

Acquaintance with a complex

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1. the discussion of Russell's theory of judgment

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2. the recent discussion of Russell's conception of acquaintance

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Russell's theory of judgment

S believes that *b* is above *a*.

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BEFORE 1906

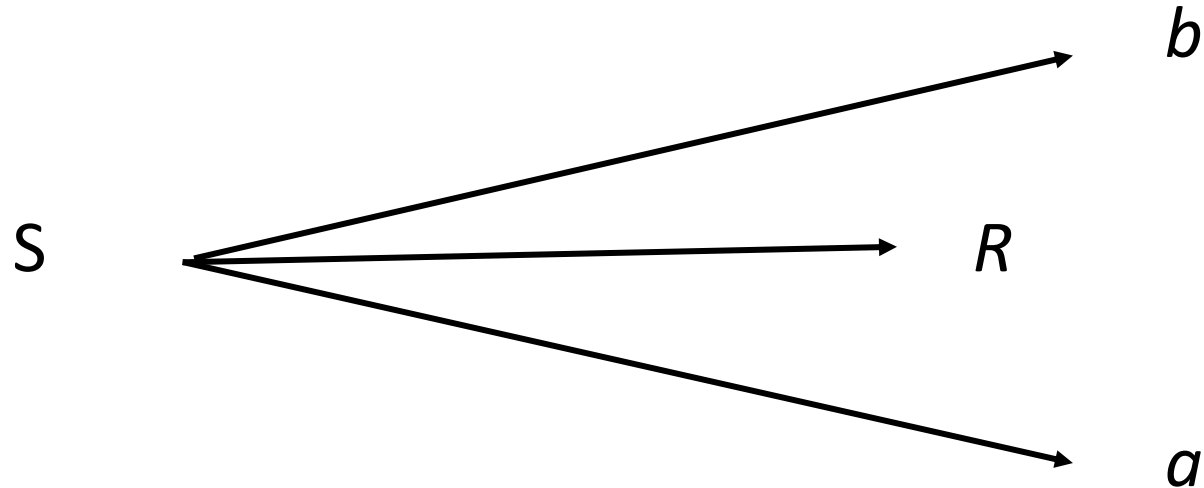


The proposition is a complex object.

Russell's theory of judgment

S believes that *b* is above *a*.

AFTER 1906



The proposition is the objective part of a belief-fact. It is no longer seen as an object.

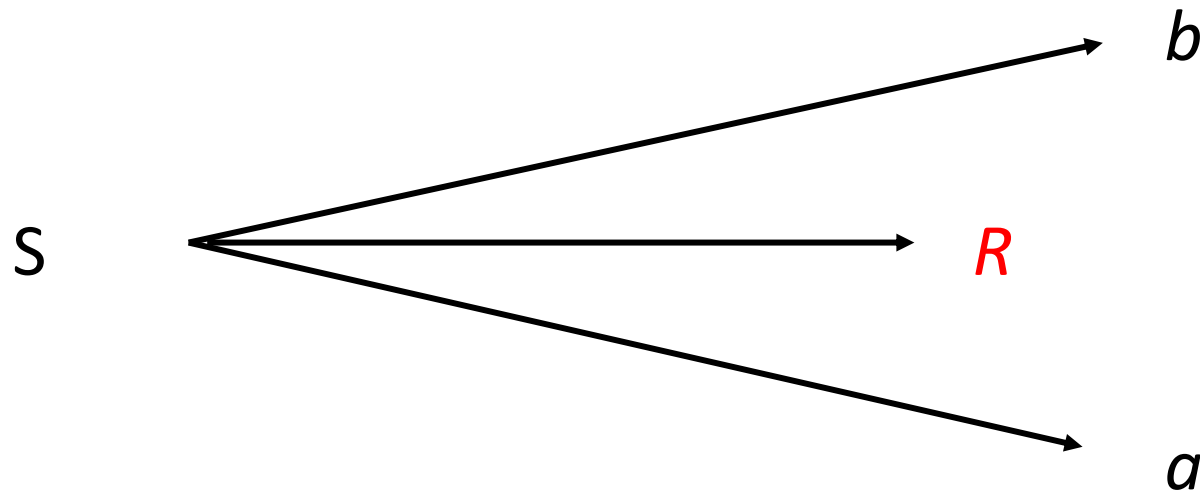
Wittgenstein's objection, June 1913

I can now express my objection to your theory of judgement exactly: I believe it is obvious that, from the prop[osition] “A judges that (say) a is in Rel[ation] R to b”, if correctly analysed, the proposition “ $aRb \vee \neg aRb$ ” *must follow directly without the use of any other premises*. This condition is not fulfilled by your theory.

Russell's theory of judgment

S believes that b is above a .

AFTER 1906

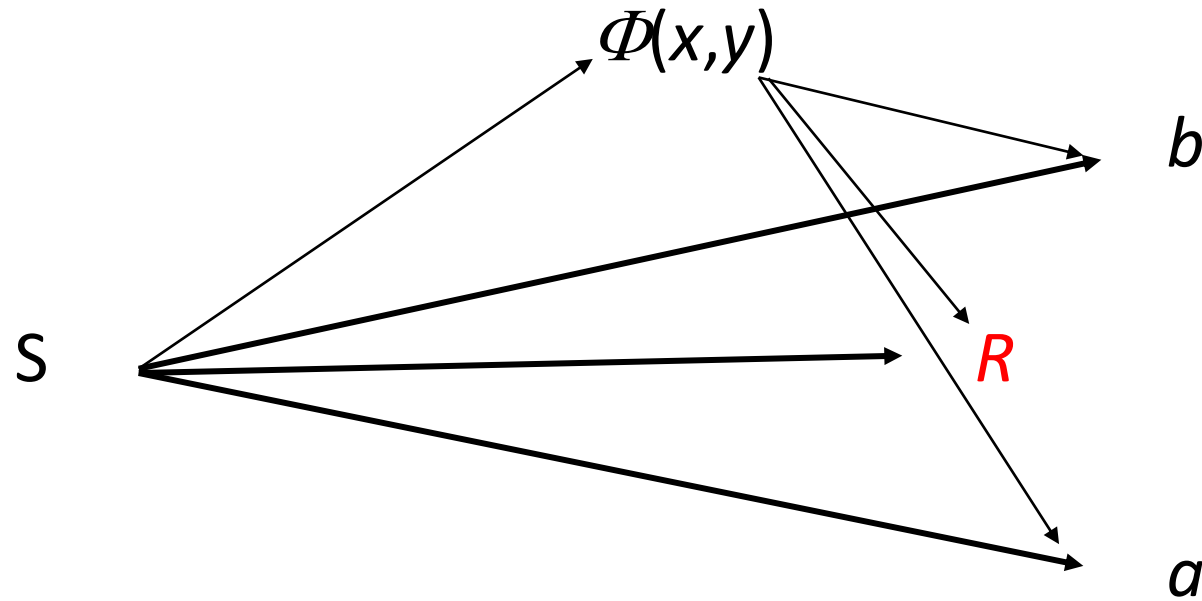


R is not a relating relation. One cannot rule out that S has the absurd belief « is above $b a$ ».

Russell's theory of judgment

S believes that b is above a .

1913's desperate move



Pincock 2008:

The problem Russell's multiple-relation faces has two distinguishable parts.

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The problem Russell's multiple-relation faced has two distinguishable parts.

The **proposition problem**: what are the parts of the proposition and how are these parts related?

That's the problem we just talked about.

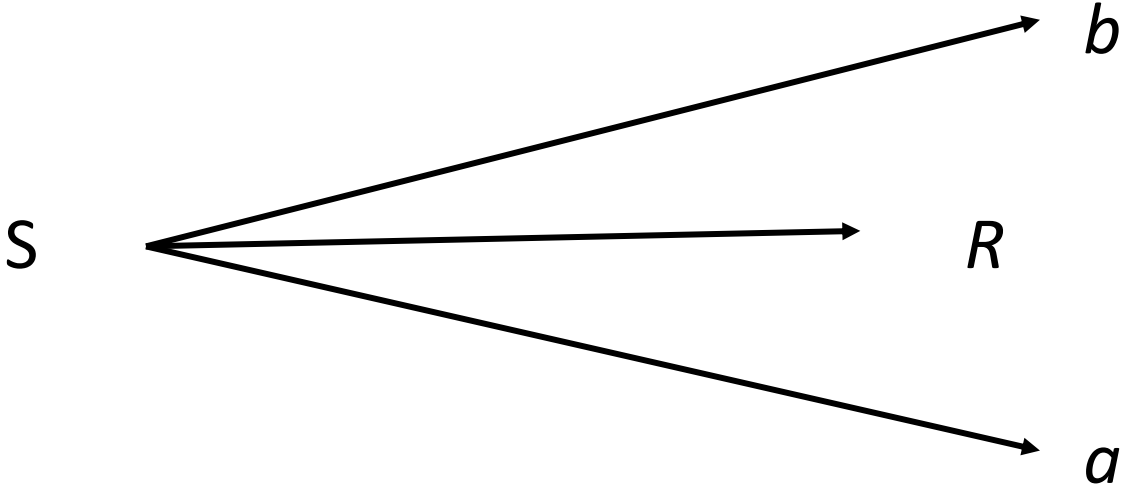
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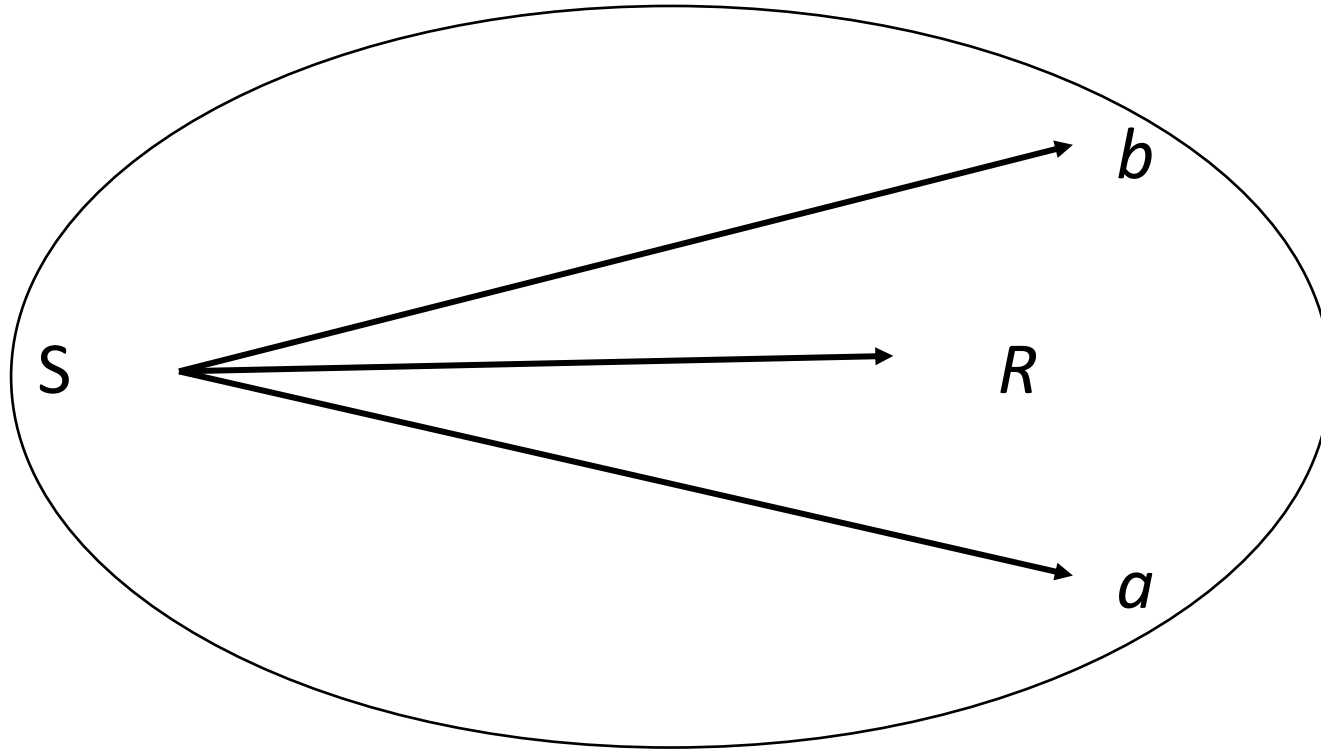
The **proposition problem**: what are the parts of the proposition and how are these parts related?

The **correspondence problem**: for any belief, what must be the case for this belief to be true and what must be the case for the belief to be false?

S believes that *b* is above *a*

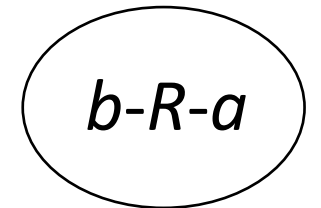


S believes that b is above a

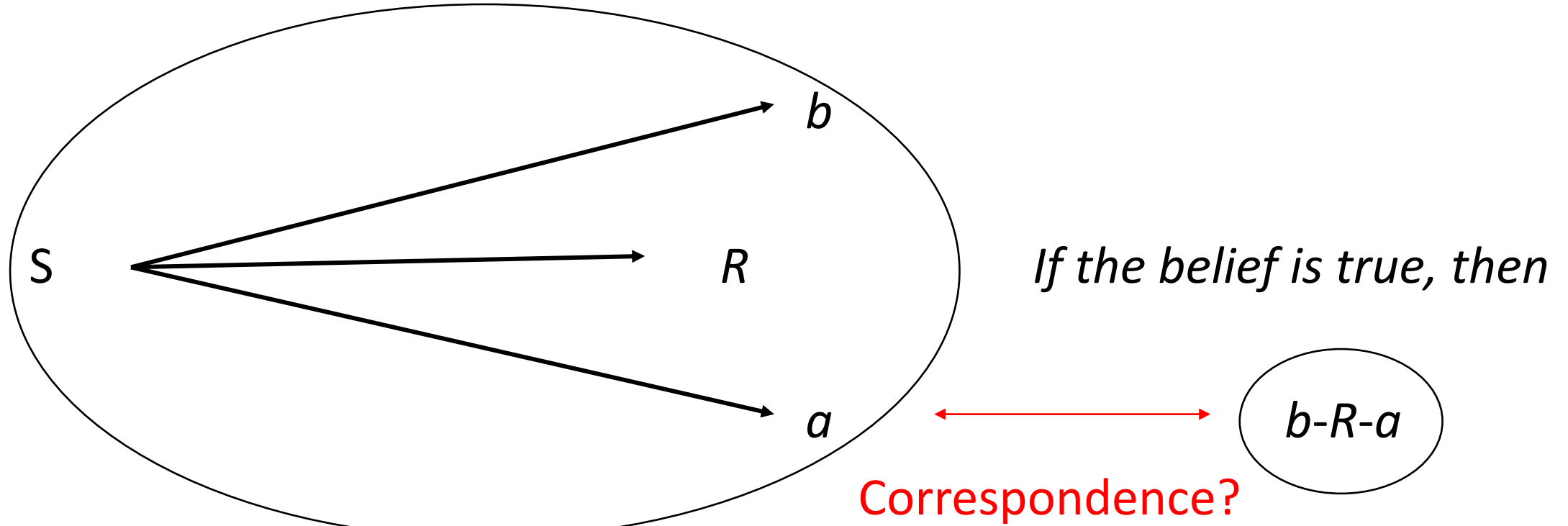


S-belief that bRa

If the belief is true, then



S believes that b is above a



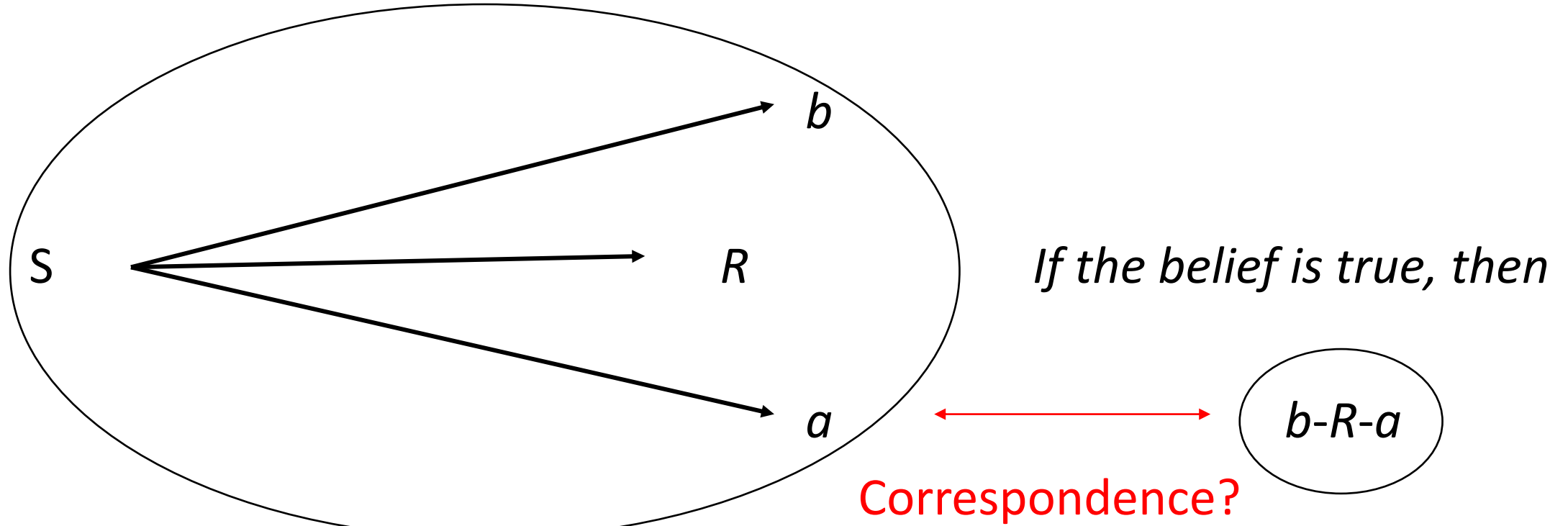
The **correspondence problem**: for any belief, what must be the case for this belief to be true and what must be the case for the belief to be false?

How to analyze the relation between the belief and the fact that makes the belief true?

Pincock: the belief is a sort of **description** of the complex, which uses its constituents to identify the complex.

Pincock 2008, 126: « [Russell] insists that the correspondence relation must be a function defined on the genuine constituents of the belief complex. »

S believes that b is above a



This raises a problem with permutative complex (that is when a permutation of the objects generates a different complex, like with *b* is above *a*)

Pincock 2018, 126: “If the belief complex is atomic and non-permutative, then the correspondence problem is easily solved. This is because there is only one logically possible complex for the constituents of the propositional attitude. So, the belief complex will be true if and only if the description of a complex listing the constituents is satisfied. Problems arise when Russell tackles the truth-conditions of the belief complexes in *prima facie* permutative cases like *S*’s belief that *A* is before *B*.”

How to explain the correspondence between belief and fact,
in the case of permutative complexes?

That is Pincock's correspondence problem.

Pincock 2008: the **correspondence problem** is the really difficult issue.
The **proposition problem** can be solved.

Pincock 2008: the **correspondence problem** is the really difficult issue. The **proposition problem** can be solved.

I am not sure to buy this. And, what is more important, I won't follow Pincock in his analysis of the **correspondence problem**.

I do think that Pincock is right when he says that there is a difficult **correspondence problem**, and that Wittgenstein has seen it.

My talk is an attempt to combine two unrelated discussions in the literature on Russell

1. the discussion of Russell's theory of judgment
- 2. the recent discussion of Russell's conception of acquaintance**

Wishon 2015

The **received view of acquaintance** holds that when a subject is acquainted with a and b , ... he or she cannot fail to determine ... whether a is b .

Evans 1982, 82

Russell himself had an excuse for his espousal (in effect) of the ordered-couple conception of monadic Russellian thoughts, in that he **restricted the objects** of such thinking mainly to items which were conceived to be so fleeting and insubstantial that **it seemed unintelligible to suppose a person might identify the same one twice without knowing it was the same.**

Campbell 2009, 661

Russell's remark about completeness of knowledge should not be read as relating to propositional knowledge of essences; the remark is, rather, his response to the problem of **partial awareness**. The idea is that the colors are such that there is nothing partial about our awareness of them; so we can characterize acquaintance with them fully merely by saying which colors are being encountered. **There are not, on Russell's view, different ways of being acquainted with one and the same color.**

Acquaintance is a dyadic relation between a subject and an object.

The object is **so simple** that

- one cannot **misidentify** it (Evans),
- one cannot **partially grasp** it (Campbell).

Against the received interpretation, Wishon elaborates two arguments:

1. A **particular** one, based on the phenomenal continua case: in a continuum, one can be acquainted with two sense data *a* and *b* (two shades of colour) without being able to distinguish *a* from *b*.
2. A **general** one, based on the distinction between knowledge of things and knowledge of truths: to know that two items are different is knowledge about them; mere acquaintance does not in any way lead to such a knowledge.

The « general » argument introduces a typological distinction between knowledge of thing and knowledge of truth – a distinction that the received view would not take enough account of.

PoP, 186:

Our knowledge of truths, unlike our knowledge of things, has an opposite, namely *error*. So far as things are concerned, we may know them or not know them, but there is no positive state of mind which can be described as erroneous knowledge of things, so long, at any rate, as we confine ourselves to knowledge by acquaintance. ... Thus there is no dualism as regards acquaintance. But as regards knowledge of truths, there is a dualism. We may believe what is false as well as what is true.

I agree with Wishon. I will even add another argument: the acquaintance with complex case is another evidence that the received view is not tenable.

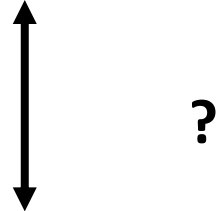
I agree with Wishon. I will even add another argument: the acquaintance with complex case is another evidence that the received view is not tenable.

However, contrary to what Wishon claims, I don't believe that Russell had a consistent view of acquaintance.

The acquaintance with complex case shows that Russell set various constraints on acquaintance that contradict each other.

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Acquaintance with complex

2. the recent discussion of Russell's conception of acquaintance

My talk is an attempt to combine two unrelated discussions in the literature on Russell

1. Pincock's **correspondence problem** comes from Russell's incapacity to articulate complex to belief



Acquaintance with complex

1. Against Evans and Campbell, Russell did consider structured objects of acquaintance

1. Acquaintance with complex as a central issue in Russell's **correspondence problem**
2. Analysis, acquaintance and attention in *Theory of Knowledge*, II, 2
3. Conclusion on Pincock & Wishon

- 1. Acquaintance with complex as a central issue in Russell's correspondence problem**
2. Analysis, acquaintance and attention in *Theory of Knowledge*, II, 2
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Acquaintance with complex occurs in the introduction of PM, when Russell defines the truth of elementary propositions.

This is then not a marginal notion confined to abstruse parts of some Russell's forgotten papers.

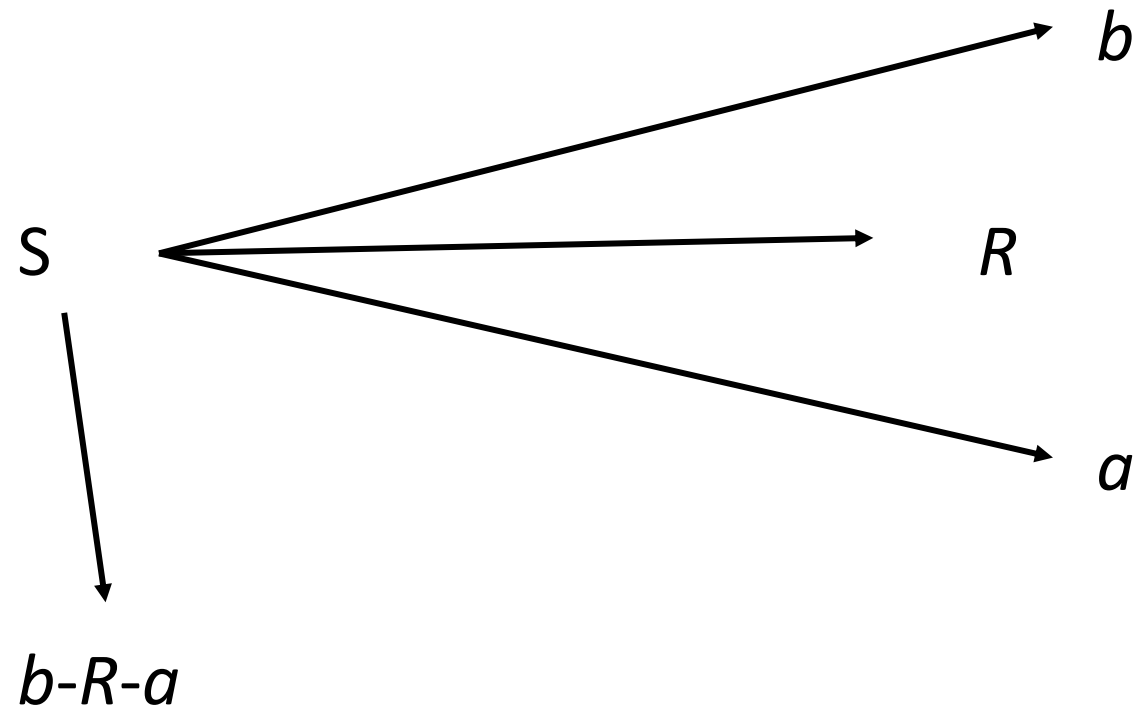
PM, 43

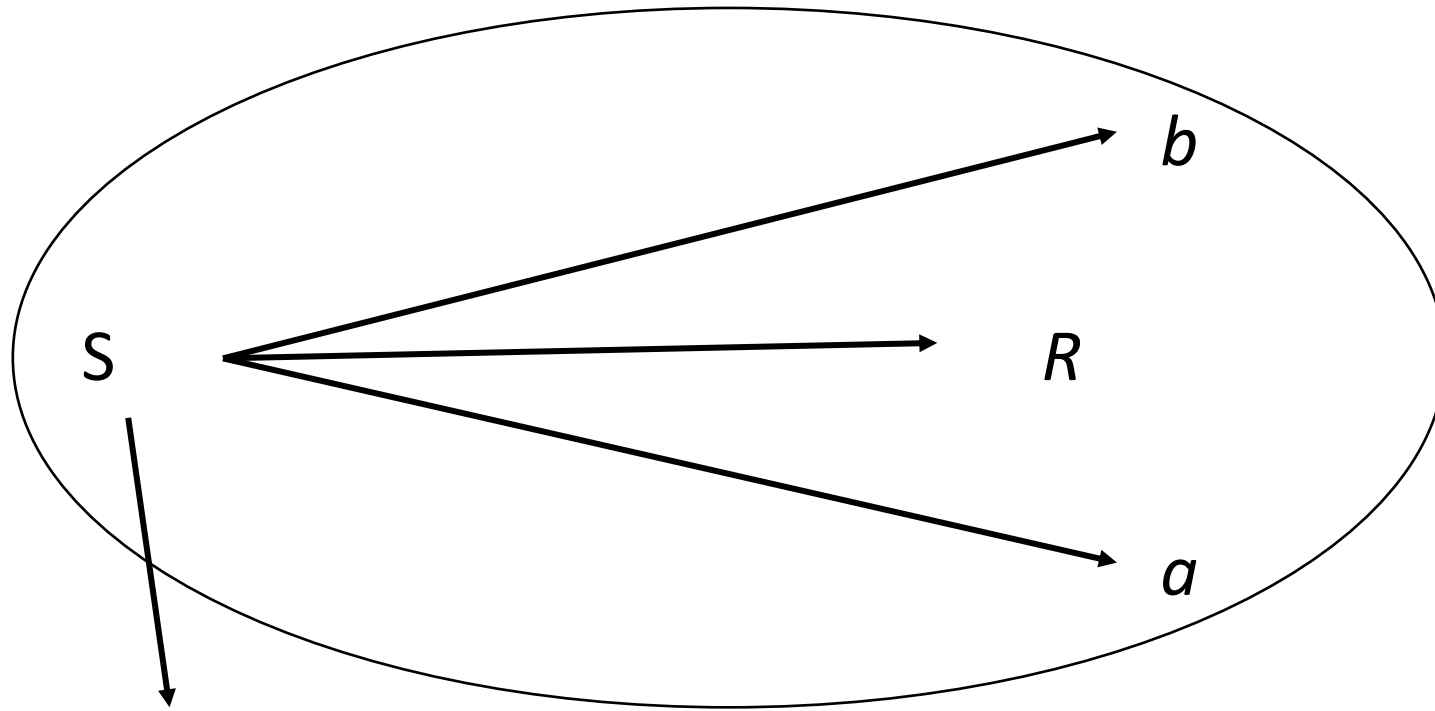
The universe consists of objects having various qualities and standing in various relations. Some of the objects which occur in the universe are complex. When an object is complex, it consists of interrelated parts. Let us consider a complex object composed of two parts a and b standing to each other in the relation R . The complex object " a -in-the-relation- R -to- b " may be capable of being *perceived* ; when perceived, it is perceived as one object. Attention may show that it is complex ; we then *judge* that a and b stand in the relation R . Such a judgment, being derived from perception by mere attention, may be called a "judgment of perception." This judgment of perception, considered as an actual occurrence, is a relation of four terms, namely a and b and R and the percipient. The perception, on the contrary, is a relation of two terms, namely " a -in-the-relation- R -to- b ," and the percipient. Since an object of perception cannot be nothing, we cannot perceive " a -in-the-relation- R -to- b " unless a is in the relation R to b . Hence a judgment of perception, according to the above definition, must be true. This does not mean that, in a judgment which *appears* to us to be one of perception, we are sure of not being in error, since we may err in thinking that our judgment has really been derived merely by analysis of what was perceived. But if our judgment has been so derived, it must be true. In fact, **we may define *truth*, where such judgments are concerned, as consisting in the fact that there is a complex *corresponding* to the discursive thought which is the judgment.** That is, when we judge " a has the relation R to b " our judgment is said to be *true* when there is a complex " a -in-the-relation- R -to- b ," and is said to be *false* when this is not the case. This is a definition of truth and falsehood in relation to judgments of this kind.

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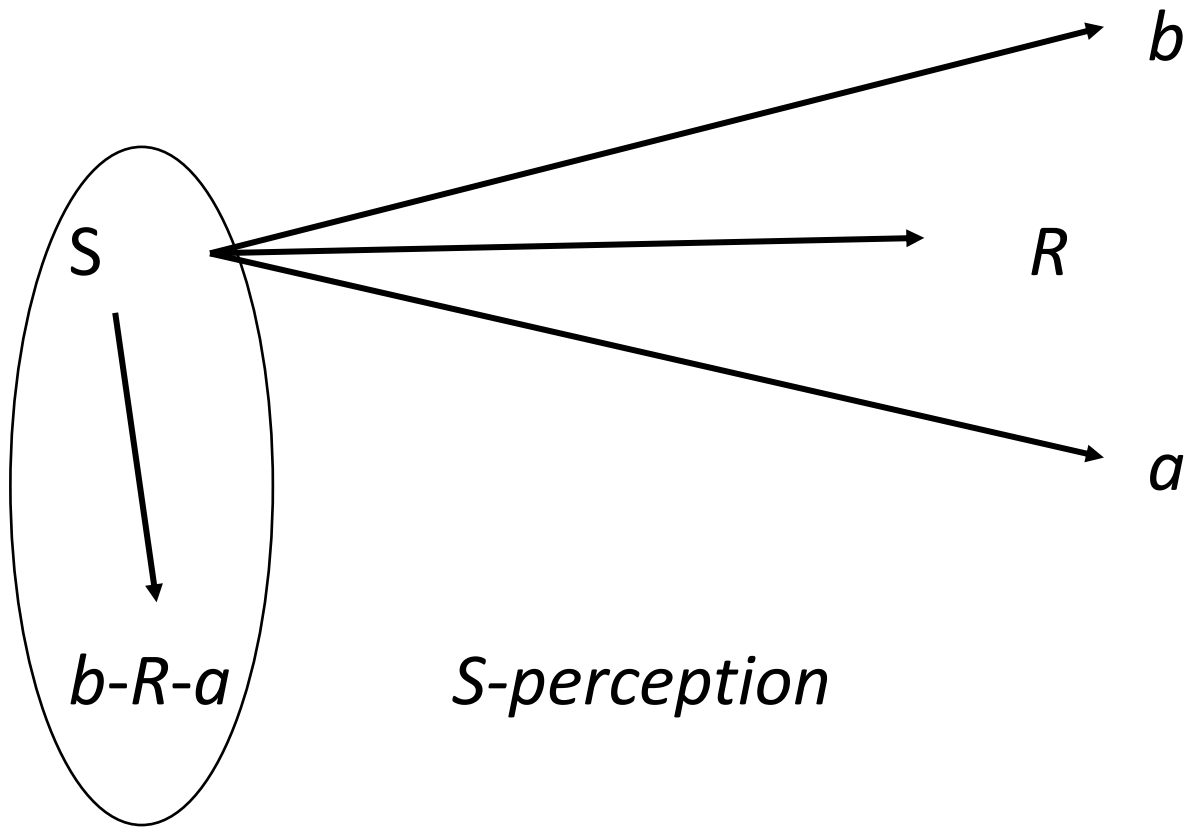
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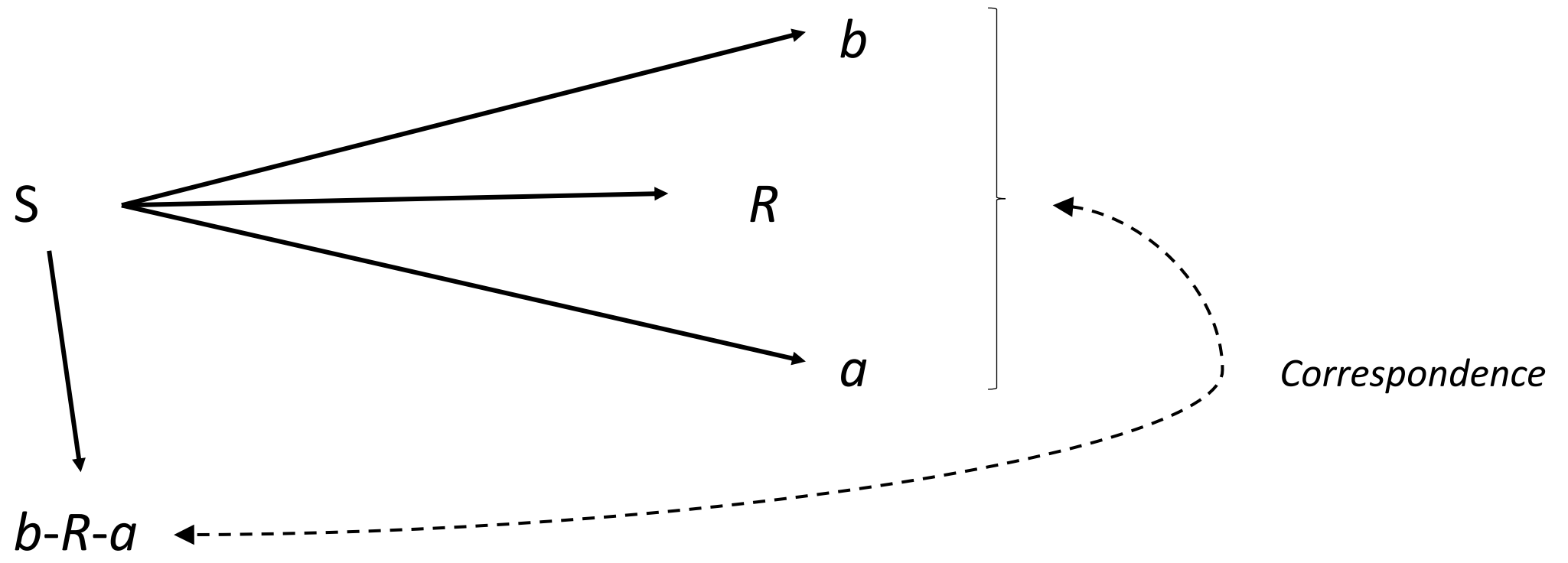




S-belief

$b-R-a$



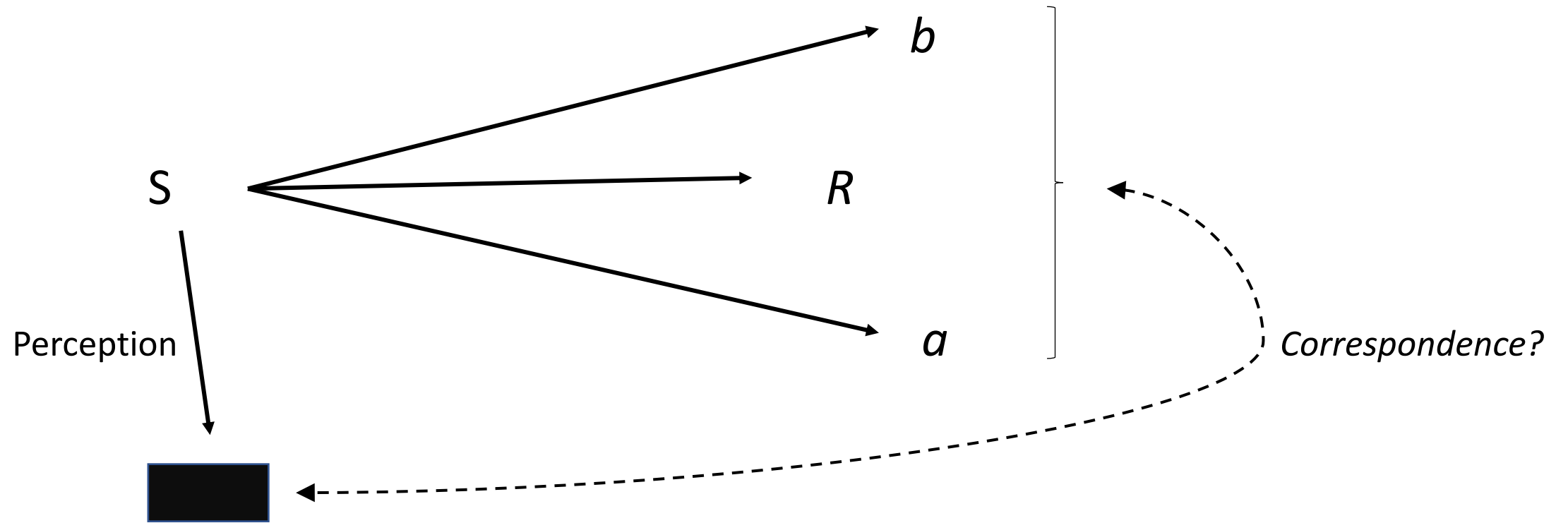


“when perceived, [b-R-a] is perceived as one object”

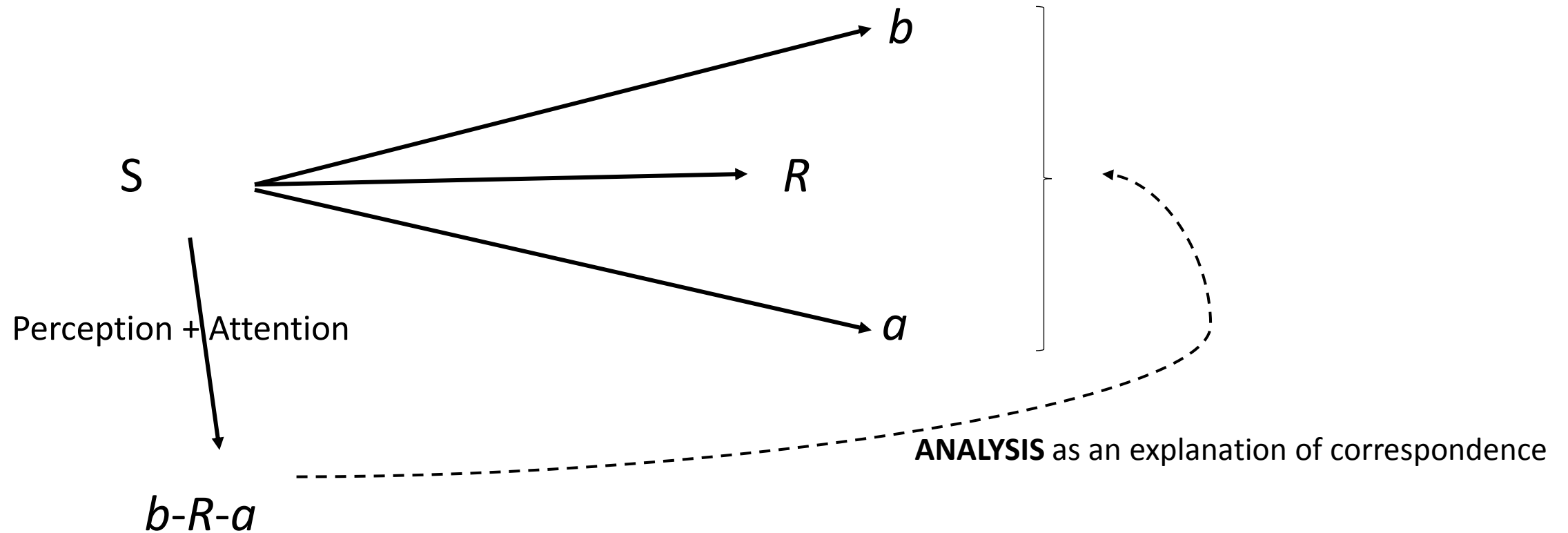
S



“when perceived, [b-R-a] is perceived as one object”



“Attention may show that [b-R-a] is complex”; “we may err in thinking that our judgment has really been derived merely by analysis of what was perceived”



Pincock's **correspondence problem**?

Not exactly. The PM **correspondence problem** is both more general and more particular than Pincock's one.

- **More general:** it applies to permutative and non-permutative complex alike. The issue is how to articulate the perception of a complex as one object to its decomposition in different constituents.
- **More particular:** the **PM correspondence problem** is not defined in logical terms (to define a function from belief to complex), but in epistemological terms (to articulate judgment and perception).

1. Acquaintance with complex as a central issue in Russell's correspondence problem

2. Analysis, acquaintance and attention in *Theory of Knowledge*, II, 2

3. Conclusion on Pincock & Wishon

Theory of Knowledge, II, 2 (1913)

Part II is the unfinished part of the ms. The section 2 is a very exploratory and tentative text. I do not pretend to have a full understanding of it.

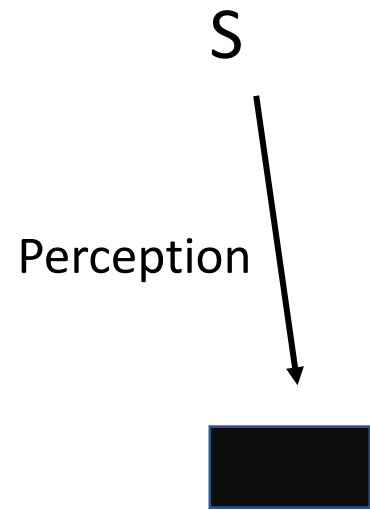
Theory of Knowledge, II, 2 (1913):

Is it possible to be acquainted with a complex without being acquainted with its constituents?

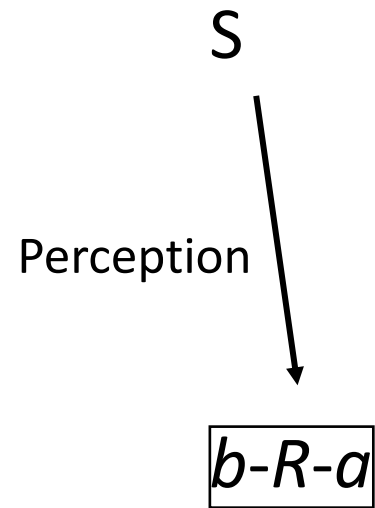
Is it possible to be acquainted with a complex without being acquainted with its constituents?

If **YES**: how to account for the correspondence? How to account for the process of analysis?

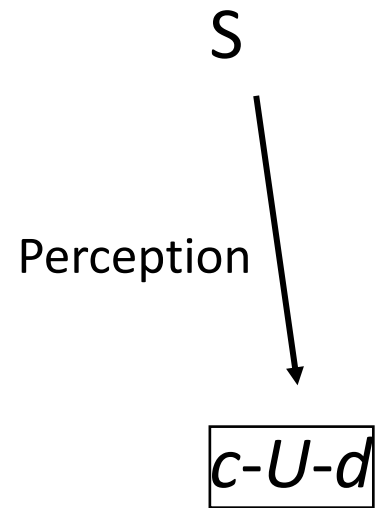
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Is it possible to be acquainted with a complex without being acquainted with its constituents?

If **NO**: how to account for the fact that acquaintance is a dyadic relation? How to account for the fact that the object of acquaintance is one object?

Evans' & Campbell's problem again: the complex has too much structure for being an object of acquaintance

Evans' & Campbell's problem again

b-R-a

Evans' & Campbell's problem again

b-R-a

Evans' & Campbell's problem again

b-R-a

Is it possible to be acquainted with a complex without being acquainted with its constituents?

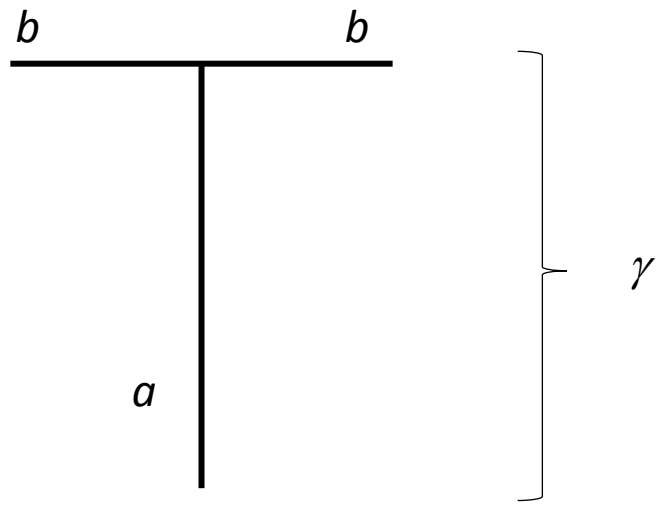
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Is it possible to be acquainted with a complex without being acquainted with its constituents?

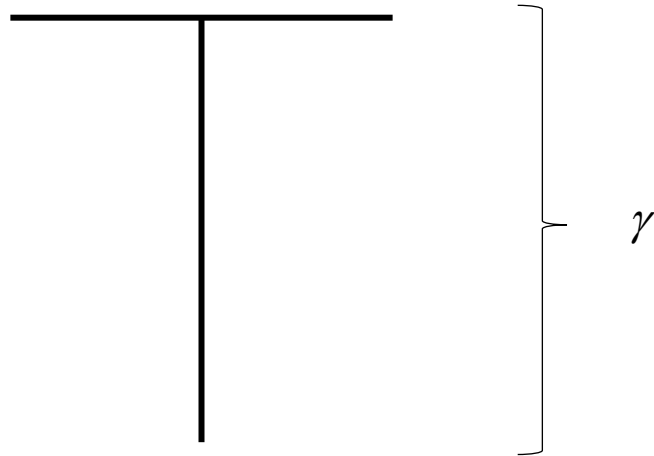
In *ThK* II, 2, Russell maintains that one can be acquainted with a complex **without being acquainted with its constituents** (he sticks to the **received** view about acquaintance), but at the same time, he seeks to explain the correspondence.

And this is a source of important tensions.



To analyze γ , it is **necessary**, but not **sufficient** to have acquaintance with a and b , or to attend to a and b .
Indeed, it is possible to attend to γ , a and b , without realizing that a and b are part of γ .

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b

To analyze γ , it is necessary, but not sufficient to have acquaintance with a and b , or to **attend** to a and b . Indeed, it is possible to attend to γ , a and b , without realizing that a and b are part of γ .

a

A vertical black line is drawn. To its left, the lowercase letter 'a' is positioned at the midpoint of the line's vertical extent.

To analyze γ , **attention does not suffice** (attention is just **acquaintance** with a constituent of a complex).

To analyze γ , **one needs to realize that α is a part of γ .**

To analyze γ , one needs to realize that α is a part of γ .

HOW?

To analyze γ , one needs to realize that a is a part of γ .

HOW?

ThK, 124: « here we come upon a difficulty. Do we first reach the judgment « a is part of γ », or do we first become acquainted with the complex « a -part-of- γ », and thence arrive at the judgment « a is part of γ » ? »

Solution 1.

« we first reach the judgment ' a is part of γ ' ».

That does not work: «the view that we begin with the judgment, without first perceiving the complex ' a is part of γ ', leaves it inexplicable how we come to know the judgment, which is certainly not obtained by inference from any other judgment. »

Solution 2.

« we first become acquainted with the complex ' a -part-of- γ ' ».

That begs the question: « if we first perceive the complex ' a -part-of- γ ', it would seem as though the very process of analysis which we are endeavouring to explain must be performed in order to pass from this to the explicit judgment ' a is part of γ '; thus this judgment, which was to be merely one step in the process of analysis, will itself involve. »

To analyze γ , one needs to realize that α is a part of γ .

HOW?

Russell's proposal: to distinguish a **new cognitive relation**, called **complex perception**, which occupies a middle position between simple perception and judgment.

Simple perception = acquaintance with one object (perception as a dyadic relation)

Judgment = multiple relations with various constituents / duality between truth and falsity.

Simple perception = acquaintance with one object (perception as a dyadic relation)

Complex perception = multiple relation with the whole and its parts / no duality between truth and falsity.

Judgment = multiple relations with various constituents / duality between truth and falsity.

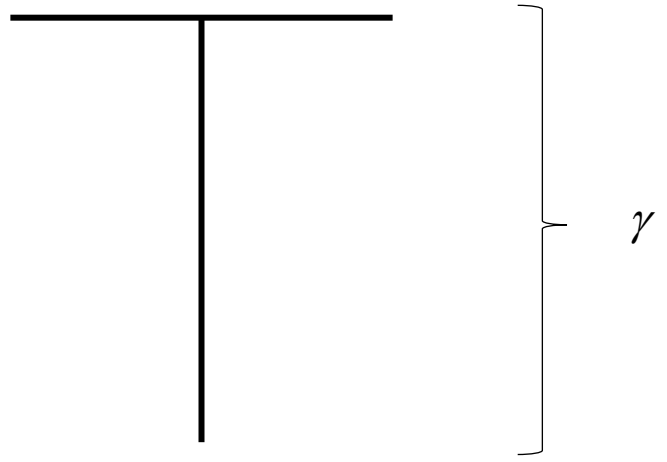
ThK 125

The difference between simple and complex perception seems to depend upon the number of objects of attention simultaneously present.... When we have analyzed our T into a vertical and a horizontal stroke, we shall have two objects of attention, namely the two strokes, where before we had only one, namely the T. We may therefore suggest that *complex perception consists in acquaintance with a whole combined with attention to its parts*. It will be natural to say, conversely, that simple perception of a complex consists in attention to the whole combined with acquaintance with its parts. If this is the case, the problem of analysis is merely the problem of transferring attention from the whole to the parts.

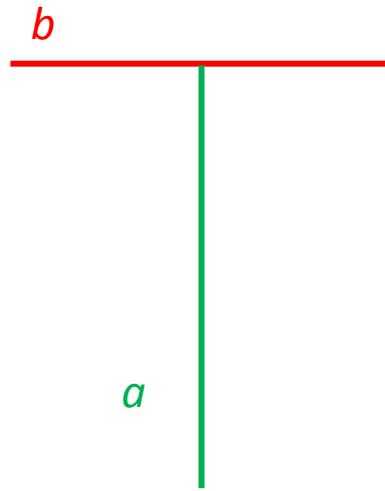
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SIMPLE PERCEPTION OF γ



COMPLEX PERCEPTION OF γ



- T as an object of a simple perception: γ

- T as the truth-maker of a judgment: that b has the relation R to a

- T as an object of a simple perception (acquaintance): γ
- T as an object of a complex perception: ***b-R-a***
- T as the truth-maker of a judgment: that *b* has the relation *R* to *a*

- T as an object of a simple perception: γ



Is γ identical to $b-R-a$? How do we know this?

- T as an object of a complex perception: $b-R-a$
- T as the truth-maker of a judgment: that b has the relation R to a

ThK 125

How shall we know that γ , the object of simple perception, is identical with $a-R-b$, the object of complex perception?

----> Recall that one can be acquainted with γ , without being acquainted neither with a nor with b

- T as an object of a simple perception: γ

- T as an object of a complex perception: $b-R-a$



How can $b-R-a$ make bRa true?

- T as the truth-maker of a judgment: that b has the relation R to a

ThK 126

Complex perception must involve some consciousness of the relatedness of the two objects. In the complex perception of our T, in which we attend to the two strokes, we are acquainted with their spatial relatedness, though we may not be attending to it. But here the very problem we set out to solve meets us again, not one step advanced towards solution. **What is the consciousness of the relatedness of two terms?**

Russell seems to waver between two positions, equally unsatisfying:

- The relation which one is acquainted with in the complex perception is not a relating relation. This opens a unbridgeable gulf between complex perception and judgement.
- The relation which one is acquainted with in the complex perception is a relating relation. This paves the way for an identification between complex perception and judgment.

1. Acquaintance with complex as a central issue in Russell's correspondence problem
2. Analysis, acquaintance and attention in *Theory of Knowledge*, II, 2
- 3. Conclusion on Pincock & Wishon**

To recap:

1. The literature on Russell's theory of judgment -----> Pincock
2. The recent literature on Russell's acquaintance -----> Wishon

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- Acquaintance with a complex is a central issue for Russell, more important than the phenomenal continua case. Witness the discussion about elementary truth.

- Acquaintance with a complex is a central issue for Russell, more important than the phenomenal continua case. Witness the discussion about elementary truth.
- Russell's discussion about this case supports Wishon's claim: one can have an acquaintance with a complex γ without knowing whether or not it is identical or not with another complex $b-R-a$

- Acquaintance with a complex is a central issue for Russell, more important than the phenomenal continua case. Witness the discussion about elementary truth.
- Russell's discussion about this case supports Wishon's claim: one can have an acquaintance with a complex γ without knowing whether or not it is identical or not with another complex $b-R-a$
- But this case also shows that, contrary to what Wishon claims, Russell is not happy with the result.

- Evans & Bergman are wrong: acquaintance with complexes shows that, in Russell, an object of acquaintance can be endowed with a structure.
- Evans & Bergman are right: this situation does create difficulties for Russell.

To recap:

- 1. The literature on Russell's theory of judgment -----> Pincock**
2. The recent literature on Russell's acquaintance -----> Wishon

Pincock is right to distinguish the **proposition problem** and the **correspondence problem**. But he does not describe the latter in a sufficiently general way. He separates too sharply the logical and the epistemological issue.

Pincock is right to distinguish the **proposition problem** and the **correspondence problem**. But he did not describe the latter in a sufficiently general way. He separates too sharply the logical and the epistemological issue.

My suggestion is that the **correspondence problem** is the direct consequence of the 1906 move (the distinction between prop and object), which makes Russell go into an unstable situation.

The new correspondence theory of truth requires a violation of the typological difference between acquaintance and judgement that has just been introduced.

The 1906 move is a key event in Russell's intellectual biography.

The 1906 move is a key event in Russell's intellectual biography. It provides the common framework to discuss:

- Russell's theory of judgment
- Russell's view of acquaintance

The two issues must be connected -- and the importance of the 1906-move must be reassessed (I take it to be perhaps more important than Russell's 1905 theory of description).

It seems to me that Wittgenstein's distinction between object and fact is a way to secure Russell's distinction between proposition and object (to achieve Russell's 1906 move).

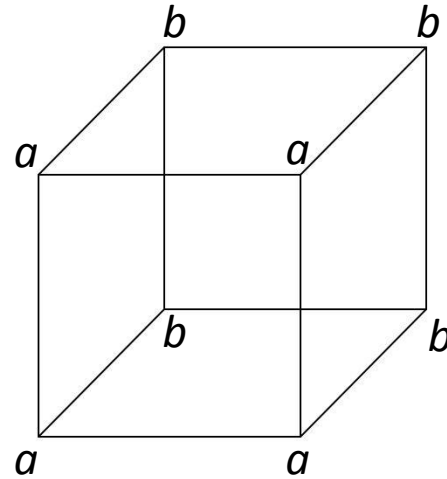
5. 5422: The correct explanation of the form of the proposition A judges p must show that it is impossible to judge a nonsense (Russell's theory does not satisfy this condition)

----> Pincock's **proposition problem**

5. 5423: To perceive a complex means to perceive that its constituents are combined in such and such a way.

----> Pincock's **correspondence problem**

5. 5423: To perceive a complex means to perceive that its constituents are combined in such and such a way. This perhaps explain that the figure



can be seen in two ways as a cube; and all similar phenomena. For we really see two different facts. (If I fix my eyes first on the corners a and only glance at b , a appears in front and b behind, and vice versa.)

Wittgenstein's cube against Russell's T

For Wittgenstein, perception is not a dyadic relation. One perceives that something is the case.

Necker's cube is a non-permutative complex; however, it gives rise to two different facts (this shows that the **correspondence problem** applies even to non-permutative complex).

PM, 43-44

That is to say, the relation which constitutes judgment is not a relation of two terms, namely the judging mind and the proposition, but is a relation of several terms, namely the mind and what are called the constituents of the proposition. That is, when we judge (say) “this is red,” what occurs is a relation of three terms, the mind, and “this,” and red. On the other hand, when we *perceive* “the redness of this,” there is a relation of two terms, namely the mind and the complex object “the redness of this.” When a judgment occurs, there is a certain complex entity, composed of the mind and the various objects of the judgment. When the judgment is *true*, in the case of the kind of judgments we have been considering, there is a corresponding complex of the *objects* of the judgment alone. Falsehood, in regard to our present class of judgments, consists in the absence of a corresponding complex composed of the objects alone.