

4

MEMORY AND TRUTH

Sven Bernecker

Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of philosophical theories of memory: traditional archival views and contemporary constructive views.¹ The *archival view* claims that memory is a purely passive device for registering, storing and reproducing representations of particular past experiences. On this picture, a subject misremembers whenever the content of her state of seeming to remember differs from the content of the corresponding original representation. Given that memory aims at preservation of content, any discrepancy between the encoded and the retrieved content is taken to be a mistake. Hume, for instance, declares that “memory preserves the original form, in which its objects were presented, and that wherever we depart from it in recollecting anything, it proceeds from some defect or imperfection in that faculty” (2000: 12). The archival view is still very much with us today; it is a tacit assumption behind the widespread storehouse metaphors of memory.

Proponents of *constructivism* argue that the archival view is at odds with what science tells us about the workings of memory. Retrieval is said to be almost always more a process of construction than one of simple retrieval. The fact that our everyday memory frequently changes the encoded information should not be regarded as an abnormal lapse of an otherwise reliable cognitive faculty, but as part of the very function of memory. According to constructivism, all attempts at remembering—whether or not the encoded content is preserved—stem from a single, adaptive process whose function it is to construct ‘accurate’ representations at the time of recall. The ‘accuracy’ criteria have to do with the role that memory is said to play in regulating expectations, steering future planning and action, and establishing social cohesion by generating self-narratives. Among the philosophers who promote constructivism about memory are De-Brigard (2014), Michaelian (2016), and Sutton (2007).

Whether memory is said to imply truth and what is meant by the notion of ‘truth in memory’ crucially depends on which of these camps one belongs to. In what follows, I will steer a middle course between the archival view, on the one hand, and constructivism, on the other. I do not go as far as some constructivists in claiming that remembering *never* involves attempting to get at, and establish the truth about what happened in the past faithfully. But I also distance myself from the archival theorist’s claim that it is the function of human memory to produce *exact* copies of past representations. According to the position sketched in this chapter, memory is supposed to provide us with knowledge of the past but it also has the function of editing the encoded information.

The first section explains and motivates the truth condition on memory. The second section discusses positions whereupon memory reports need not be completely true but only true to a degree. The third section explores the authenticity condition on memory. A memory report is authentic if it correctly represents the subject's initial representation of reality, regardless of whether the initial representation was veridical. The fourth and final section deals with the question of how we assess whether someone's recollection of an event accurately depicts the event or his initial representation of the event.

1. The truth condition

Though talk of 'false memory' is familiar enough, it is an oxymoron. 'To remember' is factive in the sense that an utterance of "S remembers that p" (where 'S' stands for a subject and 'p' stands for a proposition) is true only if p is the case. If not-p, then S may think she remembers that p (she may be in a state of seeming to remember that p), but she doesn't actually remember that p. And it is not only propositional memory that implies truth. Memory of persons, objects, events and properties is also factive. I cannot remember a person, say, John F. Kennedy or an event, say, his being assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald unless there was a person called 'John F. Kennedy' who was assassinated by a person called 'Lee Harvey Oswald.' And habit memory (remembering how), though it does not imply truth, implies something similar, namely success under certain counterfactual circumstances. (Hawley 2003). For instance, remembering how to play Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 21 requires that I would succeed in playing the concerto if I were to try under certain circumstances.

Hazlett (2010) has recently challenged the orthodox view among philosophers that the verb 'to know' is factive. He cites a few cases in which 'know' is used non-factively but which do not strike most people as deviant, improper, unacceptable, or necessarily false. One such case is "Everyone knew that stress caused ulcers, before two Australian doctors in the early [19]80s proved that ulcers are actually caused by bacterial infection" (Hazlett 2010: 501). An analogous case for the verb 'to remember' is "Thales remembered that the earth was flat when he set sail towards Sicily." Hazlett argues that the best explanation for why non-factive usages of allegedly factive verbs seem acceptable is that these verbs are non-factive.

It is debatable whether Hazlett's argument for the non-factivity of 'know' and 'remember' is in fact the best available explanation. There are alternative explanations for why non-factive usages of 'know' ('remember') do not strike us as odd, explanations that do not challenge the factivity of 'know' ('remember'). Consider again the statement "Everyone knew that stress caused ulcers, before two Australian doctors in the early [19]80s proved that ulcers are actually caused by bacterial infection." If it literally means *everyone*, then the statement is clearly false. What is meant is that *some* people knew. But these people knew, at best, that stress caused *some* ulcers, not *all* ulcers. Next consider "Two Australian doctors proved that ulcers are caused by bacterial infection." Again, these doctors only proved that bacterial infection causes *some* ulcers. What the statement means is therefore something like this: "Some people knew that stress caused some ulcers, before two Australian doctors proved that bacterial infection causes some ulcers." But note that we can understand this statement as true without challenging the factivity of 'know.' It could be that stress and bacterial infection cause different kinds of ulcers. Another possibility is that stress causes bacterial infections which, in turn, cause ulcers. The upshot is that non-factive usages of 'know' that strike us as appropriate occur in loose talk and overstatements.²

The truth condition of memory can be motivated in two ways. One argument makes use of the fact that statements of the form "I remember that p; but p is false" and "I remember such-and-such; but such-and-such never happened" have a paradoxical ring to them. These

statements are in the same way paradoxical as G.E. Moore's famous statement "It is raining; but I don't believe that it is raining." Though not literally contradictory, none of these statements can be used to make a coherent assertion.

The crux with using Moore's paradox to motivate the truth condition of memory is that the paradoxical nature of the statement "I remember that p; but p is false" can be explained without challenging the thesis that memory implies truth. Consider the following explanation: When I claim to remember that p, I am convinced that p is the case. This is what the first part of the statement "I remember that p; but p is false" expresses. Yet the second part of the statement denies that p is the case. Thus the reason "I remember that p; but p is false" need not be that one cannot remember that p without p being the case. Instead, the incoherence of the statement may be due to the fact that one cannot *claim* to remember that p while *daiming* that p is false. And given that the conditions for claiming to remember that p are distinct from the conditions for remembering that p, it does not follow that memory implies truth just because claiming to remember that p implies the truth of p.

Another argument for the truth condition of memory is based on syntactical considerations. Both factive and non-factive propositional verbs can take that-clause complements (e.g., "S remembers/believes that Kennedy was shot by Oswald"), but the that-clauses following factive verbs are different from those following non-factive verbs. Only the that-clauses following factive verbs can be transformed into wh-nominals, i.e., clauses beginning with 'who,' 'whom,' 'what,' 'where,' 'when,' and 'why' (Vendler 1972: 93-9; 1980: 280-2). We can say "S remembers who shot Kennedy," "S remembers who Oswald shot," "S remembers why Oswald shot Kennedy," "S remembers where Oswald shot Kennedy," "S remembers what Oswald did to Kennedy," and "S remembers when Oswald shot Kennedy." But we cannot say "S believes who shot Kennedy," "S believes who Oswald shot," "S believes why Oswald shot Kennedy," "S believes where Oswald shot Kennedy," "S believes when Oswald shot Kennedy."³

Given that memories are necessarily true, they are not transparent from a first-person perspective. I cannot tell, on the basis of reflection, whether the proposition I ostensibly remember is in fact true. But if I cannot know this, then I cannot tell, by reflection alone, whether the activity I am currently engaged in qualifies as remembering or whether it is an instance of, say, confabulating. The same applies to other factive verbs such as 'know' and 'see.' I may be mistaken in thinking that I know something which is in fact false and cannot be known. Or I may be mistaken in thinking that I see something which isn't there. I will return to this topic in Section 4.

Since errors regarding the self-attribution of memories may be irremediable by introspection, there are four possible reasons for why a claim to remember a past factive attitude may be incorrect. Suppose I claim to remember having seen that the cat is on the mat. First, I may have taken, say, a dog for a cat. Here it is the past perception, not the memory which is to blame. Second, I may misremember what it is that I saw in the past. Here, the fault lies with the memory, not the past perception. Third, both kinds of mistakes can be combined. Suppose I ostensibly remember having seen a cat on the mat, but what I took myself to be seeing, at that time, was a dog and the perception was false for there was no dog but, say, a squirrel. Here, the fault lies both with the memory and the perception. Fourth, the perceptual mistake and the memory mistake can balance each other out. Suppose I claim to remember having seen a cat on the mat, but what I took myself to be seeing, at that time, was a dog, and the perception was false for it was in fact a cat that I saw. In this case, though the memory report is veridical, it doesn't qualify as a genuine memory because the causal condition of memory is not satisfied. The upshot is that one can misremember something not only because one's memory malfunctions but also because the representation fed into the memory process is false.

While most philosophers maintain that the content emerging from the memory process must be veridical, there is no consensus as to whether the content fed into the memory process must be veridical as well. Anscombe (1981: 105–6) claims that memory requires present *and* past truth. Von Leyden (1961: 62), on the other hand, seems to hold that present truth is sufficient. Memory, he claims, allows for “the inheritance of a mistake” but is incompatible with “a mistake of inheritance.”

In my view, for a representation to qualify as memory, it must track what one took to be true. A memory must authentically report a subject’s past representation, but the past representation need not have been true at the time it was entertained. Memory demands a present truth-condition but not a past truth-condition. Elsewhere (2010: 38–9, 74) I have argued that the authentic reproduction of a proposition that was false at the time it was initially entertained but which, in the meantime, has become true due to good fortune may qualify as memory. Even if the content of one’s past representation, p^* , was false, one’s present representation that p qualifies as a memory provided the following conditions hold: (i) p is true, and (ii) one would not represent that p in the present unless one had represented that p^* in the past.

2. Standards of truth

As was mentioned above, there are two schools of thought in philosophy regarding the importance of representational fidelity for remembering. According to the traditional archival view, remembering demands that the content of the present representation be the same as that of the past representation. Constructivists, on the other hand, maintain that memory is not primarily about reproducing the contents of previous experiences. That is why remembering is said to allow for (minor) distortions and errors. Bernstein and Loftus express the constructivist position when they write:

All memory is false to some degree. Memory is inherently a reconstructive process, whereby we piece together the past to form a coherent narrative that becomes our autobiography. In the process of reconstructing the past, we color and shape our life’s experiences based on what we know about the world.⁴

(Bernstein and Loftus 2009: 373)

Other scientists go one step further by claiming that truth is irrelevant for memory. Klein, for example, writes:

there is no principled reason for episodic recollection to adhere to any particular degree of fidelity to the past; all that matters, from a functional perspective, is that the information supplied is beneficial to the adaptive challenges faced by the organism . . . Environmental regularities and the demands of reality place limits on which anticipatory behaviors will work, how well they will work, and which will fail. Nonetheless, within the (sometimes fairly broad) constraints imposed by reality, the memory content served up to consciousness need not entail ‘precision of match’ to past events as a criterion of success.

(Klein 2014: 438–9)

The views discussed so far represent two poles on a continuum of philosophical positions. Instead of claiming that truth is either *indispensable* or *irrelevant* for memory, some argue for a position in the middle whereby memories must be true to a degree. Hamilton (1998: 283),

for instance, distinguishes between memories that are *false in detail* and those that are *completely false*: in the former, we transpose or condense experiences or elements of past experiences, whereas the latter fail to match past experience entirely. According to Hamilton, memories may be false in detail but they may not be completely false. A related distinction is that between *memory for gist* and *memory for details* (see Koriat et al. 2000: 291–3). The idea is, once again, that memories can be true without being perfectly accurate or verbatim records of past events.

A real-life example of memory for gist are John Dean's recollections of conversations with U.S. President Nixon in the context of the Watergate scandal. When John Dean, Counsel to Nixon, testified against Nixon before the Senate's Watergate Committee, he was unaware that the conversations he had with Nixon in September 1972 had been tape-recorded. In his testimony, Dean provided an incredibly detailed account of these conversations. When this testimony was compared with the tape recordings, members of the hearing committee concluded that Dean had told the truth despite the fact that almost all of his memories for details were false. In his study of Dean's memories, the psychologist Neisser (1981) identified three standards of truth which can be imposed on memories: (i) accurately reproducing the details of a conversation, (ii) distorting the details but retaining the gist or overall meaning, and (iii) distorting both details and gist, but remaining faithful to the overall theme or 'narrative truth' of the events.

Temporally displaced memories (the reported event really happened, but not when the subject claims it happened) and source monitoring errors are further examples of memories that are partially false. Source monitoring errors occur when a subject confuses what she experienced first-hand with what she has learned via testimony from another source. A real-life example of this type of partially correct memory is provided by Crombag and colleagues' (1996) study. Crombag studied the memories of one hundred Amsterdam residents of El Al Flight 1862, a Boeing 747 cargo aircraft, crashing into an apartment building in Amsterdam in 1992. Even though no one had filmed the crash, the researchers found that 66 percent of the witnesses said they saw the plane crash on TV. It would appear that the Amsterdam residents pieced together what they had heard about the crash from different sources to construct an image of the crash, and then accepted the suggestion that they had watched it on TV.

Sometimes our memory reports are basically accurate as to observable facts about the world while they are mistaken because of their bizarre interpretation of those facts. Schechtman (1996: 126) provides the following example: someone who constantly sees in clearly innocent actions and gestures evidence of a sinister conspiracy directed against him gives the following memory report: "Yesterday, while shopping, there was a group of men in black suits watching me and taking notes. This is no coincidence; the CIA is once again after me." Provided the paranoiac is not suffering from hallucinations, the observable facts mentioned in his memory report—men in black suits watched him and took notes—are correct. It is just the interpretation of these facts which is absurd. The men were not CIA agents but market researchers counting the number of shoppers. This seems to be yet another example of a memory report that is partially correct.⁵

Memory errors can be grouped into two categories: errors from omission and errors from commission. Omissions are forgetting errors. Commissions involve distorted or unwanted recollections and are commonly labeled *false memories*.⁶ Some memory disorders (e.g., Alzheimer's disease) mainly affect the amount of correct information (or percentage of the input) reproduced while other memory disorders (e.g., Korsakoff syndrome) primarily diminish the accuracy of the reported information by inserting fictitious elements into the recall. Whether a report is classified as a genuine memory depends on the underlying assessment of accuracy: whether one counts the absolute number of errors in the reported information or whether one looks at the proportion of erroneous and confabulated statements that is indexed. Presumably the choice between these standards of truth is not arbitrary but depends on the social context.

In a forensic setting, for instance, it is usually the absolute number of errors reported rather than the accuracy rate (regardless of the absolute number of errors and confabulations) that is crucial. Yet in a clinical setting, it may be the accuracy rate that is more important than the absolute number of errors.

3. The authenticity constraint

So far the accuracy of memory has been understood as consisting in the correspondence of the memory report with the objective reality. This is not the only conception of memorial accuracy. An alternative approach is to say that a memory is accurate if it accords with the subject's initial perception of reality, whether or not the initial perception was veridical. On the former (external) conception, memorial accuracy has a mind-to-world direction of fit; on the latter (internal) conception, it has a mind-in-the-present-to-mind-in-the-past. The idea is that we cannot ask more out of memory than that recollections reflect the person's original perspective; otherwise we confuse errors in perception with errors in memory. Odell (1971) illustrates the internal conception of memorial accuracy by imagining that he teaches a child the false statement that Columbus discovered America in 1392. When asked to remember when Columbus discovered America, the child answers '1392.' "What does [the child] remember? He remembers what I told him. What did I tell him? That Columbus discovered America in 1392. So it follows that he remembers that p."⁷ In Odell's mind, cases like this one suggest that one can remember a falsehood.

I use the term *authenticity* to refer to the accuracy of the present rendition of a past representation (true and false) by means of a memory judgment. The *truth* of a memory report, on the other hand, has to do with the memory content correctly representing the objective reality. Sometimes these two accuracy standards are played off against one another. In my view, a memory report must accurately represent the objective reality *and* resemble the subject's initial perception. Just as the faithful rendering of a false proposition does not qualify as memory, neither does the distorted rendering of a true proposition. Memories must be both veridical and authentic.

What are the conditions on the authentic rendering of a past representation? According to the archival view, the mark of memorial authenticity is content *identity*: for a present representation to be memory-related to a past representation, the contents of both representational states must be type-identical.⁸ *Constructivists*, on the other hand, hold that a memory report need not amount to an exact reproduction of some previously encoded content. The contents of the past representation and of the present rendition need to be only sufficiently similar. But what is the permissible range of aberration between the content of a past representation and the memory content thereof? What is the margin of error regarding content reproduction? What, in other words, are the bounds of authenticity with respect to remembering?

In (2010: 222–9), I develop an account of memorial authenticity for propositional memory. The basic idea is that the content of a propositional attitude retrieved from non-inferential memory may be informationally impoverished vis-à-vis the content of the propositional attitude fed into the memory system. Non-inferential memory allows for the decrease, but not the increase or enrichment of information. The content of a non-inferential memory must be a relevant entailment of the original content.⁹ The entailment thesis can be illustrated by this example. On Monday morning you have scrambled eggs for breakfast. On Tuesday all you can remember is that you had eggs for breakfast; you have forgotten how the eggs were prepared. Notwithstanding the fact that *I had eggs for breakfast* and *I had scrambled eggs for breakfast* are different propositions, it is natural to suppose that the former belief is memory-related to the latter

one—provided, of course, the other memory conditions are met. The reason, I reckon, the discrepancy between the two content tokens does not and should not prevent us from granting propositional memory is that the proposition *I had eggs for breakfast* is entailed by the proposition *I had scrambled eggs for breakfast*.

While non-inferential memory allows only for the decrease of information, inferential memory also allows for the increase or enrichment of information. Consider the following example. On Monday morning you have scrambled eggs for breakfast. On Tuesday you remember that the breakfast you had the previous day was not vegan. *I have scrambled eggs for breakfast* relevantly entails that *my breakfast wasn't vegan*. The belief that my breakfast wasn't vegan does not qualify as a *non-inferential* memory of the belief that I have scrambled eggs for breakfast, but it does meet the conditions for *inferential* memory, provided, of course, I know what 'vegan' means.

Michaelian (2011, 2016) develops an opposing view, according to which non-inferential memory allows for the enrichment of informational content. Appealing to research on constructive memory, he argues that remembering has a simulational character, in the sense that it routinely involves the generation of new information and the incorporation of information originating in sources other than experience of the remembered event. For example, in the phenomenon of boundary extension (Intraub and Richardson 1989), the subject 'remembers' more of a scene than he actually saw, i.e., he 'remembers' parts of the scene that were beyond his field of view at the time of the experience. Since boundary extension and similar phenomena are ordinary and frequent occurrences, Michaelian argues that they are compatible with the proper functioning of the memory system and hence with the occurrence of genuine remembering. On his view, then, it is literally possible for one to remember more than one experienced.

This is a counterintuitive view, and several more conservative responses to the research on constructive memory are available. First, we might insist that cases in which remembering involves the generation or incorporation of new content are cases of merely apparent remembering. Second, we might distinguish between the components of the content which originate in the relevant experience and those which do not, treating the former as genuinely remembered but the latter as merely apparently remembered. Finally, we might argue that the relevant cases are best understood as cases of inferential memory.

So far we have concerned ourselves with the authenticity of *propositional* memory. But what are the bounds of authenticity with respect to *visual* remembering? The answer to this question crucially depends on whether the internal representations of memory images are said to represent in the manner of (physical) pictures or in the manner of language. Proponents of *pictorialism* (like Kosslyn and Fodor) hold that the mental representations we experience as imagery are like pictures with intrinsically spatial representational properties of the sort that pictures have. Proponents of *descriptivism* (like Pylyshyn and Dennett), on the other hand, hold that the mental representations that we experience as imagery are more like linguistic descriptions of visual scenes.

If memory images are linguistic descriptions of visual scenes, as descriptivism claims, the entailment thesis which was developed for propositional memory carries over to visual memory. But what is the rule of memory abstraction, if the content of visual memories is imagistic? Elsewhere I have argued that non-inferential visual memory allows for the omission of content (2015: 458–61). The omission of content can take different forms. One way for content to be omitted in the process of remembering is that the memory image is indeterminate with respect to particular features. You may, for instance, visually remember your friend sitting across from you sipping coffee but your memory may be non-committal regarding the color of your friend's pullover. Another way for content to be lost in the process of remembering is that the mental

image retrieved from memory is a cropped version of a previously perceived scene. You may, for instance, visually remember your friend sipping coffee but not remember the scenery around her—the color of the wall, the people at the adjacent table, the decor of the room, etc.

4. Assessing accuracy

How do we assess whether someone's recollection of an event accurately depicts the event or his initial representation of the event? We do not have direct access to the subject's initial representation of the event. And we cannot bring back the past to directly compare the event with the subject's recollection of the past. Instead, we have to use indirect means when trying to validate ostensible memories. We have to rely on diaries, photographs, hearsay, etc. But this kind of validation is circular. Suppose you seem to remember having put your key in the drawer. You open the drawer, and there is the key. Does finding the key in the drawer confirm your ostensible memory of the key being in the drawer? Does it prove that what you took to be a memory was indeed a memory? No, for the key might have been in the drawer for reasons completely unknown to you. Next suppose you try to confirm your ostensible memory of having put the key in the drawer by asking a friend whether he saw you put the key there. The friend answers in the affirmative. Does this validate your ostensible memory? No, for your friend's ostensible memory might be just as unreliable as your own. And to that your friend's memory has been reliable in the past you would have to rely, once again, on your own memory. The problem of verifying ostensible memories is only pushed from you to your friend. Price nicely summarizes this problem:

no one memory can be validated or invalidated without relying on other memories . . . It is often supposed that we can validate or invalidate a memory-judgement by means of a present perception, for example by consulting documents or records. Again, it is supposed that we can do it by appealing to the established laws of nature . . . But in both cases we are using memory over again, because we are relying on inductive generalizations . . . however great the probability of an inductive generalization may be, its probability is derived from past observations. We have only memory to assure us that those past observations existed, or what sort of observations they were.

(Price 1969: 78–9)

What Price points out is that any inductive argument for the trustworthiness of memory experiences is open to the charge of vicious circularity. We cannot validate our ostensible remembering without already assuming the reliability of ostensible remembering. And since a circular justification is no justification at all, the problem of validating ostensible memory seems to be insoluble.

The problem of validating our ostensible remembering has striking similarities to Hume's problem of induction, that is, the problem of justifying our tacit belief in the principle of the uniformity of nature. Both problems result from attempts to justify epistemic methods which apparently can be justified only by appeal to their own principles. It is not surprising then that the same approaches that are used to deal with the problem of induction are also brought to bear on the problem of validating memory experiences. The three main putative solutions to the Humean problem of induction are the postulational, the pragmatic, and the analytic approach.

Russell (1948: 288) and Saunders (1963: 486) solve the problem of validating our ostensible memories by maintaining that the reliability of ostensible memory is a postulate that cannot be proven or disproven but must be assumed. Yet the postulation of an unjustified and

unjustifiable principle makes our reliance on memory experiences a matter of faith. If memory knowledge is basically a matter of faith, then this faith exists on a par with other faiths. Reliance on memory experiences has no ground on which to maintain its cognitive superiority to any other form of irrationalism.

According to the pragmatic justification of our reliance on ostensible memories, trusting one's ostensible memories, though ultimately unjustified, is better suited to the goal of uncovering the past than any other method that might be adopted. This approach has been defended by Brandt who writes:

the only acceptable theory [of our ostensible memories] is one which asserts that a large proportion of our memory beliefs are veridical. No alternative to such a theory has been proposed; nor can one imagine what one would be like.

(Brandt 1955: 92-3)

As was noted by Locke (1971: 113-14), the crux with Brandt's justification of ostensible memory is that such an alternative theory has indeed been proposed as a logical possibility that has not yet been ruled out. The alternative is Russell's (1921: 159-60; 1948: 228) suggestion that there has been no past at all for us to remember since the world sprang into being five minutes ago. Until Russell's proposal has been ruled out, Brandt does not seem to be entitled to conclude that ostensible memory is reliable.

Malcolm (1963: 196) and Shoemaker are proponents of the analytic approach to the problem of validating ostensible memories. Shoemaker, for instance, wants to show "that it is a necessary (logical or conceptual) truth, not a contingent one, that when perceptual and memory statements are sincerely and confidently asserted, i.e., express confident beliefs, they are generally true" (1963: 229).¹⁰ As far as I can see, there are two main arguments to the effect that ostensible memories are generally true. This is Shoemaker's presentation of the first argument:

A primary criterion for determining whether a person understands the meaning of such terms as 'see' and 'remember' is whether under optimum conditions the confident claims that he makes by the use of these words are generally true. If most of a person's apparent perceptual and memory claims turned out to be false, this would show, not that the person had exceptionally poor eyesight or an exceptionally bad memory, but that he did not understand, had not correctly grasped, the meanings of the words he was uttering, or was not using them with their established meanings, i.e., was not using them to express the perceptual and memory claims they appear to express.

(Shoemaker 1963: 231; cf. Malcolm 1963: 193-4)

Shoemaker claims that if someone were to consistently make wildly inaccurate claims about the past, and seemed to remember things that never happened, we would have to say not that he was misremembering, but that he had lost his understanding of 'to remember.'

It seems to me that Shoemaker is right in that habitual mistakes regarding one's memory claims can be due to a mistake of terminology. The question is, however, whether someone whose memory claims are habitually wrong necessarily misunderstands 'to remember' and the past tense. Couldn't the habitual mistakes in question be due to mistakes of fact rather than meaning? I am inclined to believe that knowing what a term means and how to use it need not go together with using the term to form true statements. Whether someone understands an expression is determined by what he thinks he is saying when he uses that expression to form a statement and what he thinks would make the statement true—not by the truth value of the

statement. Even if someone's memory claims were consistently wrong, he could still have a correct understanding of the verb 'to remember.' That he correctly understands 'to remember' could be established by the fact that he uses the term only to talk about things that, he believes, did happen and not about things that, he believes, he imagined.

The second argument to the effect that ostensible memories are generally true rests on the claim that one cannot question one's confident perceptual and memory beliefs. Shoemaker writes:

It is precisely one's confident beliefs, and especially one's confident-perceptual and memory beliefs, that one expresses by saying 'I know . . .'; it is not a psychological fact, but rather a logical fact, that one cannot help regarding one's confident perceptual and memory beliefs as constituting knowledge.

(Shoemaker 1963: 234)

Shoemaker goes on to argue that what is true of me is also true of other people. Each one of us has to claim that his confident perceptual beliefs and memory beliefs are generally true. Shoemaker concludes that it is necessarily true of confident perceptual and memory beliefs in general that they are generally true. But this conclusion is problematic. Just because I cannot question my own confident memory beliefs doesn't mean that I cannot question someone else's claim concerning his confident memory beliefs. Recognizing that the other person cannot question his own confident memory beliefs is not the same as accepting them as true, or even generally true (O'Connor and Carr 1982: 140). A further worry about the second argument for the analytic approach is that even if it were incoherent to question one's confident memory beliefs, this does not mean that one's memory beliefs could not be consistently false. The skeptical problem doesn't get any better but instead gets worse, for not only is it possible that one's memory beliefs are consistently false but also one is not even in a position to coherently entertain this possibility.

In my view, the most promising solution to the problem of verifying our ostensible memories is to reject *epistemic internalism*, that is, the view that all of the factors required for a belief to be justified must be cognitively accessible to the subject and thus internal to his mind.¹¹ The skeptic about memory knowledge asks how one can know (or justifiably believe) that the memory experience on which one bases one's memory report is in fact an accurate, a reliable, guide to the past. This question is committed to internalism about justification. For unless it is deemed reasonable to expect an epistemic subject to have insight into his justifying reasons, the skeptic's question is irrelevant. *Epistemic externalism*, by contrast, holds that some of the justifying factors may be external to the subject's cognitive perspective. Given externalism, we need not be able to respond to the skeptical query. The fact that we don't know (or justifiably believe) that our memory reports amount to knowledge does not mean that they do not amount to knowledge. A person who knows something does not have to know that what he has in his evidential base amounts to knowledge. As long as he in fact satisfies the conditions of knowing something, there is nothing more he has to do in order to know. No skeptical worry gets started.¹²

Notes

- 1 The labels for the two views are borrowed from Robins (2016: 432). In previous writings, I have referred to the archival view as the *xerox model of memory* (2008: 144–6) and the *identity theory of memory* (2010: 217–21). See note 8.
- 2 See Turri (2011) and Hazlett (2012). For an empirical investigation of Hazlett's claims, see Buckwalter (2014).
- 3 Some non-factive verbs seem to allow for co-occurrences with *wh*-nominal complements. 'What', for instance, can introduce the verb-object of 'believe' as in "S may believe what I said as he may remember

- what I said." Vendler writes: "The possibility of 'believing what' (= 'that which' or 'the thing which') is restricted to things that can be objects of belief. For this reason, such sentences as 'I believe what he lost' are ruled out: the relevant co-occurrence set of 'believe' and 'lose', unlike those of 'believe' and 'say', do not overlap. Roughly speaking, 'believe' demands that-clauses, but 'lose' requires object nouns" (1972: 98).
- 4 Bernstein and Loftus (2009: 373). Similarly, Conway and Loveday (2015: 580) declare: "All memories are to some degree false in the sense that they do not represent past experience literally . . . One of the main functions of memories is to generate meanings, personal meanings, that allow us to make sense of the world and operate on it adaptively. Memories are, perhaps, most important in supporting a wide range social interactions where coherence is predominant and correspondence often less central."
 - 5 Schechtman (1994) argues that the weaving together, summarizing, and re-editing of parts of our own past is a key means by which we produce and maintain continuity of identity over time.
 - 6 Schacter (2001) distinguishes three kinds of omission errors—transience, absent-mindedness, blocking—and four kinds of commission errors—misattribution, suggestibility, bias, and persistence.
 - 7 Odell (1971: 593). See also Newby and Ross (1996: 205).
 - 8 I have labeled this position the *identity theory of memory* (2010: 217–21).
 - 9 Anything follows from a false antecedent and any conditional with a true consequent is true. What is unsettling about these paradoxes of material implication is that in each of them the antecedent is thematically irrelevant to the consequent. The reason I analyze memorial authenticity in terms of relevant entailment is so as to rule out some far-fetched entailments of one's past thoughts as instances of memory. The notion of relevant entailment ensures that the content of the present propositional attitude is not on a completely different topic than the content of the past propositional attitude. See Lewis (1998).
 - 10 Shoemaker (1963: 229). The expression 'perceptual and memory statements,' as Shoemaker uses it, refers not only to statements explicitly referring to memories but also to statements that are "directly based on . . . memory, i.e., are putative reports of what the speaker . . . remembers."
 - 11 See Chapter 22 of this volume.
 - 12 For comments on a previous draft, I am grateful to Kirk Michaelian.

References

- Anscombe, G.E.M. (1981). The Reality of the Past. In G.E.M. Anscombe (ed.), *Collected Philosophical Papers 2: Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind* (pp. 103–19). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bernecker, S. (2008). *The Metaphysics of Memory*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Bernecker, S. (2010). *Memory: A Philosophical Study*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bernecker, S. (2015). Visual Memory and the Bounds of Authenticity. In D. Moyal-Sharrock, V. Munz, A. Coliva (eds.), *Mind, Language and Action* (pp. 445–63). Berlin/New York: de Gruyter.
- Bernstein, D.M. and Loftus, E.F. (2009). How to Tell if a Particular Memory is True or False. *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 4: 370–74.
- Brandt, R. (1955). The Epistemological Status of Memory Beliefs. *Philosophical Review* 64: 78–95.
- Buckwalter, W. (2014). Factive Verbs and Protagonist Projection. *Episteme* 11: 391–409.
- Conway, M.C. and Loveday, C. (2015). Remembering, Imagining, False Memories and Personal Meanings. *Consciousness and Cognition* 33: 574–81.
- Crombag, H.F.M., Wagenaar, W.A., and Van Koppen, P.J. (1996). Crashing Memories and the Problem of 'Source Monitoring'. *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 10: 95–104.
- De Brigard, F. (2014). Is Memory for Remembering? Recollection as a Form of Episodic Hypothetical Thinking. *Synthese* 191: 1–31.
- Hamilton, A. (1998). False Memory Syndrome and the Authority of Personal Memory-Claims: A Philosophical Perspective. *Philosophy, Psychiatry, and Psychology* 5: 283–97.
- Hawley, K. (2003). Success and Knowledge-How. *American Philosophical Quarterly* 40: 19–31.
- Hazlett, A. (2010). The Myth of Factive Verbs. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 80: 497–522.
- Hazlett, A. (2012). Factive Presuppositions and the Truth Condition on Knowledge. *Acta Analytica* 27: 461–78.
- Hume, D. (2000). *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Ed. D.F. Norton and M.J. Norton. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Intraub, H. and Richardson, M. (1989). Wide-Angle Memories of Close-Up Scenes. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition* 15: 179–87.
- Klein, S.B. (2014). Autonoesis and Belief in a Personal Past: An Evolutionary Theory of Episodic Memory Indices. *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* 5: 427–47.

- Koriat, A., Goldsmith, M., and Pansky, A. (2000). Towards a Psychology of Memory Accuracy. *Annual Review of Psychology* 51: 481–537.
- Lewis, D. (1998). Relevant Implication. In D. Lewis, *Papers on Philosophical Logic* (pp. 111–24). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Leyden, von W. (1961). *Remembering: A Philosophical Problem*. London: Duckworth.
- Locke, D. (1971). *Memory*. London: Macmillan.
- Malcolm, N. (1963). *Knowledge and Certainty*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Michaelian, K. (2011). Generative Memory. *Philosophical Psychology* 24: 323–42.
- Michaelian, K. (2016). *Mental Time Travel: Episodic Memory and Our Knowledge of the Personal Past*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Neisser, U. (1981). John Dean's Memory: A Case Study. *Cognition* 9: 1–22.
- Newby, I.R. and Ross, M. (1996). Beyond the Correspondence Metaphor: When Accuracy Cannot Be Assessed. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 19: 205–6.
- O'Connor, D.J. and Carr, B. (1982). *Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Odell, S.J. (1971). Malcolm on 'Remembering that.' *Mind* 80: 593.
- Price, H.H. (1969). *Thinking and Experience*. 2nd edition, London: Hutchinson.
- Robins, S.K. (2016). Misremembering. *Philosophical Psychology* 29: 432–47.
- Russell, B. (1921). *The Analysis of Mind*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Russell, B. (1948). *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Saunders, J.T. (1963). Skepticism and Memory. *Philosophical Review* 72: 477–86.
- Schacter, D.L. (2001). *The Seven Sins of Memory*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Schechtman, M. (1994). The Truth about Memory. *Philosophical Psychology* 7: 3–18.
- Schechtman, M. (1996). *The Constitution of Selves*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Shoemaker, S. (1963). *Self-Knowledge and Self-Identity*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Sutton, J. (2007). *Philosophy and Memory Traces: Descartes to Connectionism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Turri, J. (2011). Mythology of the Factive. *Logos und Episteme* 2: 143–52.
- Vendler, Z. (1972). *Res Cogitans: An Essay in Rational Psychology*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Vendler, Z. (1980). Telling the Facts. In J.R. Searle, F. Kiefer, and M. Bierwisch (eds.), *Speech Act Theory and Pragmatics* (pp. 173–290). Dordrecht: Reidel.

THE ROUTLEDGE
HANDBOOK OF PHILOSOPHY
OF MEMORY

Edited by
Sven Bernecker and
Kourken Michaelian

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2017
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York City, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2017 selection and editorial matter, Sven Bernecker and Kourken Michaelian; individual chapters, the contributors

The right of Sven Bernecker and Kourken Michaelian to be identified as the authors of the editorial material, and of the authors for their individual chapters, has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Bernecker, Sven, editor.

Title: The Routledge handbook of philosophy of memory / edited by Sven Bernecker and Kourken Michaelian.

Description: 1 [edition]. | New York : Routledge, 2017. |

Series: Routledge handbooks in philosophy | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016053811 | ISBN 9781138909366 (hardback : alk. paper) | ISBN 9781315687315 (e-book)

Subjects: LCSH: Memory (Philosophy)

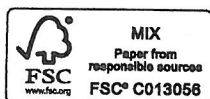
Classification: LCC BD181.7 R68 2017 | DDC 128/.3—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2016053811>

ISBN: 978-1-138-90936-6 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-68731-5 (ebk)

Typeset in Bembo Std
by Swales & Willis Ltd, Exeter, Devon, UK



Printed and bound in Great Britain by
TJ International Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| <i>List of figures and tables</i> | xi |
| <i>Notes on contributors</i> | xiii |
| <i>Acknowledgements</i> | xxi |
| | |
| Editors' introduction: the philosophy of memory today <i>Sven Bernecker and Kourken Michaelian</i> | 1 |
| | |
| PART I | |
| The nature of memory | 5 |
| | |
| 1. Taxonomy and unity of memory <i>Markus Werning and Sen Cheng</i> | 7 |
| | |
| 2. The phenomenology of memory <i>Fabrice Teroni</i> | 21 |
| | |
| 3. Memory and levels of scientific explanation <i>John Bickle</i> | 34 |
| | |
| PART II | |
| The metaphysics of memory | 49 |
| | |
| 4. Memory and truth <i>Sven Bernecker</i> | 51 |
| | |
| 5. Memory causation <i>Dorothea Debus</i> | 63 |

| | | |
|-----------------|---|------------|
| 6 | Memory traces <i>Sarah K. Robins</i> | 76 |
| 7 | The intentional objects of memory <i>Jordi Fernández</i> | 88 |
| PART III | | |
| | Memory, mind, and meaning | 101 |
| 8 | Memory and consciousness <i>Paula Droege</i> | 103 |
| 9 | Memory and perspective <i>Christopher Jude McCarroll and John Sutton</i> | 113 |
| 10 | Memory and imagination <i>Felipe De Brigard</i> | 127 |
| 11 | Memory images <i>Elizabeth Irvine</i> | 141 |
| 12 | Memory and emotion <i>Ronald de Sousa</i> | 154 |
| PART IV | | |
| | Memory and the self | 167 |
| 13 | Memory and personal identity <i>Shaun Nichols</i> | 169 |
| 14 | Memory and self-consciousness <i>José Luis Bermúdez</i> | 180 |
| 15 | Memory and narrativity <i>Daniel D. Hutto</i> | 192 |
| PART V | | |
| | Memory and time | 205 |
| 16 | Memory and the concept of time <i>Christoph Hoerl</i> | 207 |
| 17 | Memory and the metaphysics of time <i>Robin Le Poidevin</i> | 219 |

Contents

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|------------|
| 18 | Memory as mental time travel <i>Denis Perrin and Kourken Michaelian</i> | 228 |
| PART VI | | |
| The social dimension of memory | | 241 |
| 19 | Extended memory <i>Robert W. Clowes</i> | 243 |
| 20 | Collective memory <i>Jeffrey Andrew Barash</i> | 255 |
| 21 | Memory and social identity <i>Robyn Fivush and Matthew Graci</i> | 268 |
| PART VII | | |
| The epistemology of memory | | 281 |
| 22 | Internalism and externalism <i>Brent J. C. Madison</i> | 283 |
| 23 | Foundationalism <i>Berit Brogaard</i> | 296 |
| 24 | Coherentism <i>Erik J. Olsson</i> | 310 |
| 25 | Preservation and generation <i>Thomas D. Senior</i> | 323 |
| 26 | Skepticism and memory <i>Andrew Moon</i> | 335 |
| PART VIII | | |
| Memory and morality | | 349 |
| 27 | A duty to remember <i>Jeffrey Blustein</i> | 351 |
| 28 | An obligation to forget <i>David Matheson</i> | 364 |
| 29 | The ethics of memory modification <i>S. Matthew Liao</i> | 373 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| PART IX | |
| History of the philosophy of memory | 383 |
| 30 Plato <i>Sophie-Grace Chappell</i> | 385 |
| 31 Aristotle <i>Sophie-Grace Chappell</i> | 396 |
| 32 Classical Indian philosophy <i>Jonardon Ganeri</i> | 408 |
| 33 Indian Buddhist philosophy <i>Monima Chadha</i> | 416 |
| 34 Chinese Buddhist philosophy <i>Chung-Ying Cheng</i> | 428 |
| 35 Augustine <i>Lilianne Manning</i> | 439 |
| 36 Avicenna and Averroes <i>Deborah L. Black</i> | 448 |
| 37 Thomas Aquinas <i>John O'Callaghan</i> | 461 |
| 38 John Locke and Thomas Reid <i>Rebecca Copenhaver</i> | 470 |
| 39 David Hume <i>Daniel E. Flage</i> | 480 |
| 40 G. W. F Hegel <i>Valentina Ricci</i> | 487 |
| 41 Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan <i>Martin Schwab</i> | 496 |
| 42 Henri Bergson <i>Trevor Perri</i> | 510 |
| 43 Bertrand Russell <i>Paulo Faria</i> | 519 |

Contents

| | | |
|----|---|-----|
| 44 | Maurice Halbwachs <i>Dmitri Nikulin</i> | 528 |
| 45 | Frederic Bartlett <i>Brady Wagoner</i> | 537 |
| 46 | Ludwig Wittgenstein <i>Andy Hamilton</i> | 546 |
| 47 | Martin Heidegger <i>Taylor Carman</i> | 557 |
| 48 | Paul Ricoeur <i>Alexandre Dessingué</i> | 563 |
| | <i>Index</i> | 572 |