s psychological contention that endogenously-generated purposes mediate
739 between sensory inputs and behavioral outputs.

740 We saw above that Russell’s account of consciousness depends on his theory of belief, his
741 theory of image meaning (or representation), and his correspondence theory of truth. James’s
742 theory of consciousness depends on a different theory of representation—on his idea that “absent
743 sensation” represent some absent goal in virtue of supporting navigation towards it. The two

744 theories of consciousness are related in that they both rely on theories of representation, but they
745 understand representation in fundamentally different ways. For Russell, representations are truth-
746 apt in a sense uncorrupted by subjectivity—the image either matches the fact, or it does not. For
747 James, to represent is paradigmatically to support navigation towards an endogenously-generated
748 goal.⁸⁶ Hence we get two distinctly different visions of consciousness—consciousness as fact-
749 detector, and consciousness as action-guider.

750

751 4. Conclusion

752 Russell and James can both be regarded as somewhat neglected figures in the history of the
753 philosophy of mind, for different reasons. We remember Russell principally for his work in
754 logic, and for his role as a key architect of analytic philosophy itself. Given the long-running
755 narrative of the rise of analytic philosophy as co-extensive with a so-called “linguistic turn,” it is
756 perhaps understandable that Russell’s serious engagement with the philosophy of mind has been
757 comparatively neglected. Russellian monists have drawn inspiration from neutral monism, it is
758 true, but this remains something of a niche position. And for his part, James has been strongly
759 associated with a form of pragmatism that has long been out of fashion in analytic philosophy,
760 and this has perhaps led to his neglect in the field more generally.

761 I hope I have said enough here to indicate that this neglect is unjust on both sides. More
762 recent analytic philosophy has made important contributions to the study of mind via a
763 distinctive technique—the logical analysis of mental concepts like *consciousness*. The use of this
764 technique, even in the philosophy of mind, might well be something the discipline learned, in
765 part, from Russell. What is more, Russell’s own analysis of *consciousness* in terms of
766 *representational content* is an ancestor of a similar approach today. That is an important and
767 sophisticated insight, one Russell arrived at remarkably early, by at least 1921.

⁸⁶ Some of James’s enigmatic pronouncements on truth make more sense against the backdrop of his earlier, psychological work—for instance, his claim that truth is what “works best in the way of leading us, what fits every part of life best and combines with the collectivity of experience’s demands, nothing being omitted” (*Pragmatism* [1907], p. 44). Thus, his theory of truth can perhaps be read as developing out of, or as informed by his theory of consciousness, but this will have to remain an interpretive hypothesis that requires further research.

768 On the other hand, James’s own insistence on connecting consciousness with the active
769 control of behavior prefigures more recent movements like predictive processing and ideo-motor
770 theory.⁸⁷ And his insistence on grounding philosophical theories of mind in concrete observation
771 (including introspective, experimental, and clinical observation)⁸⁸ also foregrounds a general turn
772 towards naturalism in philosophy of mind and cognitive science today.⁸⁹
773

⁸⁷ BUCKNER, “A Forward-Looking Theory of Content” (2022), SHIN, PROCTOR, and CAPALDI, “A Review of Contemporary Ideomotor Theory” (2010). James’s own insistence on connecting consciousness with the active control of behavior might be thought to anticipate enactivism in some respects; but the role James gives representation—even though of bodily states—would presumably be off-putting to enactivists.

⁸⁸ Some of my articles emphasize the extensive role of empirical observation in James’s accounts of consciousness and will; see for example “On the Philosophical and Scientific Relationship between Ernst Mach and William James” (2021) and “James and Consciousness” (forthcoming-b).

⁸⁹ This research was undertaken, in part, thanks to funding from the Canada Research Chairs Program. I presented earlier versions of this paper at McMaster University and at a Bertrand Russell Society annual meeting, and I thank audiences for constructive feedback. I also thank Donovan Wishon for reading and commenting on an earlier draft, and for discussing Russell’s neutral monism with me at length. Two anonymous referees also helped substantially improve the paper, as did this journal’s co-editor Gülberk Koç.

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