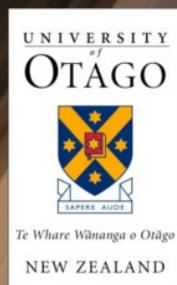


# NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF MEMORY

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25-26 October 2016  
University of Otago

<http://phil-mem.org/events.html>



**NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF MEMORY**  
25–26 October 2016

University of Otago  
Philosophy Department seminar room  
117 Union Street East

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## **SCHEDULE: TUESDAY OCTOBER 25**

**09:00–09:15** Welcome.

**09:15–10:30** Kourken Michaelian. *Confabulating, misremembering, relearning: The simulation theory of memory and unsuccessful remembering.*

**10:30–10:45** Coffee break.

**10:45–12:00** Denis Perrin. *The procedural nature of episodic memory.*

**12:00–13:30** Lunch at a local restaurant.

**13:30–14:45** André Sant'Anna. *Thinking about events: A pragmatic account of the objects of episodic hypothetical thought.*

**14:45–15:00** Coffee break.

**15:00–16:15** Jordi Fernández. *Functionalism and the nature of episodic memory.*

**16:15–17:00** Comfort break.

**17:00–18:00** Public talk: John Sutton. *Sharing cognitive futures (and pasts): Small groups and shared histories.*

**18:00–19:00** Free time.

**19:00 onwards** Dinner at a local restaurant.

**SCHEDULE: WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 26**

**09:15–10:30** Philip Gerrans. *Subjective presence in mental time travel.*

**10:30–10:45** Coffee break.

**10:45–12:00** Dorothea Debus. *Handle with care: On the fragility of recollective memories, and some ethical implications.*

**12:00–13:30** Lunch at a local restaurant.

**13:30–14:45** Chloe Wall. *Are memory and testimony analogous?*

**14:45–15:00** Coffee break.

**15:00–16:15** John Sutton. *Shared remembering and distributed affectivity: Intimacy, memory, and emotion-regulation.*

**16:15–17:00** Comfort break.

**17:00–18:00** Public talk: Denis Perrin. *Memory and anaphora.*

**18:00–19:00** Free time.

**19:00 onwards** Dinner at a local restaurant.

## ABSTRACTS

**Dorothea Debus (University of York).** *Handle with care: On the fragility of recollective memories, and some ethical implications.*

Sometimes we remember past events in a vivid, experiential way. These experiential, or ‘recollective’ memories play an important role in our everyday lives. They provide us with knowledge about the past, they help us to form a healthy sense of self, and they arguably also play an important role in grounding a person’s identity over time. Thus, recollective memories are rather important and valuable elements of our ordinary, everyday mental lives. However, while recollective memories seem very important, recollective memories also are rather ‘fragile’: Sometimes we find ourselves unable to prompt ourselves to recollectively remember particular past events which we would like to remember, and at other times we find ourselves with recollective memories which we would much rather not have; sometimes we find that certain recollective memories have ‘reconstructive’ elements which are imagined into the scene but do not represent things as they were in the past, at other times we have whole experiences of which we are not sure whether they are memories or imaginings; the empirical literature on so-called ‘false memories’ also provides evidence which suggests that it is sometimes possible to manipulate subjects so that they become convinced that some of their experiences are memories, while these experiences present subjects with events which never occurred in their lives at all (and therefore most certainly should not count as memories). Thus, it is plausible to hold that while recollective memories are very important in our everyday lives, they are also very ‘fragile’. But then, given their importance, we should try to protect our recollective memories from ‘breaking’. The present paper will explore ways in which we might be actively involved with our own recollective memories in this respect, and it will ask whether, why, and in which contexts subjects might be responsible for handling their own recollective memories, as well as the recollective memories of others, with care.

**Jordi Fernández (University of Adelaide).** *Functionalism and the nature of episodic memory.*

The goal of this chapter is to determine what is to remember something, as opposed to imagining it, perceiving it, or introspecting it. What does it take for a mental state to qualify as remembering? I will consider the two main existing conceptions of the conditions that a mental state must satisfy for us to accept it as the state of remembering something. The first of these approaches, the causal theory of memory, is backward-looking. It puts forward conditions that strictly concern the aetiology of the mental state at issue. I will argue that the conditions offered by this backward-looking approach are both too strong and too weak: They rule out mental states that, intuitively, count as memories while including mental states that, intuitively, do not qualify as memories. The second approach, the narrativity conception of memory, is forward-looking. It puts forward conditions that only concern the impact that the mental state has on the subjects overall cognitive economy. I will argue that the conditions proposed by this forward-looking approach are both too weak

and too strong as well. However, the discussion of the two approaches will allow us to draw some helpful lessons on the constraints that any proposal about the nature of memory should respect. An alternative approach that aims to incorporate those lessons will be offered by drawing on the literature on functionalism. I will argue that this approach can, on the one hand, accommodate as memories those mental states which indicate that the backward-looking approach and the forward-looking approach are too strict and, on the other hand, rule out those mental states which suggest that the two alternative approaches are too permissive. Accordingly, I will conclude that construing memory along functionalist lines allows us to preserve the virtues of the two main conceptions of the nature of memory while, at the same time, avoiding their difficulties.

**Philip Gerrans (University of Adelaide).** *Subjective presence in mental time travel.*

One of the defining features of the default mode network (DMN) is its specialization for “self referential” processing. This specialization is produced by its links with circuitry involved in affective processing.

In particular the contribution of the DMN is to allow us to “feel the future”, to produce feelings of being personally involved in an episode of imagination. Many theorists have argued that without the ability to integrate such feelings, which are produced by higher order affective processes, self referential processing in a variety of contexts (moral and social cognition, personal planning and reflection) would be severely compromised. Indeed I have argued that it is the affective aspect which makes DMN processing self-referential. Unless self representation is imbued with affect it lacks an essential subjective perspective.

These ideas are challenged by patients such as Roger, whose limbic and DMN systems are lesioned and who has severe anterograde amnesia. Yet according to experimenters his self-awareness is not compromised. Other cases of aphantasia (absence of the episodic representations) also challenge the view that the DMN is necessary for self-awareness and diachronic self representation. In particular they challenge the interpretation of Anterior Insula functioning advanced by Craig and others which treats the AIC as a substrate of self awareness. Roger for example has damaged insula and limbic systems.

These challenges can be met by reflecting on the computational nature of processes that generate self awareness. In short it is not affective processing per se which generates self awareness but predicted affective processing in the AIC. I discuss the contribution of predictive coding in the AIC to cognition and self representation and self awareness in general and in cases of aphantasia in particular. The conclusion that aphantasics have intact self awareness may depend on an overly intellectual characterization of representation.

**Kourken Michaelian (University of Otago).** *Confabulating, misremembering, relearning: The simulation theory of memory and unsuccessful remembering.*

This talk develops a taxonomy of memory errors in terms of three conditions: the accuracy of the memory representation, the reliability of the memory process, and the internality (with respect to the remembering subject) of that process. Unlike previous taxonomies, which appeal to retention of information rather than reliability or internality, this taxonomy can accommodate not only misremembering (e.g., the DRM effect), falsidical confabulation, and veridical relearning but also veridical confabulation and falsidical relearning. Moreover, because it does not assume that successful remembering presupposes retention of information, the taxonomy is compatible with recent simulation theories of remembering.

**Denis Perrin (Université Grenoble Alpes).** *The procedural nature of episodic memory.*

It is common to draw a sharp distinction between declarative memory and procedural memory regarding their respective natures and functions. The former are thought to be world-highlighting in virtue of providing representations of facts and experiences, while the latter are thought to be representationally blind and to merely provide practical skills. Drawing on attributionalism in psychology (Jacoby & al., 1989; Whittlesea, 1997; Leboe-McGowan and Whittlesea, 2013 — but see also Tulving’s GAPS model, 1985), this chapter argues that this common view is misguided. In contrast to the common view, it argues for a view of procedural memory as an essential ground of declarative memory, especially episodic memory. The core argument of the chapter is as follows: representation (including perceptual and recollective representation) always depends on constructive processes; constructive processes involve skills, whose possession depends on procedural memory; thus representational memory (including episodic memory) is grounded in procedural memory. I build up this argument in two steps. First, I critically discuss direct realism, which endorses a sharp declarative-procedural distinction. On this view, episodic reliving is a matter of being about the relevant past episode itself in a specific manner, namely, through a direct cognitive link to it. I argue that this claim can be understood in either of two ways: in a strong, internalist way (Debus, 2008) or in a weak, externalist way (Bernecker, 2008). Bearing this distinction in mind, I claim that the first version is empirically implausible and that the second fails to account for the phenomenology of reliving. On either way of understanding the claim, direct realism is doomed to failure because it assumes a static view of the objects of memory. Second, once we acknowledge that the objects of perception and memory are the products of essentially constructive cognitive processes, as suggested by current constructivism in psychology (Schacter et Addis, 2007), a different, dynamic approach is available, one that bases their phenomenological properties on these processes. I then argue that attributionalism provides a way of fleshing out such an approach that provides an adequate understanding of episodic phenomenology. In a nutshell, episodic reliving results from the automatic attribution to past experience of the detected procedural features of the construction of a mental scene. In support of this claim, I then show that key features of episodic recollection — causality, subjectivity, the sense of pastness, and particularity — can be accounted for along attributionalist lines.

**André Sant’Anna (University of Otago).** *Thinking about events: A pragmatic account of the objects of episodic hypothetical thought.*

This paper motivates and defends a novel pragmatist account of the objects of episodic hypothetical thought. Taking the traditional debate between direct and indirect realist accounts of the objects of episodic memory as our starting point, we aim to move the debate forward by bringing together insights from two literatures: first, recent psychological and neuroscientific research on memory as a form of mental time travel; second, the contemporary philosophical literature on relationalist and representationalist approaches to perception. We appeal to both literatures to demonstrate the need for an account of the objects of episodic memory — and, more generally, of the objects of what we refer to as episodic hypothetical thought — which combines features of direct and indirect realism, and we build on the philosophy of perception literature, in particular, to develop a relationalist account — grounded on pragmatist ideas — which does so. This approach builds on two important pragmatist ideas: first, that there is a continuity between mental objects and material objects, and second, that our relationship to objects depends on the actions generated by our interaction with them.

**John Sutton (Macquarie University).** *Shared remembering and distributed affectivity: Intimacy, memory, and emotion-regulation.*

Significant features of human social and emotional life arise from undertaking joint actions and sharing experiences together over many years. The unique nature of specific close relationships reflects and is partly constituted by the particular ways people remember their shared past, and in doing so manage their ongoing affective states, construct and adjust joint commitments, and implement or enact future plans together. Such shared remembering is also situated, occurring in rich socio-material contexts and settings, and implicating cultural norms and resources, explicit and implicit cognitive styles and strategies, and idiosyncratic patterns of embodied and emotional interaction. This paper examines connections between shared memory and situated or distributed affectivity both in ongoing intimate relationships, and when such relationships end or change. It draws on and seeks to forge links between recent philosophical work (for example by Colombetti, Krueger, Seemann, and Slaby), and psychological studies of the roles of memory and sociality in dementia and grief.

**Chloe Wall (University of Otago).** *Are memory and testimony analogous?*

My primary task in this talk is to consider two serious objections to the claim that memory and testimony are analogous. To this end, I provide a brief overview of the features of memory and testimony that support drawing an analogy between them. Crucially, I argue, both memory and testimony are constructive enterprises that draw on the cognitive resources of both a source (the earlier or past self in the case of memory, and a testifier in the case of testimony) and a receiver (the present or later self and a recipient, respectively). I then consider two serious objections to the analogy I aim to draw. First, in order for a testimonial exchange to take place, both testifier and recipient must form intentional stances about the other. In other words, each must make assessments regarding the other’s

cognitive state, background knowledge, reliability, etc. One might object that there is no analogous process in the case of remembering. Second, it appears as though one can remember on purpose—that is, intentionally—or one can simply remember without forming the intention to do so. By contrast, it seems as though testifying is only ever done intentionally. The asymmetry, one might object, is enough to threaten the analogy between memory and testimony. In this presentation, I consider and respond to both of these objections, showing that neither undermines the analogy.