

Trinity 2007

Professor Robert Stalnaker (MIT) *Our Knowledge of the Internal World*

Lecture Five (Wednesday 30th May): *Acquaintance and essence*

Russell held that we must be *acquainted* with the constituents of the contents of our thoughts, and remnants of this doctrine persist in the work of a number of more recent philosophers. Our knowledge of our own phenomenal experience is supposed to be a paradigm of acquaintance, but acquaintance is sometimes explained in a way that implies that it involves knowledge of the essential nature of a thing or property. In the fifth lecture, I will explore some tensions in the notion of acquaintance, focusing on some conflicting assumptions that David Lewis makes about our knowledge of phenomenal experience, and about the foundational role of phenomenal experience in grounding knowledge more generally.