

MEMORY KNOWLEDGE

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Introduction

Knowledge can be subdivided according to the sources from which it arises. Among the basic sources of knowledge and justification are perception, testimony, reason and inference. Whether memory is a basic source of knowledge is a controversial issue. Some philosophers maintain that memory only retains or preserves knowledge but doesn't produce new knowledge. Others insist that there are cases where a person first comes to know by remembering.

In what follows I will begin in section 1 by characterizing the standard taxonomy of memory. Following this, I will explain the distinction between direct and representative realism about memory (section 2). Section 3 concerns the question of whether memory implies knowledge. Section 4 examines whether memory is merely a preservative source of justification and knowledge or whether it can also function as a generative source. Finally, section 5 discusses responses to skepticism about memory knowledge.

1. Kinds of Memory

Psychologists distinguish between kinds of memories along four axes: the length of time the information is stored, the degree of awareness the subject has of the stored information, the kind of prompt that triggers the retrieval of the stored content, and the kind of content that is stored. The most basic distinction regarding memory contents is that between those that the subject can express (declarative memory) and memories that one can only demonstrate but not express (non-declarative memory). Declarative memory is broken down into two subtypes: semantic and episodic memory. Semantic memory is the store of general knowledge about the world, concepts, rules, and language. The characteristic feature of semantic memory is that it can be used without reference to the events that account for its formation in the first place. Episodic memory stores spatial and temporal landmarks that identify the particular time and place when an event occurred. It is accompanied by the experience of remembering, or mentally traveling back in time and re-experiencing the

events. Thus, whereas semantic memory involves retrieval of the information acquired during a given learning episode, episodic memory involves, in addition, remembering something about the specific learning episode itself, namely the context in which the information was acquired.

When philosophers distinguish kinds of memory they usually come up with a tripartite classification: experiential (or personal), propositional (or factual), and practical (or procedural) memory. To *experientially remember* something one must not only remember what happened but also remember what it was like. Experiential memory has two characteristics. First, one can experientially remember only what one has personally experienced. Experiential memory is restricted to cases in which the claim to remember something incorporates the claim to have experienced it for oneself. Second, experiential memory represents the remembered content from the first-person perspective and involves qualitative experiences (qualia) and imagery. Experiential memory consists in the evocation of parts of the original experience, allowing one to relive or re-experience the original situation and going over what it was like.

Propositional memory is memory of true propositions or facts. One can remember propositions about the past (e.g. that John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963), the present (e.g. that one's partner is currently shopping), the future (e.g. that one's partner's birthday is next Tuesday), as well as timeless truths (e.g. $2 + 2 = 4$). Though the object of propositional memory need not deal with the past, one's learning of what one propositionally remembers must precede the remembering. One cannot remember that p if one has only just learned that p . Unlike experiential memory, propositional memory is not limited to things with which one has had direct or personal acquaintance. One need not have witnessed the event to remember, say, that Kennedy was assassinated in 1963. Consequently propositional memory doesn't require qualitative experiences and imagery. And provided the individual is the final authority on the existence and nature of his mental images and qualia, self-ascriptions of experiential memory have an epistemic authority that self-ascriptions of propositional memory lack.

Experiential and propositional memory have in common that they seek to represent the world and that their contents can in principle be articulated. Neither of the features apply to *practical memory* or is remembering how to do something. Practical memory stores previously acquired skills. Examples of practical memory are remembering how to swim and remembering how to ride a bicycle. To remember how to swim, one need not be able to visualize or describe the activity of swimming – all one needs to do is to actually swim.

Although the three kinds of memory are each associated with a particular

grammatical construction – remembering *that* such-and-such, remembering *such-and-such itself*, remembering *how* to do such-and-such – grammar provides only a rough guide to which form of memory is involved. Experiential memories can be expressed not only by a combination of ‘remember’ with a gerund (e.g. I remember having spent a few days in Dallas) but also by a that-clause (e.g. I remember that I spent a few days in Dallas). It’s not always possible to tell, on the basis of a memory report, whether a memory in question belongs to the class of experiential or propositional memory.

Some proponents of the tripartite classification scheme employ Russell’s (1997: ch. 5) distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description to differentiate between experiential and propositional memory. Something is known by acquaintance when there is direct experience of it; it is known by description if it can only be described as a thing with such-and-such properties. Experiential memory is said to be memory by acquaintance and its intentional objects to be not facts or propositions but people, places, things, events, and situations. Propositional memory, on the other hand, is thought to be analogous to knowledge by description. The problem with this proposal is threefold: First, many autobiographical data are remembered by description and many memories of impersonal propositions are due to us having been acquainted with the things they are about. Second, in one respect propositional memory is analogous to knowledge by acquaintance. Russell himself thought that in entertaining a proposition, one is acquainted with that proposition. So appealing to Russell’s notion of acquaintance doesn’t have the consequence that the advocates of the standard taxonomy of kinds of memory aim for. Third, construing the experiential/propositional distinction along the lines of the acquaintance/description distinction yields the counterintuitive consequence that, strictly speaking, one cannot experientially remember *that p*.

Some proponents of the tripartite classification scheme align the distinction between experiential and propositional memory with the psychologist’s distinction between semantic and episodic memory. Propositional memory is identified with semantic memory and experiential memory is identified with episodic memory. Yet we saw that what distinguishes experiential from propositional memory is that the former, but not the latter, is limited to items with which one has had direct acquaintance. The distinction between semantic and episodic memory, on the other hand, does not turn on direct acquaintance with the remembered thing but instead on the contextual wealth of the stored information.

2. The Objects of Memory

Traditionally philosophers were concerned with the debate between representative (or indirect) and direct realism about memory. The discussion of memory closely followed the discussion of perception. Just as philosophers have debated the question whether perception is a direct awareness of objects or an inferential procedure, so it has been debated whether memory provides mediate or immediate awareness of the past.

Representative realism about memory claims that, though there is a past that causes us to have memory experiences, we are not directly or immediately aware of the past. What we are directly aware of are the effects these objects have on us – representations or sense-data of things past. We remember something not by way of being directly aware of that thing, but rather a mediating representation of that thing. To remember is to undergo a certain sort of mental experience; it is to experience a mental representation which reproduces some past sense-experience. Among the advocates of the representative theory are Hume (1978: 8-10), James (1890: i. ch. 16), Locke (1975: 149-55), and Russell (1995a: ch. 9).

What speaks in favor of representative realism is the fact that, phenomenologically speaking, there might be no difference between veridical and illusory rememberings. There doesn't seem to be a subjective mark whereby we can distinguish between those rememberings in which the object as presently visualized is identical with the object as originally seen and those in which it is not. Why not therefore say that what is directly remembered in either case is something internal to us – a representation? Even in cases of veridical remembering the primary object of awareness is a representation of a past object rather than the object itself.

The most widely canvassed objection to representative realism about memory is that it makes the past unknowable. If all we are directly aware of are our representations about the past, how can we know that there is a past at all, much less that the past is the cause of our present representations? How can we discriminate memory representations from other representational states such as figments of the imagination? The need to discern memory representations from other kinds of representations is particularly pressing if one wants to base memory knowledge on awareness of memory representations. It seems that to know that the representation one is currently having refers to what actually happened one would have to first establish what happened and then check the representation against the facts. But how can one do this if, as the representative theory insists, the direct objects of memory are internal representations? To discover whether something is a genuine memory representation,

one would have to inspect it from an external point of view, but, according to the representative theory, the only way of finding out what happened in the past is via representations. Thus the representative theorist finds himself imprisoned within his representations, with no way of confirming that the alleged memory representations do in fact reveal the past, as they have to if he is to have memory knowledge.

Some advocates of representative realism have responded to this problem by maintaining that one can indeed tell, by reflection alone, whether a particular representation one is having is one of memory or one of the other faculties of the mind, such as perception or imagination. The feature of memory representations that distinguishes them from other kinds of representations and that stamps them as authentic may be called the *memory marker*. Memory markers are defined as a priori knowable properties of memory representations by which they can be distinguished from other mental phenomena. Memory markers have been described by representative realists in a number of ways, as the feeling of warmth and intimacy (James 1890: i. 650), the feeling of familiarity and pastness (Russell 1995a: 163), or as the force and vivacity of memory representations (Hume 1978: 9-10, 85-6).

The problem all the various proposals of memory markers have in common is that they don't offer a reliable mark. There are cases in which these alleged memory markers are present, but in which there is no inclination to speak of memory and there are instances where memories lack these alleged markers. We may seem to remember something that is really unfamiliar to us, and we may not seem to remember something that once formed part of our common experience. What is more, the properties identified as memory markers don't bear their own explanation upon their face. The association between representations that strike us as familiar and memory is not an epistemic reason for anything. For the mere fact, if it is one, that we are inclined to make this association does not imply that we are justified to make it. The required justification could of course come from some independent evidence suggesting that genuine memories appear familiar more often than fantasies. Yet if such evidence exists at all, it cannot be accessed by reflection alone. Alternatively the required justification could be the result of a general principle whereby it is reasonable to trust our cognitive faculties (including our memories) even though we lack a non-question begging assurance of their reliability. But if in any event we are entitled to trust our cognitive faculties, including our memory, then memory markers are superfluous (cf. Bernecker 2008, ch. 5-6).

According to the *direct realist*, we don't remember the past by virtue of being aware of a representation presenting the past to us, rather our awareness of the

past is direct. Although remembering something requires the having of representations and although these representations determine the way the thing appears to us, there is no reason to suppose we are aware of these representations themselves. We are aware of the past event by internally representing the event, not by being aware of the internal representation of the event. Representations, according to the direct realist, don't function as the objects of memory, but are merely the vehicle of the remembered information. Direct realism about memory is defended by, among others, Laird (1920: 56), Reid (1997: essay 3), and Russell (1997: 114-5).

The realist theory derives some of its plausibility from the fact that when we remember something, what we are aware of is just that thing, and nothing further. As Reid (1997: 28) remarks, 'upon the strictest examination, memory appears to me to have things that are past, and not present ideas, for its object'. Since, on the realist view, what we are directly aware of in memory is the past event in *propria persona*, and not some representation of it, one of the difficulties of the representative theory of memory disappears: the difficulty of explaining how we can be justified in inferring the occurrence of a past event from the occurrence of a present representation. If what we are directly aware of is the past event itself, and not a present representation thereof, no such inference is required.

Though direct realism makes some problems disappear, it gives rise to others. One of the problems of direct realism is to explain our direct acquaintance with, or experience of past events. Another worry is that direct realism is incompatible with the highly intuitive causal theory of memory, that is, the view that for someone to remember something his representation of that thing must be suitably causally connected to his past representation of that same thing. Hume famously held that the relation between cause and effect is a metaphysical rather than a logical relation and that therefore causal relations cannot be known a priori. The only way in which a particular effect can be inferred from a given cause is on the basis of experience, in particular by observation of a regularity between events of the same type. This is the Humean requirement that a cause and its effect are 'independent existences' (1978: 79-80). Now, there is the worry that direct realism about memory is incompatible with the causal theory of memory because it violates the Humean requirement of distinct existences. For if the effect is characterized as 'S's having a memory representation of X', then it is possible to tell a priori that X occurred. Direct realism licences an a priori inference from a memory representation to its past cause and thereby flies in the face of the Humean account of causation.

The Humean worry that if there is a logical relation between two events that

supports an a priori inference from one to the other, then there is no room left for causal efficacy among them strikes me as being misguided. We can always re-describe the effect in a way as to make it an entailment of the cause. But from this it doesn't follow that causation is a myth. For even if we chose to describe the effect-event in a different manner it would still follow the cause with the same regularity as before. Causation is a relation between events. Logical relations, however, hold between propositions and linguistic entities. And just because there is a logical relation between the descriptions of two events doesn't preclude that the events themselves stand in a causal relation. Hence there is no reason to suppose that direct realism conflicts with the causal theory of memory.

In the end, the most plausible position regarding the dispute between representative and direct realism seems to be some form of disjunctivism. Disjunctivism grants that there may be no experiential difference between veridical and illusory memory and that there is a true description available under which a given genuine memory and a subjectively indistinguishable illusion can fall. What disjunctivism denies is that the availability of such a description is due to us being aware of the same thing in genuine memory and in illusory memory. In genuine memory we are aware of physical objects; in illusory memory, if we are aware of anything, we are aware of mental entities such representations. A genuine memory and a subjectively indistinguishable illusion are mental states of a different kind.

3. Memory and Knowledge

According to received wisdom in philosophy, remembering that *p* implies knowing that *p*. Propositional memory is thought to be long-standing or continuing knowledge. Audi (2003: 69), for example, says that 'if you remember that we met, you know that we did. Similarly, if you remember me, you know me.' Malcolm (1963: 223) defines propositional memory thus: 'A person *B* remembers that *p* if and only if *B* knows that *p* because he knew that *p*.' And Margalit (2002: 14) writes: 'To remember now is to know now what you knew in the past, without learning in-between what you know now. And to know is to believe something to be true. Memory, then, is knowing from the past.' The identification of memory with knowledge is not confined to the field of philosophy but is just as widespread among psychologists (cf. Gardiner and Richardson-Klavehn 2000).

Most philosophers hold that the concept of propositional knowledge has

three necessary conditions: belief, truth, and justification (however construed). (I use the term ‘justification’ to refer to any factor that transforms a true belief into knowledge.) Given that memory implies knowledge and given the transitivity of implication, memory implies belief, truth and justification. Now it is beyond doubt that both knowledge and memory imply truth. Just as you can know that p only if p is true, so you can remember only what is the case. If not- p , then S may think he remembers that p , but cannot actually remember that p . Truth is a component of both knowledge and memory. The task of evaluating the view whereupon memory is a form of knowledge is thus a matter of determining the tenability of the belief constraint and the justification constraint.

To see that one can remember that p without believing that p consider the following example adapted from Malcolm (1963: 213-4): at t_2 S finds himself with the thought that he has been kidnapped when he was a small boy (at t_1). The idea that he has been kidnapped just pops into his head; it seems to come ‘out of the blue’. S can’t make sense of this idea and takes it to be merely imaginary. After all the likelihood of being kidnapped is rather low. What is more, the idea in question is inferentially isolated from the large body of inferentially integrated beliefs to which S has access. Nothing of what S knows or believes about his past connects with the idea that he has been kidnapped. But now suppose that, unbeknownst to S , it is in fact the case that he has been kidnapped. The flashbulb thought is indeed an instance of propositional memory. Perhaps because of the terror of the experience S can’t allow himself to even consider the possibility that he had been the victim of kidnapping but instead takes himself to be making it up.

Believing that p involves holding p true yet it doesn’t involve actively reflecting on p or an especially high degree of confidence with respect to p . Given that acceptance is a central component of both occurrent and dispositional belief, it would be wrong to say that S *believes* at t_2 that he was kidnapped at t_1 . For only after he is presented with the police record and newspaper clippings about his kidnapping does he reluctantly accept that he had been kidnapped when a small boy. It takes considerable convincing until S consents to the thesis according to which the thought in question springs from his memory rather than his imagination. And when he finally accepts this thesis he acquires a novel belief rather than reviving a dormant one. Thus S not only remembers that p without believing that he remembers that p , but he remembers that p without believing that which he remembers, namely p . (Obviously, if knowledge didn’t imply belief, as some argue, then cases of memory without belief wouldn’t count against the thesis that to remember that p is to know that p .)

The most compelling cases of memory without justification are ones where

the subject remembers that p but where there is some defeating information such that, if he became aware of it, he would no longer be justified in believing p . Despite the dazzling number of different conceptions of epistemic justification, philosophers on both sides of the internalism/externalism divide sign up to the idea that justification is incompatible with undefeated defeaters. In the case of epistemic internalism, it is obvious that the presence of undefeated defeaters undermines justification. Given that what justifies a belief is a mentally accessible item (something that one can come to know whether it obtains just by reflecting on one's mental states), being justified in believing p must exclude a person's having sufficient reasons for supposing either that p is false or that the belief that p is not grounded or produced in a way that is sufficiently truth-indicating. Moreover, the majority of externalists hold that although a subject need not be aware of the factors that justify his belief, he may not be aware of evidence that undermines his belief. So in addition to the reliabilist justification condition they adopt a no-defeater condition that ensures that a justified belief is not incoherent with the background information the subject possesses.

Consider the following case of memory without justification. At t_1 , S learned that John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963. He comes to know this fact. At t_2 , S 's friends play a practical joke on him. They tell him that Kennedy not assassinated until 1964 and present him with plausible but misleading evidence to this effect. Given the incompatibility of justification with the presence of undefeated defeaters, S doesn't know at t_2 that Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, for he is unable to rule out the relevant alternative that he was not assassinated until 1964. He fails to know that Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, despite the fact that he still remembers this fact. This example is meant to show is that one can know at t_2 that p , remember at t_2 everything one knew at t_1 , and yet fail to know at t_2 that p – even though one continues to truly believe that p – for the reason that one isn't anymore justified in believing that p . The upshot is that memory doesn't imply knowledge since it implies neither belief nor justification. Not only is it possible to remember something one doesn't believe but also one might acquire some plausible yet misleading evidence that destroys the status as justified belief of the once-genuine justified belief that one still remembers (cf. Bernecker 2010: 65-94).

4. Memory and Justification

Though memory doesn't imply justification and knowledge, memory beliefs can, of course, be justified and qualify as knowledge. And so the question arises whether memory is merely a preservative source of justification and knowledge or whether it can also function as a generative source.

The standard view has it that memory is only a *preservative* source of justification and knowledge. Just as testimony is said to transmit knowledge from one person to another, memory is said to preserve knowledge from one time to another. Both in the case of memory knowledge and testimonial knowledge the proposition in question must have been known when it was originally acquired and a source other than memory and testimony, respectively, must have been responsible for its original acquisition (Plantinga 1993: 61n). If one justifiably believes that *p* on the basis of memory, then one must have acquired this justification in a non-memorial way at some earlier time. Memory cannot improve the epistemic status a belief has at the time of recall *vis-à-vis* the epistemic status it had at the time it was originally acquired. Memory is incapable of making an unknown proposition known, an unjustified belief justified, or an irrational belief rational – it can only preserve what is already known, justified, or rational.

How does memory preserve the positive epistemic status of the original belief? According to some preservationists (e.g., Conee and Feldman 2004: 60-1), epistemic justification is entirely a matter of internal or conscious justifying factors. The obvious problem with this internalist version of preservationism is that there are numerous justified memory beliefs for which there are no internal or conscious justifying factors because they are (irretrievably) forgotten. This is how Williamson (2007: 110-11) states the problem:

Many of our factual memories come without any particular supporting phenomenology of memory images or feelings of familiarity. We cannot remember how we acquired the information, and it may be relatively isolated, but we still use it when the need arises. Although few if any memories stand in total isolation from the rest of our conscious lives, very many memories are too isolated to receive impressive justification from other internal elements.

Internalists seem to be stuck with the implausible result that retained beliefs are unjustified unless the past evidence is also recalled. In response to the problem of forgotten evidence many proponents of preservationism adopt the principle of continuous justification: at t_2 , S's belief from t_1 that *p* is continuously justified if S continues to believe at t_2 that *p* – even if he lost his original knowledge-producing justification and has acquired no new justification in

the meantime (Shoemaker 1967: 271-2). According to some preservationists (e.g., Pappas 1980), continuous justification is a kind of basic or foundational justification. According to others (Burge 1997: 458-9; Owens 2000: 153), the reason we are continuously justified in holding our memory beliefs is that we are entitled to believe what memory 'serves up', in the absence of defeaters.

According to *generativism*, a memory belief may not only be *less* but also *more* justified than the original belief. A memory belief may be justified even if the original belief wasn't justified. According to Audi (1995: 37) and Pollock (1974: 193), it is the phenomenology of recalling that generates justification for memory beliefs. They draw a parallel between memory and perception. In a standard case of perceptual belief, one is 'appeared to' in a certain way and, on the basis of this appearance, comes to justifiably believe something about the perceptual surroundings. Similarly, when one remembers something one has a recollection and, on the basis of this phenomenal state, comes to justifiably believe something about the past. The idea is that if one bases one's belief that *p* on one's state of seeming to remember that *p*, and *p* is undefeated, then one is at least *prima facie* justified in believing *p*.

Even if we grant that there is a distinctive phenomenology that attends all the memory beliefs we are justified in holding and even if we grant that the experiential features of memory beliefs can do the epistemic work that Pollock and Audi assign to them, this version of generativism has its problems. In the absence of defeating conditions, the epistemic status of a belief is said to improve simply in virtue of the belief being recalled. Every time a belief is retrieved from memory it receives an extra epistemic boost. This strikes some as being an implausible consequence. It is implausible to suppose that, everything else being equal, a belief that is retrieved often enjoys a better epistemic status than a belief that is retrieved infrequently. There simply is no neat correlation between the positive epistemic status a belief has and the number of times it has been retrieved from memory. Following McGrath (2007: 19-22), we can call this the *epistemic boost problem*.

According to Audi's and Pollock's *radical generativism*, memory can generate new justificatory factors, new evidence. If, for instance, I came to justifiably believe at t_1 that *p*, on the basis of a priori reasoning, and if I remember at t_2 that *p*, then the memory belief inherits (some of) the justification the original belief had and there will be an additional justificatory element due to the process of remembering. The justification of a memory belief has two parts: there is a preserved component and a new component due to the act of recalling. *Moderate generativism* (cf. Bernecker 2010: 96-103; Lackey 2005: 640-4), by contrast, agrees with preservationism in that the memory process generates no

new elements of justification or evidence. Memory cannot make justification and knowledge from nothing. Instead, the only way for memory to function as a generative source of justification is by removing defeaters and thereby unleashing the justificatory potential that was already present at the time the belief was initially entertained. All the elements required for a memory belief to be justified must already have been present when the belief was encoded. If the original belief had no justificatory potential, then memory cannot turn it into a justified belief. Memory generates justification only by lifting justificatory elements that were previously rebutted or undermined by defeating evidence.

5. Skepticism about Memory Knowledge

'S remembers that p' implies that p is the case. Though memory entails truth, we are frequently mistaken in thinking that we remember something. Memories are not transparent to the mind in the sense that we can identify them and discriminate them from other states in any possible situation. Whether we genuinely or ostensibly remember that p we cannot tell just by reflection. But we all trust our ostensible memories to a greater or less degree. What reasons, if any, do we have for believing that events we seem to remember actually happened? What kind of justification do we have for accepting (at least some of) our ostensible memories as reliable information about the past? Do we, for example, have any way of ruling out Russell's (1995a: 159) hypothesis whereupon the world sprang into being five minutes ago, exactly as it then was, with a population that seemed to remember a wholly unreal past?

As was shown above (section 2) there are no intrinsic features of memory experiences (called *memory markers*) from which it can be read off that they are memory experiences rather than imaginary experiences. Given that there are no memory markers, is it possible to validate ostensible memories by checking them against the past events they are (purportedly) about? This isn't possible because the past events have ceased to exist and hence are not available for comparison. Could we then validate ostensible memories by means of diaries, photographs, testimony, and the like? The problem with this proposal is that it begs the question at issue: the employment of this kind of evidence assumes the trustworthiness of some ostensible memories (one's own or someone else's). Any inductive argument to the effect that ostensible memories are in general reliable depends on other memories. And however great the probability of an inductive generalization may be, its probability is based on (what we take to be) past observations; and we have only memory to confirm those (alleged)

past observations. But how else should we validate our ostensible memories?

Lewis (1946: ch. 11) suggests that we can validate our ostensible memories by examining the degree to which they cohere. Such coherence (he calls it *congruence*) is said to raise the probability of what is remembered to the level of practical certainty in a way analogous to that in which agreement of independently given testimonies can convince us that what is being testified is true. The idea is that the degree of coherence of our ostensible memories is sufficiently high for rational and practical reliance. But coherence can play this amplifying role only if the states of ostensible memory have some positive degree of initial credibility. And one might think that our ostensible memories lack the required initial credibility due to systematic delusion or general unreliability. Lewis argues that these *prima facie* possibilities are not genuine possibilities since they are either incoherent or contradict our experience. Yet his argument against the possibility of systematic delusion crucially depends on the highly contentious verifiability criterion of meaning. And even if the verifiability criterion of meaning is conceded, Lewis seems to overestimate the power of coherence to amplify probability.

Malcolm (1963: 193-6) and Shoemaker (1963: 229-34) take a very different approach to the task of validating our ostensible memories. They argue that the general reliability of ostensible memories is an analytic truth. There are two main arguments to the effect that ostensible memories are necessarily reliable. According to the first argument, if someone were to consistently make wildly inaccurate claims about the past, and instead 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'. The problem with this argument is that habitual mistakes about memory claims need not be mistakes of meaning rather than fact. 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 the verb 'to remember' could be established by the fact that he uses it to talk only about things that he believes did happen and not about things that he believes he imagined. The second argument to the effect that ostensible memory is necessarily reliable rests on the observation that one cannot help thinking that one's confident memory beliefs constitute knowledge. However, just because one cannot question one's own confident memory beliefs doesn't mean that one cannot question someone else's claim concerning his confident memory beliefs. Moreover, even if it is incoherent to question one's confident memory beliefs, this doesn't mean that they couldn't be consistently false. Thus the skeptical problem actually gets worse because not only is it possible that one's memory beliefs are consistently false but also

one might be incapable of coherently entertaining this possibility.

In the end, none of the strategies for validating ostensible memories seem to work. We don't seem to be able to put our reliance on memories in question and then demonstrate the reliability of a given ostensible memory. As Russell (1995b: 154) remarks, 'no memory proposition is, strictly speaking, verifiable, since nothing in the present or future makes any proposition about the past necessary.' At the same time we couldn't secure a connection with epistemic rationality unless we could trust at least some of our ostensible memories. This has led some philosophers (e.g., Burge 1993) to work out a transcendental argument to the effect that we have an a priori entitlement to trust our ostensible memories, unless there are stronger reasons not to do so.

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