Foreword

Apresentação

César Schirmer dos Santos[*]

Tiegue Vieira Rodrigues[**]

The philosophy of memory today

From time immemorial, philosophers have been concerned with issues related to memory. However, the philosophy of memory understood as a particular field is a very new enterprise. This new field of study is the result of the growth of research on memory, which can be measured by a large number of publications in specialized scientific journals, conferences, seminars, as well as societies and research centers. It is safe to say that

> The philosophy of memory is now well on its way to taking form as a distinct, coherent area of research, with a recognized set of problematics and theories. […] Philosophers of memory […] increasingly think of themselves as philosophers of memory, and the area is in the process of developing its own infrastructure, as books, special issues, conferences, and workshops on all aspects of the philosophy of memory become regular occurrences[1].

Thus the situation is such that, historically, memory is fundamental for the main debates in aesthetics, politics, ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics, and there is more than one venerable tradition of philosophical investigation about the nature of memory. Until now, however, it was not usual to hear philosophers describing themselves as philosophers of memory. But now the philosophical landscape is changing. Evidence of this new situation is this very number of the journal *Voluntas* on the topic of philosophy of memory.

---

[*] PhD in Philosophy at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul. Professor of Philosophy at Federal University of Santa Maria. E-mail: cesar.santos@ufsm.br
[**] PhD in Philosophy at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul. Professor of Philosophy at Federal University of Santa Maria. E-mail: tieguevieira@gmail.com
[1] BERNECKER; MICHAELIAN, *Editors' introduction*, p. 1.

But why now? The explanation seems to be outside philosophy, in science and society. Nowadays, due both to new empirical discoveries and to new social challenges, the philosophy of memory is thriving for at least two reasons. On the one hand, new ideas in cognitive psychology and the neurosciences open the opportunity to think once more about the distinction between memory and imagination, the requirement of truth in memory, and the relationship between memory and knowledge. On the other hand, new political phenomena from the 20th century made it necessary to discuss the relationship between forgetfulness and responsibility—and the duty to remember.

Memory is fundamental. Almost every cognitive capacity interacts with memory. Investigation about the nature of memory is almost as old as philosophy itself and is more critical today than it has ever been in the history of philosophy. Plato, Aristotle, and Augustine gave key contributions to the philosophy of memory, and Buddhist schools of thought discussed deeply how it could be the case that we have memory considering that there is no self at the fundamental level of reality. Spinoza, Locke, Hume, and Reid renewed the philosophy of memory at the dawn of modernity, bonding the power to remember one's own personal past with the issue of personal identity. More recently, analytic and non-analytic philosophers used insights from psychology (introspectionist and behaviorist), psychoanalysis, cognitive sciences, and neurosciences to reconceive the philosophical thought about the nature of memory. Usually, the results of these philosophical explorations can be seen in the philosophy of mind, epistemology, and ethics, areas that can progress even more now with the help of philosophers or memory.

Having in mind this current situation, the editors of this special issue of *Voluntas* proposed to the philosophical community a call for papers on the topic of memory. Our idea was to receive contributions from a wide variety of perspectives: historical and thematic, ancient and modern, a priori and a posteriori. We strongly believe that such pluralism[2] of approaches, problems, and solutions is the best way forward when it comes to the further development of the area of philosophy of memory.

Overview of the articles

André Sant'Anna and Kourken Michaelian's article is a presentation of the current state of the debate in philosophy of memory. They review the causal theory of memory (CTM), and explain the motivation behind the simulation theory of memory (STM) and the functionalist theory of memory. Besides the fact that the article is an important contribution for the current debate in philosophy of memory, it is probably the best introduction to the philosophy of memory available for the Brazilian language readers. For these readers, this article is the natural starting point.

---

[2] O'LOUGHLIN; ROBINS, *The Philosophy of Memory*, p. 2.

Nikola Andonovski's article examines more closely the role of the notion of *simulation* in the STM, a theory based on empirical research grounding the hypothesis that there is a cognitive system that allows human beings to construct or simulate episodes. There are two views on the nature of simulation. First, simulation can be seen as replication of a former mental state. Second, simulation can be viewed as mathematical representation of an event. The problem with the first view is that STM is not committed to the thesis that what is remembered is a previous mental state. The problem for the second proposal is that it is not clear how the cognitive system would establish the minimal conditions for the similarity between the event simulated and the abstract representation.

Marina Trakas' article deals with main difficulties with the usual criteria for the distinction between different kinds of memory—with a focus on the case of episodic memory. Trakas review the main criteria available in the literature: grammar, phenomenology, causation. Also, she approaches issues concerning the vehicle/content distinction and the main differences between autobiographical and episodic memory. As a result, Trakas assess problems with these criteria and distinctions. For this reason, she proposes a new criterium based on "the affective significance of a past experience".

Maria Cristina Clorinda Vendra's article investigates how Paul Ricoeur uses the concept of collective memory for the exposition of problems related to diachronic and synchronic social cohesion. Concerning the constitution of collective memory, the main problem concerns problems for the self due to the gap between subjective time and manifest time. Given the unbridgeable nature of this gap, Vendra proposes that the solution cannot be found neither in an isolated individual consciousness nor in a simple sum of memories from different people, but in narrative. The author also proposes a way of reading back the first works of Paul Ricoeur by the light of his last works.

Danilo Dantas' article focuses on how the causal condition makes it hard to explain memory errors in the CTM framework. Consider cases where the agent retrieves information that was not in the former experience that is the target of the retrieval process, but is associated with the target past experience. In this case, the CTM philosopher can say that there is no memory because there is no satisfaction of the causal condition. However, it is strange that there is no proper *causal* explanation for the error. Why is this the case? Dantas proposes that if the causal condition were adequate, it could be used to explain cases of remembering and *mis*remembering—which is not the case. Similar problems for the CTM are related to other kinds of memory errors.

Beatriz Sorrentino Marques' article takes on Stanley Klein's theory of the self. According to Klein, there can be a self with no episodic memory. However, Marques disputes the meaningfulness of Klein's proposal on the grounds that the relevant sense of the self for the debate on selfhood "springs from and is dependent on episodic memory". Marques concludes "that the sense of continuity, as Klein conceives it, does not add much

to the issue of personal identity or related issues that elicit philosophical concern. Moreover, the relevant sense of selfhood to these issues is diachronic sense of self, which depends on episodic memory".

Filipe Volz' article addresses Walter Benjamin's philosophy of memory. Volz claim that Benjamin's framework for memory is constituted by two elements. On the one hand, there is a thesis about self-understanding: the way we understand the past is the key to the explanation of the way we understand the present. On the other hand, there is a thesis about the possibility of self-understanding: because there is a conflict between leaving traces and being aware, either there is a process from acquisition to storage of information or there is a process from storage to retrieval of information, but the two process cannot be simultaneous. The solution for the conflict between storage and recollection is structuring the past in an intersubjective narrative that works as a surrogate for individual memory and opens the possibility of understanding one's own past, and, therefore, of understanding one's own present.

Lastly, Sanqueilo de Lima Santos and Mariana Marcelino Alvares' article considers the complex and challenging bridge between, on the one hand, personal and collective memory, and, on the other hand, impersonal historiography. Based on Paul Ricoeur's proposals, Santos & Alvares put pressure on the problem of the dual success condition for historiography: the historical document has to be true, but it also has to be a ground for justice. The author concludes that there is no ready or easy solution for this problem.

Associated with this special issue of *Voluntas* there is, also, a translation to Brazilian Portuguese of Henri Bergson's review for the 1890's edition of Jean-Marie Guyau's book *La Genèse de l'Idée de Temps*.

On the cover image

In the cover of this special issue of *Voluntas* is illustrated the image of a 31,3cm terracotta figure of a mythological animal, the hippocamp. It is a living being with an upper part of a horse and a lower part of a fish. This is a Greek sculpture from the third century before Christ that was found in the Sicilian city of Centuripe, in Italy. Nowadays, the sculpture is part of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art collection (https://collections.lacma.org/node/172485).

We had chosen this image for two reasons. First, "hippocampus" is the noun for the genus of the seahorse, and the part of the brain responsible for binding images together in the representation of a complex and coherent scene remembered or imagined is called "hippocampus" because it has a shape similar to a seahorse. Second, the mythological figure of the hippocamp, typical of Greek, Roman and Etruscan art, is an emblematic product of this part of the brain that we call the *hippocampus*. For this reason, it expresses

very well the human ease of moving from the domain of perceived and remembered scenes to the domain of what was never exactly perceived but can be imagined.

Acknowledgements

References

BERNECKER, S.; MICHAELIAN, K. Editors' introduction: The philosophy of memory today. In: BERNECKER, S.; MICHAELIAN, K. (Eds.). *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Memory.* London: Routledge, 2017. p. 1–5.

O'LOUGHLIN, I.; ROBINS, S. K. The Philosophy of Memory: Introduction. *Essays in Philosophy*, v. 19, n. 2, 2018.