

This is the penultimate draft.

Episodic memory as Representing the Past to Oneself

Remembering in any form is retaining information. Episodic memory is special in being memory for episodes in one's past life. The information retained is information acquired in (and sometimes concerning) one's earlier experiences.

Some psychologists and philosophers like to talk of episodic memory as 'mental time travel'. Remembering is a mental phenomenon analogous to travelling in time. But analogous in what respects? While this is usually left unsaid, three suggest themselves:

Quasi-Experience: episodic memory gives us a special kind of access to our past. Just as real time travel would give us access to other times, so mental time travel gives us access to our earlier lives. More, just as travelling back in time would allow us to experience the events then occurring, so this form of memory gives us access to episodes from our past in a way that is like experiencing them. This distinguishes episodic memory from memory in factual (or 'semantic') form. Either might concern an event from one's past, but, while entertaining factual memories of the event is to call to mind what one believes about it, summoning an episodic memory is something like living it anew.

Source of Knowledge: episodic memory is a source of knowledge of the past. Just as real time travel would allow us to learn about the times we visit, so mental time travel allows us to learn about the episodes we remember. Of course, what we come to know in remembering is information acquired earlier. More, that information was acquired in earlier experiences, and so must at the time have been available to consciousness. Nonetheless, what I then knew, or could have known, I might not know now. Remembering makes that information available to present consciousness, enabling me to learn (or learn afresh) how things were.

Passivity: episodic memory will be active only in strictly limited ways. Non-mental time travel might involve setting one's sights on some past episode, and doing whatever is required to get back to it. Once arrived, however, how one found things to be would be a matter not of action, but passive openness to the world. Similarly, then, with mental travel in time. Targetting a particular episode might be an action of mine, as might doing whatever is needed to hit the target. Nonetheless, once I have engaged with the episode, remembering is a matter of passively receiving the information about it memory provides.

In this paper I want to explore and defend a view antipathetic to each of these ideas. Elsewhere (Hopkins forthcoming) I describe a position I call the Inclusion View, on which episodic memory is imagining the past, in a way controlled by how things were:

S episodically remembers some episode *E* only if

(I) S experientially imagines *E*.

(II) S earlier experienced *E*.

(III) S's current imagining depends (in the right way) on her earlier experience.

Thus while some (Tulving 1983, Owens 1996, Martin 2001) take the quasi-experiential state at the heart of episodic remembering to be *sui generis*, I propose that it is a state familiar from other contexts: i.e. imagining. More precisely, it is experiential imagining, the sort that captures the nature of things as we experience them. Examples would be visualizing, imagining sounds, smells and feelings (both bodily and affective), and so on.

The Inclusion View is hostile to Source of Knowledge and Passivity. My interest here, however, is in a more liberal position that rejects Quasi-Experience as well. If the Inclusion View is plausible for central cases, a less restrictive position better reflects the variety of episodic memories. On the Inclusion View, imagining plays a particular role in episodic memory. It is a way for the subject to represent the past to herself. There are other ways she might do that. She might, for instance, draw a picture of the event remembered. Or she might capture how someone moved by mimicking that gesture. She might do these things whether or not she can form a mental image of the episode. In doing them, provided her representation derives in the right way from her earlier experience, I think she counts as episodically remembering. Thus we should replace the Inclusion View with the following:

S episodically remembers some episode *E* only if

(I)^L S represents to herself how *E* was.

(II) S earlier experienced *E*.

(III)^L S's current representing depends (in the right way) on her earlier experience.

Unlike a purely mental memory image, some of the representations S might use might also serve to represent to others how things were. This is true, for instance, of her gesture or her drawing. However, what is key on this view is her representing the past *to herself*. In consequence, I'll call this the *Representing to Self* view (RtS for short). To episodically remember is to represent the past to oneself, in a way controlled by one's earlier experience of it.¹

Here I won't attempt a full defence of RtS. What I will do is twofold. First, I explore the three points of conflict between RtS and the conception of episodic memory lurking in the analogy with time travel. In the case of two—Passivity and Source of Knowledge—I argue for settling in RtS's favour. (The third—Quasi-Experience—I leave to ride on the wider debate between the two views.) Second (and in part by way of pursuing that debate), I identify some useful work RtS does, in relating episodic memory to a range of other phenomena, and in answering a particular question episodic memory throws up. The next section begins the first task by addressing the issue of agency versus passivity. It argues that episodic memory is active. Section 2 discusses whether episodic memory is a source of knowledge or an expression of it. If memory is active, it seems it can only be the latter. The section aims to clarify what this amounts to. In section 3, I address an argument that promises to show that, whether source or expression, memory cannot be active after all. In the fourth section I explain why RtS will reject Quasi-Experience. I also there show how approaching episodic memory in this way allows us to understand its continuity with other forms of memory,

¹ The Representing to Self view has much in common with the position advocated in Martin & Deutscher 1966. They offer examples of subjects whose remembering takes the form of his painting a scene (167-8) and of reproducing a gesture (161-2). They also place the notion of representing centre stage in their account of remembering (166). While they are more explicit about these ideas than some, I think that in these respects their views are shared by a range of earlier writers (see Ryle 1949, Ayer 1956 and Russell 1921)—though matters are complicated by the fact that by no means all these thinkers distinguish episodic memory from other forms of remembering. In advocating RtS my goal is not so much to present a new view of memory as to tease out and defend some of the commitments of a view that has fallen into undue neglect.

and with anticipation. The final section sketches another advantage for RtS: its explaining our ability to know which aspects of our memories claim to reflect the past and which are mere accidents of the way we represent it.

1. Active or Passive?

The idea that episodic memory involves representing the remembered episode will surprise no one. However, talk of representation needs care. As RtS conceives it, representing is (i) something the subject does, an action she performs; that (ii) results in something given to her as a representation. Her representation might be purely mental, as when she forms a memory image (i.e. imagines how things were). Or it might not be, as when she remembers by producing a drawing or a gesture. In either case, the representing is something she does, and not merely something going on within her. And in either, the resulting conscious state or symbol is manifestly (to her) a representation of the remembered episode.²

The notion of representation here is different from the idea of mental representation that looms large in cognitive science, including the psychology of memory. In the psychologist's sense, representing is a feature of the cognitive system, not an action on the part of the conscious subject. Moreover, mental representations need not be given to the subject as representations. They need not be conscious at all. Even when they are—when the subject's state is conscious and involves (or is) a mental representation—she need not be conscious of the representation *as* a representation. This is true, for instance, of perceptual states, at least on some accounts.³ The psychologist's notion brings with it a commitment to neither (i) nor (ii).

I return to (ii) below (section 4). At present our concern is (i). RtS claims that episodic memory is representing the past to oneself. Since representing things to oneself is an action, the view puts an action at the heart of episodic remembering. The view accepts that remembering involves more than merely representing the past—condition (I)^L needs supplementing by (II) and (III)^L. Thus RtS can allow that remembering may not be purely active. Still, agency is at its core. It is an action in ways in which perception, for instance, is not.

This provides the first point of conflict between RtS and the idea of mental time travel. Of course, the latter can accept some role for action in remembering: Passivity does not claim that episodic memory is passive through-and-through. It does, however, severely limit that role. Sometimes memories just come to us, unbidden. In such cases, the view may find no room for agency at all. But even when we actively seek out memories, any role for agency is strictly limited. If mental time travel is to be like non-mental, in effect it will be active only in the ways in which perception is. There are perceptual actions—observing and attending. But these are ways of clearing the ground for perception proper, which is not itself an action. Our activity is exhausted (to take vision as an

² (i) and (ii) together provide the substance of the idea that episodic remembering involves representing the past *to oneself*. The subject (i) acts to produce something that (ii) is manifestly a representation. She is the one to whom its status as a representation is manifest, and she the one who produces it. Contrast the rather different idea that episodic memory necessarily involves awareness of oneself (Perner 2000, Dokic 2001, Perrin 2010).

³ Some Direct Realists, for instance, take the phenomenology of perception to incorporate its relational nature, while allowing that the sub-personal states underpinning perception might involve mental representation, in the psychologist's sense. See e.g. McDowell 1994.

While my notion of representation is richer than the psychologists', other notions are richer still. Peter Goldie, for instance, describes what he calls 'autobiographical memory'. This combines memory of various kinds (factual, episodic and generic) into a *narrative* representation of some portion of one's past (see Goldie 2012: 43-44).

example) in our looking in a certain direction, focussing at a certain depth, and readying ourselves to attend to particular features of the scene. Whether we find the features looked for, whether they are perceived, is a question, not of action, but of our passively receiving what the scene has to offer.⁴ Something similar is true of non-mental time travel. That merely supplements the possibilities for action involved in observing the past, once arrived, with another set of actions required to get there in the first place. The core of the access to the past such travel offers remains perceptual, and so passive, a matter of letting the events we witness flow in. And if episodic memory is something like time travel in the mind, the same will be true of it. Scanning the past may be active, but remembering it to be a certain way is not.

How are we to settle this conflict? How are we to decide whether a given phenomenon is an exercise of agency? I will not attempt to define action. That is difficult enough in general, and not made easier if the topic is, as in some of the cases here, specifically *mental* action, since the bulk of the literature focuses on action in bodily form. Instead, I will exploit a simple connection between acting and trying. Where there is action, there is the possibility of trying to act; and one marker of action lies in the form such trying can take.

Let's begin with a principle tying acting to trying:

(P1) If ϕ -ing is an action, one can try to ϕ .⁵

This does not suffice to identify action. There are many things that are not actions but that we can try to do: for instance, *falling asleep*. However, such episodes are governed by the following principle:

(P2) If ϕ -ing is not an action, trying to ϕ , where possible at all, involves successfully doing something else.

Thus, for instance, to try to fall asleep is to shut one's eyes, relax one's limbs, to empty one's mind of thoughts of the day, and so on. If one does none of this, nor anything like it, in what sense is one trying to fall asleep?

In genuine action, in contrast, trying need not involve success in any other action. Consider, for instance, raising my arm. Suppose I try to do this, but fail, perhaps because the arm has been temporarily paralysed (Pink 1996: 261-2). It seems I can try, even though trying does not amount to successfully performing any other action. No doubt my trying will lead to alterations in my brain and/or body. However, these will be sub-personal changes, not actions of mine. It is quite possible that the only manifestation in consciousness of my attempt is the trying itself. Given this, what other completed action (other than the trying) must that attempt involve? Actions such as raising my arm thus allow for what we might call *bare trying*.

⁴ What of the idea, with a distinguished history in philosophy and psychology, that perception involves more than receptiveness to the world; it also requires a contribution from the perceptual system? Sensory stimulation must be filtered, organized and categorized in certain ways, if perception is to occur. That is not denied. What is rejected is the idea that such contributions by the perceptual system amount to *our doing* something, to some action we subjects undertake.

Recently, Alva Noë (2004) has defended a position that comes closer to giving genuine action an essential role in perception. There is neither space nor reason to address whether his position, read charitably, is inconsistent with the position in the text. My main thought is not that perception is passive, but that memory is active.

⁵ For a different claim about how mental action relates to trying, see Peacocke 2007.

Perhaps not all actions have this feature. Perhaps it is only basic actions that allow for bare trying—though the fact that ϕ -ing involves doing something else doesn't obviously entail that trying to ϕ will necessarily involve successfully doing anything else. Happily, we need not settle whether bare trying is necessary for action, since sufficiency will do:

(P3) If trying to ϕ need not involve the performance of any other action, ϕ -ing is an action.

It is enough for something to be action that it allow for bare trying. (And let us not worry whether this is because it is sufficient for *basic* action.) That is all the argument will require.

Of course, sometimes, when ϕ -ing is an action, we may do various other things to help pull it off. For instance, if I am trying to jump over a bar, I may visualize myself succeeding, or remind myself how much I need the prize money. These further actions do not prevent the case involving bare trying. For here the further actions are mere *aids* to ϕ -ing. They do not themselves constitute trying to ϕ , and it may be present while they are not.

We can provide some assurance that we're on the right track by applying our principles to phenomena other than memory: perception and imagining. Intuitively, perception is not an exercise of agency, and imagining is. Happily, this is just what our principles suggest.

Take perception first. As noted, while bound up with certain actions, observing and attending, perception itself is a passive state those actions make possible. This intuitive picture fits with the principles above. What is it to try to perceive? It is precisely to act in the ways just described. One observes: altering one's relations to the target, e.g. by moving one's head, or adjusting where one's eyes are focused. Or one directs attention to the relevant thing or feature. But these options exhaust what one can do by way of trying to perceive something. Once they are done, there is no further act of bare trying to undertake. Thus perception fails to fit (P3) and does fit (P2). That does not entail that perceiving is not an action. (P2) describes a condition that is no more than necessary for non-actions, and (P3) one that is no more than sufficient for action. Nonetheless, the principles leave open that perception is not an action, and exclude one way in which it might be. They at least square with our intuition that perception is passive.

Next consider experiential imagining, such as imagining the look, sound, feel or taste of things. Does it allow for bare trying? To see that it does, we must set aside a potential confusion. When what we are trying to imagine is complex, we sometimes succeed in imagining some of its elements even if we fail in our larger goal. Trying to imagine the sound of Beethoven's Eighth played on a brass band, I might succeed in imagining the tune carried by a lone trumpet, but not the sound of the rest. This might encourage the idea that to try to imagine one thing is always to succeed in imagining something else. However, considering simpler cases shows this to be mistaken. Suppose I try to visualize a colour I have never seen, perhaps on the basis of an evocative description. Might I not simply try, and fail to visualize anything at all? Of course, I might start with a related colour and try to alter what I picture in appropriate ways. But surely I need not do this, in order to try. Once we set aside such aids to trying, it is plausible that imagining does meet the condition imposed by (P3), and thus counts as action.

With the principles partly vindicated by capturing our intuitions in this way, let us apply them to episodic memory. What is it to try to remember a given episode from one's past? One way we

describe the attempt is as ‘casting one’s mind back’. Is that a bare trying, or does it amount to successfully performing some other action? The image of mental time travel encourages us to see it as the latter. Since remembering is not acting, casting one’s mind back (trying to remember) must be successfully doing something other than remembering; just as observing or attending (trying to perceive) is successfully doing something other than perceiving. RtS, in contrast, treats remembering as itself an action, and thus can treat casting one’s mind back as bare trying to remember. And that is what the principles now before us suggest. If they are right, remembering is itself an action, and not merely a passion to which actions open the way.

In general, trying to do something must be distinct from doing it, or else the attempt could not possibly fail. So we can add one last principle:

(P4) If S can try to ϕ , S can fail to ϕ .

Given (P3), where ϕ -ing is not an action, but we can try to ϕ , that trying cannot be bare: to try to ϕ is successfully to do something else, ψ . *Ex hypothesi*, ψ -ing is an action. So, given (P1), ψ -ing is something we can try to do, and, given (P4), it is something we could fail to do. Thus, if ϕ -ing is not an action, the following must all be possible, when I try to ϕ :

- (A) I try to ψ , but fail (to ψ).
- (B) I try to ψ , succeed, but don’t succeed in ϕ -ing.
- (C) I try to ψ , succeed, and do succeed in ϕ -ing.

In the cases above of non-actions, all three possibilities clearly hold. Consider perceiving. I can try to look in the direction of what you are describing, and fail. (Perhaps my neck is too stiff.) I can look that way, but fail to see the thing. Or I look that way, and succeed in seeing it. Similarly for trying to fall asleep by emptying my mind of the thoughts of the day. If we now substitute ‘remembering’ for ϕ -ing and ‘casting my mind back’ for ψ -ing, there thus ought to be three possibilities:

- (a) I try to cast my mind back to the episode, but fail (to cast it back).
- (b) I try to cast my mind back to the episode, succeed, but don’t remember it.
- (c) I try to cast my mind back to the episode, succeed, and do remember it.

But we can only make sense of two situations here. Either I cast my mind back and remember, or I cast it back and don’t remember.⁶ There are only two actions here: the trying and the successful execution of what it is an attempt to do. Thus ‘casting my mind back’ cannot be another action, the successful performance of which constitutes trying to remember. It just *is* the bare attempt to remember. Thus, given (P3), episodic remembering is an action.

Of course, I may do various things when I cast my mind back. I might summon my memory of related episodes, hoping to jog the memory of the target. I might remind myself of the facts of that event – who was there, what we were doing, etc. I might ask someone to describe it to me, or I might try imagining how it was. However, these are all optional extras. Casting my mind back need not involve any of them: I can simply target the relevant event and attempt to bring it to mind. (Test

⁶ Of course, I might remember *other* episodes. This might give a sense in which I succeed in casting my mind back *to the time*, but don’t remember the target episode. But that is just remembering other things while failing to remember the thing I wanted. It can hardly give a sense in which (b) is true, but (c) is not.

this out: try to remember your last birthday, or having breakfast three days ago, or your first day at university.) They are thus aids to memory, as visualizing success was an aid to jumping the bar. They do nothing to undermine the idea that trying to remember does not amount to performing any other action.

Does this argument cheat? One worry would be that (P1) does not hold of all actions. In particular, while tryings are themselves actions (Pink 1996: 52-3), it is not clear that one can try to try. If not, then casting one's mind back is not subject to (P1), and thus not to (P4). My opponent is not committed to possibility (a) after all.

The response fails. It is true that the idea of trying to try is problematic. However, it is so only when the trying in question is a bare trying. If trying to X amounts to successfully doing something else, trying to try is perfectly possible. Thus, I can try to fall asleep by emptying my mind of thoughts of the day. That last, however, is precisely something I can try to do—after all, I might fail. We might not readily describe this as 'trying to try to fall asleep'. But that is precisely what it is, given the assumptions my opponent and I both accept.

Another question about the argument is this. Earlier I distinguished deliberate remembering from memories that come unbidden. The argument seems tailored to the former. What can it say about the latter? Are they passions, through and through; and, if so, does this cast doubt on RtS?

It is true that unbidden memories do not involve trying to remember. The memory simply comes, without my doing anything to bring it to mind. However, nothing in the argument excludes this. The principles all link action to the possibility of trying. None suggests that acting requires actually trying to act. Still, one might wonder what we should say about remembering that comes unbidden. Is this an action? I am tempted to say it is. Unbidden remembering belongs to the class of actions that we do without setting out to do them. Just we can find ourselves scratching our noses or singing a tune, so we can find ourselves remembering some past episode. In such cases these things are not done deliberately, but even so they are actions. Tempting or not, this line is not compulsory. An alternative is to allow that some remembering is action, some not. That would not threaten RtS provided the same is true in general of representing to oneself. And this last certainly has some plausibility. We sometimes find ourselves visualizing unintentionally, as in daydreaming. And it is also possible to find oneself drawing pictures when one intended to work. These are uncontroversial cases of representing to oneself, where remembering is not in question. If coming unbidden suggests that not all episodic memory is active, it does the same for some some representing to oneself. Again, RtS's position is secure.

Thus there is such a thing as bare trying to remember. So (at least some) episodic remembering fits (P3). (At least some) remembering is an action. There thus cannot be anything wrong with the idea that at its heart lies a phenomenon—representing the past to oneself—that is itself (sometimes) an action. Indeed, any view that denies that remembering is (ever) an exercise of agency needs to explain where the the argument here goes wrong. Absent an explanation, such denials should be rejected. And to the extent that the image of mental time travel motivates that denial, it too is found wanting.⁷

⁷ For a rather different account of the active and passive ingredients in episodic recall, see Soteriou 2008: 474-7.

2. Source or Expression?

If we side with RtS on Passivity, where does that leave another of the ideas suggested by the image of mental time travel, Source of Knowledge? How can episodic memory be a source of knowledge, if it's an exercise of agency? Memory is factive: one can only remember things being thus and so if that's how they were.⁸ (Otherwise, one merely *seems* to remember them being that way.⁹) If in memory we represent the past to ourselves as being a certain way, and if representing it so is an action of ours, it seems we can only get the past right if we in some way already know how it was. Remembering cannot be the source of knowledge of how things were, since it presupposes such knowledge. It can at most be an *expression* of knowledge we already have.

In essence, I accept this consequence, and so embrace the thought that, having rejected one idea the metaphor throws up, we should also reject another. I am not alone in thinking that memory is better conceived as an expression of knowledge than a source—in some form or other, the thought is found in Reid (1785), Ryle (1948 ch.8), Ayer (1956 ch.IV) and both Russell's theories of memory (1909 & 1921).¹⁰ Still, these days the thought is rarely articulated and even less frequently endorsed. Perhaps this is because pretheoretically, the idea of a source of knowledge is considerably clearer than that of an expression. Since the preceding argument suggests it is the latter that captures the truth about episodic memory, let me try to clarify it.

All should accept two claims concerning episodic memory. The first is that it can be a source of *belief* about the past. Uncertain whether my aunt was at my last birthday party, I can reasonably form a belief on the matter by trying to remember the event. My ability to do this in no way suggests that I must already somehow have a belief on the issue: I gain the belief by consulting my memory. Thus the denial that memory is a source of knowledge must assume that knowledge can take forms other than belief. That should not provoke alarm. At least one form of knowledge, knowledge how to do things, does not clearly reduce to belief.¹¹ Why should there not be others? The second claim is that, as I noted at the start, all memory involves retaining information. The idea

⁸ Strictly, factivity should be restricted to states that take propositional contents. If so, memory displays a related feature: its non-propositional contents are necessarily accurate.

This feature of memory is not explicitly captured by RtS's claims (I)^L to (III)^L. Since these are only intended as necessary for episodic remembering, we might accommodate factivity (or its like) by adding a fourth condition. In fact, however, I think the idea is implicit in (III)^L, properly understood. For discussion of the analogous issue facing the Inclusion View, see Hopkins forthcoming §2.

⁹ The factivity of memory is of no interest to psychologists, some of whom are happy to speak, without qualification, of our remembering what did not occur. Given their interest in mechanisms and functionally defined processes, this is understandable: it is not unreasonable to expect that the working of those mechanisms can be fully described without reference to such normative notions as accuracy. From the point of view of the subject however, the distinction between accurate and inaccurate memory states is crucial, and it is hardly surprising that our everyday concept of memory encodes it. Respecting factivity is just one way in which I pursue an understanding of episodic memory and related mental phenomena that does justice to the perspective on them of conscious subjects.

¹⁰ For a representative formulation, consider Ryle: a memory image 'is not something by means of which one gets oneself to remember. It is the goal, not a vehicle, of his struggle to remember' (Ryle 1971: 398. Cf. Hoerl 2001: §VIII).

¹¹ Recent work has called into question the traditional distinction between knowledge-that and knowledge-how (Stanley and Williamson 2001). Perhaps the latter is a subset of the former, in which the proposition known involves some irreducibly perceptual or agential mode of presentation. Perhaps, then, know-how too involves belief. Even if so, the point above can stand. If all knowledge-how involves belief, the distinction between know-how and knowledge-that lies in the differing modes of presentation those beliefs involve. We can then appeal to a parallel difference to distinguish the knowledge episodic memory expresses from the belief formed on the back of remembering.

that episodic memory is an expression of knowledge must also not reduce to an instance of that truism.¹²

To formulate the idea appropriately, we need to make use of the distinction between occurrent and dispositional mental states (Wollheim 1984: 33-5). Episodic memories, like many mental states, take both forms. I can be said to remember my last birthday party when I'm thinking of other things, or even when asleep. The claim might be true provided it concerns memory in dispositional form. In another sense, I only remember the party when I actually call it to mind. Here the claim concerns memory's occurrent form. Note that both dispositional and occurrent memories are states of the person: the claims just made concern what I am able to do, or what I am currently undergoing. Neither is in the first instance about the processing that underpins that capacity or mental occurrence.¹³

The distinction in hand, we can articulate the idea. It is occurrent episodic memory that is an expression of knowledge. The knowledge expressed is the knowledge embodied in the memory disposition. An occurrent episodic memory is an expression of knowledge of the episode remembered in that (A) it represents that episode as having been a certain way; (B) it is the manifestation of a (memory) disposition; (C) that disposition itself counts as knowledge of how the past episode was; and (D) the content represented in (A) is what is known in (C).

This interpretation of the idea is consistent with the fact that (occurrent) episodic memory can be a source of belief. For, while belief can take dispositional form, the memory disposition involved in (B) to (D) hardly counts. Its paradigmatic manifestation is not an occurrent belief, but a memory image (or gesture or drawing, etc.). The treatment also takes us beyond the truism that memory involves retaining information: not all the information retained by my cognitive system is known by me, since not all of it is available to me (in either my dispositional or occurrent states). Finally, the interpretation constitutes a genuine alternative to the Source of Knowledge view. The claim that episodic memory is a source of knowledge is presumably intended as a claim about memory in occurrent form. That, after all, is the form that is the source of belief, and the analogue of the source of knowledge (perception) in non-mental time travel. In treating occurrent memory instead as an expression of knowledge, we reject that claim. The treatment doesn't offer a way to make sense of memory *dispositions* as expressions, versus sources, of knowledge; but nor is that something its opponents deny.

It's worth noting that this interpretation of episodic memory as expressing knowledge nicely brings out its parallels with factual ('semantic') memory. Factual memory also takes both occurrent and dispositional forms: one may remember the date of the battle of Lepanto whether or not one currently calls it to mind. Moreover, in factual memory these two forms also exhibit the structure

¹² Some argue that memory is not purely preservative. That is, we can learn from memory things we neither knew nor were in a position to know before. These positions are consistent with the truism. Some of them hold that new information is made available in some forms of memory (Dokic 2001; Matthen 2010). But the truism doesn't claim that memory is nothing but the retention of information, only that it is always in core part that. Others (Lackey 2005) assert that memory's generative role lies in its altering the subject's epistemic relation to a content—e.g. rendering known what was earlier merely believed. Here there is not even new information, only a changed epistemic relation to information retained.

¹³ In framing RtS above, I in effect presented it as defining episodic memory (for some episode *E*) in occurrent form. Dispositional memory (of *E*) is simply the ability to form such occurrent memories. One can possess that ability (with respect to *E*) whether or not one currently, or indeed ever, exercises it.

For a rather different view of the canonical manifestations of the dispositions at the heart of 'autobiographical' memory, see Coburn 2001.

above—I'll call it the *Expression Schema*. The occurrent memory state (A^*) captures some fact; (B^*) is the manifestation of a disposition; that (C^*) itself counts as knowledge of that fact; where (D^*) what is captured in (A^*) is what is known in (C^*). For sure, the presence of this structure is less noteworthy here than in episodic memory. It's plausible that factual memory is just retained belief (Owens 2000 ch.8). Since one can't learn that p by simply failing to forget that p , few will be tempted by the idea that occurrent factual memory is a source of knowledge. In the case of occurrent episodic memory, in contrast, the temptation is real. Still, the treatment draws an illuminating parallel between the two, and this speaks in its favour.¹⁴

3. An Objection to Passivity?

Even those sympathetic to the idea that episodic memory expresses knowledge may feel that it merely postpones the real difficulty for RtS. Section 2 began in puzzlement over how memory could be both a source of knowledge and active. The response was to reject the first. Does that really help, or does the underlying problem return in altered form?

If occurrent episodic memory is an expression, not a source, of knowledge of past episodes, then it is surely often its *primary* expression: either the memory is the only expression of that knowledge in the subject's conscious states or any others there might be depend on it, and not vice versa. For example, in trying to decide whether my aunt was at the party, my memory images (or other episodic memory representations) may be my only guide. In such a case, as in every other, the images I form won't count as remembering her presence/absence unless I get those facts right. The past must somehow control the way I now represent it. But how is this control exercised? Not, it seems, by my being *guided by* the past, if that means I deliberately construct my imagining so as to fit how things were. For to do that I would have to have an independent conscious conception of the episode, to which I make my representing conform. And then the occurrent memory would not be the primary expression of my knowledge, that other conscious conception would be. So my representing must be *directly determined* by the episode: how I represent it is causally controlled by how it was, and not via the mediation of any other conscious state.¹⁵ But how, we might wonder, is this consistent with remembering's being an action? The active nature of remembering is supposed to contrast with the passive nature of perceiving. Yet the current proposal is that in memory the way things are represented to be is directly determined by factors outside myself. Something closely parallel holds in perception.¹⁶ What is 'passivity', if not this? If in both memory and perception the way things are represented as being is determined by external factors, what room is there for one being active, as the other is not?

¹⁴ Compare Matthew Soteriou's attempt to 'understand what is right in Sartre's claim that "nothing can be learned from the image that is not already known," without assimilating episodic memory to semantic memory' (Soteriou 2008: 481).

¹⁵ By how it was, or by how it was experienced to be? There are two ways for episodic memory to lead us into error about the past. We might misremember how we earlier experienced things as being; or we might accurately remember experiences that themselves misrepresented the past event. Remembering the past event as being thus and so presumably requires that both sources of error be avoided (with respect to the relevant remembered feature). Remembering how we experienced things to be requires only that we avoid error of the first kind. For simplicity's sake, I here ignore cases of this second form.

¹⁶ There is one difference between memory and perception: only in memory do the facts determine occurrent states via dispositions. Since only occurrent states are conscious, this does not prevent memory involving direct determination, as defined. More importantly, since neither the process by which a disposition is established nor that by which it is manifested is clearly anything but passive, the root worry remains: memory can be no more active than perception is.

Thus, whether we treat episodic memory as a source of knowledge or its expression, it seems hard to make sense of its being active. Section 2's efforts to unpack the idea of memory as expression may have been of value—the idea has some independent appeal and the issue between its advocates and opponents is now clearer. They nonetheless leave the central challenge to RtS untouched.

Fortunately, this entire line of objection is misplaced. To see how, consider a different form of memory, remembering-how. For instance, take my remembering how to tie a figure-of-eight knot. Remembering-how combines various features. First, it involves the causal determination of the present by the past. Someone might, of course, be able to tie a figure-of-eight without any previous learning. Perhaps her spatial reasoning skills are so good that on first seeing the knot she can reproduce it. But, while we might describe this person as *knowing* how to tie a figure-of-eight, we certainly wouldn't say her first performance counts as *remembering* how to tie one. For that, she must earlier have learned to tie the knot, and her current performance must derive in the appropriate way from that learning. Second, however, this derivation should not be construed as *the subject's being guided by* the past, if that means she has a conscious conception of what she then learned, and shapes her current action to reflect it. For sure, things might go that way. She might remember how to tie the knot by picturing the way her teacher moved his hands, or by remembering explicit rules ('take the first end over the second, and loop it back under', etc.). But things need not be so. It might be that she can call nothing to mind about how to tie the knot—all she can do is to pick up the rope and start, allowing 'her hands to remember for her'. She has no conscious conception of how to do it, and yet, if she succeeds, certainly counts as remembering how. Thus the minimum control of the past over the present that remembering-how requires is direct determination. But, third, and crucially, even in a case such as this, in which her hands 'remember for her', her tying the knot is certainly an exercise of agency: if this isn't an action of hers, what is?

Thus remembering-how combines precisely the features that, according to RtS, episodic memory involves. It shows that an action can lie at the heart of a form of memory even though the specifics of what is done are determined by past events, and not via any further grasp the agent has on those events. Given that these features are compatible, there is nothing incoherent in the idea that episodic memory also exhibits them.

4. Episodic Memory and Some Related Phenomena

Note the argument just given makes no appeal to the idea that remembering-how is an expression of knowledge. It thus blocks the objection independently of any position we take on whether episodic memory is an expression of knowledge or its source. Still, in the case of remembering-how, it would be grossly implausible to adopt a source view. Our subject doesn't learn to tie a figure-of-eight by doing so; she can do so only because she already knows! At the close of §2 I made the parallel point for factual memory: it too is not plausibly treated as a source of knowledge. By treating episodic memory as an expression of knowledge, RtS thus identifies a feature common to memory of these three kinds. More generally, one of the attractions of the view is that it brings out the systematic connections and differences across various mental capacities that, intuitively, belong together. I now provide some other examples of these benefits. I continue with remembering-how, before turning to the relations between episodic memory and some other phenomena.

Episodic memory and remembering-how are alike in various ways. Both are dispositional states that are manifested in actions. In both, the ultimate cause of how one acts lies in some earlier state of the world (the remembered event, or the event of learning how to ϕ). And, as just noted, in both the

actions express knowledge. Of course, there are important differences. Most obviously, remembering-how does not represent the past, and so the knowledge its manifestations express cannot be knowledge of that. If I tie a figure-of-eight to show you how it's done, my action at most represents what you must do to get that result; not the past event of my learning how to do those things.¹⁷

What about the Expression Schema? Does remembering-how fit that? Its failure to represent the past leaves the matter open—after all, much factual memory does not represent the past either, yet that fits (§2). Nonetheless, there are grounds for doubt. The Schema requires that one's current action be a representing, one manifesting a disposition that itself counts as knowing, where what is represented in the action is what is known in the disposition. Remembering how to do something may be manifested in a range of actions and occurrent states: in doing it, describing it, appraising others' performances, or feeling disgust at their dismal attempts. Some of these fit the schema, some do not. Some represent, but not what is known; and some are not representations at all. Now, any disposition will have a range of possible manifestations. Episodic memory is no exception. My (dispositional) memory of some traumatic event may be manifested in picturing it, in endlessly referring to it, in studiously avoiding the topic, or in my feelings of anxiety when confronted with something similar. However, we use the term 'episodic memory' to refer, not just to the disposition, but also to a particular range of its manifestations, the occurrent rememberings. Every manifestation in that range fits the schema. There is no parallel use of 'remembering-how'. It refers, not to particular acts, thoughts or feelings that manifest the disposition, but to the disposition alone.¹⁸ Nor is there obviously any other non-trivial way to identify, among the disposition's possible manifestations, a group which fits the Schema. Thus remembering-how does not so much fail the Schema's test, as fail to sit it in the first place.

The resources we've developed also allow us to relate episodic memory to other phenomena. One we might call *generic* memory. This is memory of how things present themselves in experience, but not how any particular thing presented itself in any particular experience. It is the memory we use, for instance, in reminding ourselves how frogs sound, how our great grandmother looked, what youthful summers spent in France were like, or what it feels like to be let down in love. In not capturing any particular past episode, generic memory differs from episodic. Nonetheless, intuitively it is the closest of memory's other forms. We are now in a position to say how. Generic memory has, I suggest, the same range of expressions as episodic. In both we represent the facts to ourselves in a variety of ways. In central cases we summon a mental memory image of what it is we're remembering. For generic memory, it is highly plausible that our doing so amounts to experientially imagining the item. (Whatever the attraction of postulating a *sui generis* state of episodic remembering, the suggestion has little appeal here.)¹⁹ Generic memory need not find expression in mental imagery, however: other forms of representation such as drawing, describing or imitating can also serve. Our production of such representations counts (provided other conditions are in place) as exercises of generic memory—whether or not we can also form a mental image of the thing remembered. These representings are clearly acts on our part, and they express a

¹⁷ There are representations of the past we describe as remembering how: e.g. in my remembering how you looked when you heard the terrible news. This, however, just is a case of episodic memory. As I use 'remembering-how', the term is limited to remembering how *to φ*.

¹⁸ A qualification: is required. If I say 'he is remembering how to...', I don't refer to the disposition. On the other hand, nor do I refer to a straightforward manifestation of it. Rather, I mean that he is attempting to reanimate his knowledge of how to perform the action, to piece together the elements of a capacity he has currently lost.

¹⁹ This is not to say that the idea has no advocates. See Owens 1996 p326. For discussion, see Hoerl [this volume].

disposition that itself counts as knowledge of the nature of the remembered item. Generic memory fits the Expression Schema.

Another phenomenon is anticipation. Being directed towards the future, this is clearly not a kind of memory. Nonetheless, there are important parallels between it and memory in episodic and generic form. One anticipates future events by representing them to oneself. If there is suitable stability in one's thinking on the topic, it may be that such representings manifest a disposition to anticipate such an event. And, at least in principle, it seems that one's expectations might be sufficiently well grounded for that disposition to count as knowledge of the anticipated event. Again, the Expression Schema fits, at least in some cases.

Now let's return to factual memory. Earlier I suggested it too fits the Expression Schema—indeed, plainly so. Despite that, I think factual memory does contrast significantly with episodic and generic memory, and with anticipation. Some differences are obvious. For instance, while the other three are in various ways restricted in subject matter, one can factually remember any proposition one can know. But the difference that matters for present purposes is not obvious. In episodic memory, generic memory and anticipation the facts are given to us by something that is manifestly a representation. Not so in factual memory. Thus factual memory lacks one of the features central to representing things to oneself (point (ii) in §1).

An enthusiast for the idea of mental time travel might propose a different difference: that factual memory does not represent the facts in the right way. Remember Quasi-Experience, the idea that (occurrent) episodic memories are somehow like experiences of the remembered events. We might think something similar is true of occurrent states of generic memory and anticipation. They too, the idea goes, have to be something like an experience of the facts they represent. Factual memory, in contrast, imposes no such demand. The occurrent state involved is simply calling to mind what one believes on the topic. States of occurrent belief are not at all like experiences, and that, the thought has it, is the key difference between factual memory and these other phenomena.

However, that is not a contrast I endorse. In moving from the Inclusion View to the Representation to Self account, we liberalise our sense of what counts as episodic remembering. Occurrent episodic memories need not have mental images at their core: various other representations of the past will do. Once we liberalise that far, it is unclear that we should retain Quasi-Experience. Why should the states that represent the past in episodic memory have to be experiential in any significant way? Why, for instance, can they not present the remembered episode in purely propositional form? Capturing the past in mental imagery certainly counts (given suitable framing conditions) as episodic memory of it. But imagery can be highly imprecise in content, and at the limit is continuous with states (perhaps not themselves imagistic) that involve little more than mentally adverting to the remembered objects or event. Why think that somewhere on this sliding scale we reach a point incompatible with episodic memory, the states thereafter being insufficiently 'experiential' to count? And if this is how things stand with episodic memory, why not similarly with generic memory and anticipation?

These considerations are hardly decisive. Perhaps they are best treated, not so much as an argument for further liberalising, as a way of opening up the option. Still, suppose we take that option. If we follow the liberalising tendency this far, the states at the heart of occurrent episodic memory need be no more like experiences, or any less like mere graspings of propositions, than those involved in occurrent factual memory. Quasi-Experience must follow Passivity and Source of Knowledge into

the reject bin. Nonetheless, a contrast remains. For even the non-experiential states involved in episodic memory are given to us as representations. The act or state of adverting mentally to the past, and representing it as being a certain way, is clearly distinct from the past objects, events or episodes adverted to. In occurrent factual memory, in contrast, no parallel distinction is manifest. In remembering the date of the battle, or the number of satellites of Neptune, or my mother's maiden name, all I do is remind myself of the facts. Bringing my beliefs to mind, on these or on other matters, is presenting myself with how things are, not summoning a representation of those facts given as distinct from them. Of course, I know that on almost any of these matters, my belief might be mistaken. As a reflective subject I thus acknowledge a gap between my take on the facts, and the facts themselves. But that acknowledgement is not part of the phenomenology of occurrent belief, and nor, therefore—since it is a matter of reminding oneself of one's beliefs—of occurrent factual memory.

The point here is not about transparency. The states that form the occurrent manifestation of all these phenomena—factual, episodic or generic memory, and anticipation—are all transparent, if that means that in attending to them we can attend only to their content. Rather, it is that some transparent states are given to one as representations of their content, as distinct from the states of affairs they represent; and some are not (Hopkins mss.). We find 'experiential' and 'propositional' states on both sides of that divide. But the states involved in occurrent factual memory always fall on the second side.²⁰

5. Knowing What to Take Seriously

Thus adopting the perspective of RtS allows us to plot the relations between episodic memory and other phenomena, both mnemonic and otherwise. I think the resulting map illuminates the terrain in ways that speak in the view's favour. I close by offering another reason for accepting the view.

Episodic memory rarely, if ever, captures the past perfectly. All, or almost all, involves an element of 'reconstruction'. For example, the shifting character of visual experience as we move our bodies, our heads and our eyes, is rarely if ever reflected in the visual memories we summon afterwards (Campbell 2001: 182). Our memories of extended processes, such as skiing down a steep piste, will often compress them, omitting certain passages altogether and shortening others. Most strikingly, we often remember particular events from a perspective other than that we occupied at the time, thus making possible the distinction, much discussed in psychology, between 'field' and 'observer' memories (Nigro & Neisser 1983).

Above we already acknowledged that how things are in episodic memory need not be how they were. Memory is factive, but misremembering is possible: one can merely seem to remember things being a certain way. Moreover, the fact that a state involves misremembering does not preclude its also involving remembering. I merely seem to remember the dress being red, but remember how well it fitted, nonetheless. In one respect, the reconstructive elements of memory are like misrememberings: reconstructed elements cannot be remembered, since that is not how things were.

²⁰ This needs qualifying. If asked the date of the battle, I might feel I can do little more than guess. If I nonetheless get the answer right, haven't I remembered? Perhaps, then, the claims above only apply to factual memories that are presented as such, or perhaps some other qualification is required. My thought is that the claims are true of the central cases of factual memory, however identified.

In another respect, however, reconstruction and misremembering differ. Misremembering always threatens to mislead. Absent special reason to think things were not as we (seem to) remember, we will wrongly assume that is how they were. We are under no such temptation with much reconstruction. No one will puzzle over how they could have witnessed their own downfall from some point of view to the side, and few will be tempted to think that skiing down the piste lasted only as long as the remembered passages combined.

How do we know not to take these aspects of our episodic memories seriously? This epistemological question can now be given a partial answer. As we saw, it follows from RtS that episodic memories are expressions of knowledge. It is a general truth about expressions of knowledge that their features divide into those expressive of the knowledge and those not serving that role. And it is a further general truth that we at least often know which features are which, and thus that we are not in danger of being misled by the incidental features. Our ability to know what to take seriously in episodic memory and what not is merely an instance of this much wider phenomenon.

Here are some other instances of these general truths. If asked what cows look like, I might draw on generic memory. My memory might take the form of a visual image. It is likely that some, perhaps many, of the features I visualize are not features cows in general share. Perhaps the cow I picture is mottled black and white and has short horns. Do I now need to work out whether to take these aspects seriously, as a guide to bovine appearance? Often I do not. Sometimes this will be because I have independent access to the facts, as when I also have factual memory of what cows are like. Often, however, I will have no way to settle the question how cows look other than by picturing one. (The image will be the primary expression of my knowledge.) Even then, often I will not have to work out which aspects to take seriously. The image expresses my knowledge of how cows look, and that fact alone brings with it knowledge of which of its features express that knowledge.

Parallel points hold for anticipation (in the cases where that does express knowledge) or know-how (remembering-how included). From a demonstration of know-how an observer can learn various things about how to perform the action in question (e.g. tying a figure-of-eight). The agent herself might be such an observer—perhaps she's trying to articulate how to tie the knot. Both the agent herself and the spectator must disentangle, from the many features the action exhibits, those essential to tying a figure of eight from those merely incidental to this instance of it. In attempting this, they will not, at least in general, be on a par. The agent need not wonder which features are key, which incidental; this is something she simply knows, as part of knowing how to tie the knot. And this, even though that last knowledge is not something she can yet articulate. (That, after all, is what she seeks to gain from observing herself.) Whence this difference? Again, I suggest, it stems from the fact that only the agent views the action from the perspective of someone whose knowledge it expresses.

I said this answer to the epistemological question is partial. It answers the question for episodic memory by placing the phenomenon in a wider class, that of expressions of knowledge. In doing so it does not, of course, answer the analogous question for that wider class: how do we know (when we do) which aspects of the states and actions expressing our knowledge to take seriously?

Perhaps the answer will seem too partial to be helpful. Perhaps it will seem simply to replace a puzzle concerning episodic memory with a much more general puzzle concerning a wide range of states that express knowledge. Let me close by saying two things against such pessimism.

First, the partial answer does some work. Linking the case of episodic memory to the wider range is real progress. Moreover, it is progress we can make only by treating episodic memories as expressions of knowledge. It is not open to anyone who treats them as sources. Indeed, it is hard to see how such folk can begin to give a plausible answer to the epistemological question for episodic memory. On such a view it seems we must stand to the reconstructive aspects of our memories just as we do to their misrepresentational aspects. For both, we must use something like inference to attempt to sort the wheat from the chaff. As suggested, I do not think this does justice to the epistemic situation. Reconstruction is not opaque to us in the way misremembering is, and it counts against the source view that it must treat it so.

Second, we can elaborate the answer so as to address the wider question. Let us return to the knot case. How is it that the agent knows, for instance, that folding this section of rope over that is essential to tying a figure-of-eight, whereas starting with the left hand rather than the right is not? As I explicated the idea, for an occurrent state or action to express knowledge is for it to be the manifestation of a disposition that itself counts as knowledge.²¹ Dispositions can, and usually do, have many manifestations. This is true of the disposition constituting the agent's knowledge of how to tie a figure-of-eight. One of the manifestations of that disposition is her lack of inclination to contemplate incidental features of her action (starting with the left) as integral to tying the knot. Another is her inclination to take essential features (laying this section over that) as precisely that. Thus the disposition exerts pressure on the agent, pressure that guides her sense of which features are incidental, which not. The mere observer, not (yet) knowing how to tie the knot, is not in a position to benefit from this resource. And this difference between them is quite consistent with the fact that neither (yet) has the ability to articulate instructions for it.

Precisely parallel points hold for other expressions of knowledge, including occurrent episodic memories. There too the fact that dispositions have a range of manifestations offers a way to answer the wider question how we know which features of expressions of our knowledge do the expressing, and which not. Perhaps this still leaves work to do. Even so, appeal to a key strand in RtS, the idea of memory as an expression of knowledge, has opened the way to progress.

Conclusion

This paper has articulated, and offered a limited defence of, the view of episodic memory as representing the past to oneself. In key part the articulation took the form of exploring points of disagreement with the conflicting position latent in the metaphor of mental time travel. For one disagreement, whether memory is active or passive, I offered an argument that, if successful, I take to be compelling. Since if memory is active it is very hard to see how it can be a source of knowledge, that also promises to settle the second dispute, suitably clarified, in RtS's favour. More tentatively, I have suggested how the view might be developed so as to deny Quasi-Experience; and offered two further considerations in its support. The coherent map RtS offers of the wider terrain in which episodic memory sits and its ability to explain how we know which aspects of our memory

²¹ This is part of the Expression Schema. The rest is that the occurrent state represents a content, where what is there represented is the same content as is known in the disposition. As noted (§4), remembering-how doesn't fit all of this. It does, however, fit the part here, and that is all I need for present purposes.

representations to take seriously may not be decisive, but they do give us significant reason to take the view seriously.²²

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