Editoriale

Philosophers and Memory
Introductory Remarks

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Why do we remember? And, for that matter, *what* is remembering? Placed between body and mind, the phenomenon of memory simultaneously involves biological, psychological, semiotic, and metaphysical elements. Memory's place at the heart of our understanding of ourselves is why many of the greatest philosophers of all the time have dealt with the problem – or, better, have had to deal with it. Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Descartes, Locke, Kant, Hegel, Bergson, Russell, and Wittgenstein, are just a few among many who have proffered explanations. While all such proposals have been deficient in their own ways, each has advanced our understanding of the myriad phenomena associated with memory.

With recent developments in phenomenology, analytic philosophy, and the empirical sciences interest in memory has intensified. In the 20th century, philosophers were particularly interested in identifying its causes, the ontology of mnemonic traces, the mechanisms of recall, and its epistemic characteristics. Moreover, as philosophy has directed its sight towards social objects and structures, questions involving memory have developed political and social dimensions as well – extending the debate to collective memory. What are the mechanisms of intersubjective memorization and recall of information, ideas, and representations? What are the ethical dimensions and consequences of public memory?

This immense wealth and relevance of the topic is the reason why *Lo Sguardo* decided to dedicate two consecutive issues to memory. The present one (2019/1) is edited by Simone Guidi and Steven James and devoted to the problem of individual memory, as well as to the various accounts of memory in the History of Western Thought. A second one (2019/2), edited by Cristina Basili and Libera Pisano, will be dedicated to the political and social implications of collective memory.

The articles that constitute the present issue provide the reader with an overview of individual memory, its accounts, and many of the contemporary debates. Hence, the aim of these introductory remarks is to provide a theoretical framing of the discussions, and to present the contents of the essays in the volume.

Over the century – within a tradition that could be called "Continental", and which goes uninterruptedly from Plato to Freud – discussions of memory have taken place within larger discussions concerning the nature — spiritual or material — of thought, and thus the relation between mind and body. Accordingly, accounts of the nature of memory have implicitly followed the ambiguous trajectory with which Philosophy, starting with ancient Greek Thought, has dealt with the nature of the soul.

On the one hand, memory has been interpreted against the background of one of Plato's several conceptions of the soul, that according to which the soul is not only a *spiritual* entity but even a *metaphysical* entity. This perspective, which pervades much of the entire History of Philosophy until at least Bergson, looks at the soul as naturally placed in continuity with a metaphysical and intelligible world, which the soul can immediately know or recognize. According to an orphic scheme, the soul is a spiritual substance imprisoned in the cage of the body, which is its σῶμα, its σῆμᾰ, and the physical obstacle for the accomplishment of its purest nature. Memory is the thread through which the soul can go back to its origin, and re-enter the lost metaphysical dimension.

On the other hand, memory has been also received a more naturalistic interpretation, according to an Aristotelian conception of the soul as part of the *physical* world, as the ἐντελέχεια of the organic body. In this sense, memory is part of a soul-body composition and can be treated as a psycho-physical phenomenon related to the mechanism of sensory perception, common sense, and imagination. This view has been especially discussed, developed and improved by Aristotle's innumerable commentators; but it is also one of the elements surviving the metamorphosis of Aristotelianism which culminates with the mechanization of biology and, accordingly, of (at least) the lower powers of the soul.

Until at least the 17th century, the study of memory vacillated between these two polarities despite many attempts, from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, to reconcile the two approaches. Despite their differences, both views connect memory with time. Some embrace a metaphysical connection, e. g. the Platonic view as developed in the Neoplatonic and Augustinian traditions. Others posit a physical connection – e. g. understanding memory within Aristotle's conception of time as the number of physical motion or Averroes' account of the unicity of time as connected with the motion of the prime heavens. It seems that memory is inevitably associated with internal perception or construction of time, and with the subsistence of continuity in the series of moments that succeed one another. This is also why memory and its right functioning are linked so closely with the epistemological status of mental representations: our knowledge of outside reality

is intimately connected with what we remember and subsequently believe about it. In some ways, epistemological realism itself depends on trust in the enigmatic mechanism of memory storage-and-recall, or the reliability of the processes by which we elaborate our representations of the world, or the stratified processes of consciousness through which we actively know our memories.

An important stage in the elaboration of this paradigm is by the way introduced by Newton, whose epistemology even influenced the sciences of mind. The early modern scientific revolution did much to destroy the ancient view of the cosmos, but it also has the merit of introducing new concepts – such as those of natural law, force, and attraction – which philosophers enthusiastically applied to the internal world of the mind. At this stage, the understanding of memory shifted away from purely qualitative characteristics to posit mechanistic explanations of it; mnemonic information is not qualitative anymore, consisting in the mere presence of a trace, able to activate upper cognitive powers. However, this happens within a topology of mind which, more or less, is still the ancient Scholastic one, placing memory side by side with the senses and imagination. Thus, memory is finally and really a mechanism, in which information is physically stored and retrieved. A model surviving at least until the 19th century, against which Bergson would even shoot the arrows of ancient philosophy, stressing how paradoxical is to think of memory in terms of a physical conversion, storage, and recall of input in the nervous system.

Influenced partially by Bergson, and even more so by the British psychologist Frederic Bartlett, philosophers in the 20th and 21st centuries have had continued interest in memory's epistemological roles, but with the publication of C. B. Martin and Max Deutscher's seminal article *Remembering* in 1966, interest in the metaphysical nature of memory itself and, in particular, with empirically adequate characterizations of the nature of memory mechanisms have come front and center.

The study of memory in philosophy has particularly flourished over the last decade with numerous interdisciplinary and international conferences dedicated to the topic, the publication of several monographs and anthologies, and the foundation of the *Centre for Philosophy of Memory* at the *Institut de Philosophie de Grenoble* at the Université Grenoble Alpes in 2018.

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The essays in the present issue add to this thriving community and literature by clarifying and discussing several historical accounts and contemporary problems in memory research. The volume is opened by a long article by Andrea Osti (Mnemosyne, *la madre delle Muse. Temporalità, memoria e percezione nel* Teeteto). Osti addresses a classic reference work on knowledge, Plato's *Theatetus*, showing especially the connection between memory, soul, and sensation in the genesis of false opinion. Osti analyzes several passages of the dialogue where memory is associated with the temporality of the soul, as well as with the

discussion of the "fluxist" Protagorean-Heraclitean view of the universe, focusing especially on the famous argument of the waxen block.

The Platonic account comes back in Maria Vittoria Comacchi's essay (*La funzione della memoria nell'estasi amorosa dei* Dialoghi d'amore*: una questione gnoseologica, fisiologica e profetica*). Comacchi deals with the role of memory in the theory of love rapture exposed by Yehudah Abarbanel (Leone Ebreo)'s, *Dialoghi d'amore* (1535), strongly influenced by Ficino and his psychology. Here the role of memory appears against the background of a metaphysical-cognitive architecture, and often not completely distinguished from imagination. Memory is appointed the role of conserving the species for imagination and other superior cognitive faculties, in order to reach an ecstatic vision of the beloved or of God. According to Leone Ebreo, it is able to passively retain the images and the simulacra of things, which imagination uses to recognize the intelligible traces of beauty; and likewise, it works in the state of loving contemplation constantly presenting to the mind the effigy of the loved object.

In the same tradition, Laura Follesa's article (*«Paradise of Childhood». Herder's Theory of Memory between Plato and Leibniz*) examines Herder's account of memory, as it is expressed especially in the manuscript *Plato sagte*, in *Von Erkennen und Empfinden der menschlichen Seelen* and *Über die Seelenwandrung*. Follesa explains how Herder inherits the views of Leibniz and/or Mendelssohn, who both, even if in different ways, embraced Plato's reminiscence while denying its connection with the pre-existence of the soul before incarnation. Accordingly, Herder questions the connection between the transmigration of souls and memory, and reads Plato in the light of the modern views. Still, he is a harsh critic of Leibniz' pre-established harmony, and his examination of such authors is aimed especially at removing memory from the ancient metaphysical background and explaining it via an anthropological and psychological reading. Herder is particularly interested in the role played by childhood in the generation of an unconscious knowledge of ourselves.

Leibniz's philosophy is specifically addressed by Fiorenza Manzo's essay, aimed at showing the role of memory in the constitution of the metaphysical hierarchy of monads. Manzo contextualizes Leibniz's account in the light of Descartes' purely mechanical account of memory, to show the originality of the first respect to the latter and to clarify the reasons for the fundamental divergences between the two philosophers. In the second part, Manzo examines the relationship between mind and memory in Leibniz's philosophy, taking into account the *Theoria Motus Abstracti* and showing how Leibniz arrives at his famous definition of body as a *mens momentanea, seu carens recordatione*, able to set out an essential distinction between mind and body, as the difference between two kinds of minds. Manzo also analyzes Leibniz's theory of *petites perceptions*, in order to show how memory plays a decisive role in such a phenomenon. According to Leibniz, perception and memory are held together through so-called 'traces': every event and every existing thing, even those perceived in the most confused and unconscious ways, leave traces of themselves in substances.

Accordingly, in his mature works, the *Nouveaux Essais*, the *Principes de la Nature et de la Grâce* and the *Monadologie*, Leibniz distinguishes between substances which are incapable of any form of active recollection and the substances which are capable of it, further marking those endowed with a simple apperceptive ability, from those capable of autonomous recollection and re-enactment.

Ilaria Ferrara's essay (*Kant on Memory*) addresses Kant's theory of memory. As Ferrara stresses, the *Critics of Pure Reason* does not attribute any transcendental function to the faculty of memory, and Kant's most extended treatment of it appears in § 34 of *Anthropology*. There he assigns it nothing beyond operations of reproductive imagination in the inner sense: memory produces unified representations through the stabilizing activity of schematism. Ferrara also shows that Kant continues limiting the faculty with respect to the transcendental foundations in other parts of the *Anthropology* as well. For Kant, memory is the faculty involved in voluntary representations of the past, and it comes in three types: 1) the mechanical, based only on repetitions; 2) the ingenious, founded on association, and 3) the judicious, which is based on mutually related judgments that create mental maps and class divisions. Ferrara's essay ends by reconsidering Kant's views in light of the results of contemporary cognitive neurosciences.

The article by Fabio Molinari (*Memoria, individuo e mondo. Percorsi tra Leibniz e Hegel*) revisits Leibniz, relating his account of reminiscence with that of Hegel. Molinari aims to show how memory — although it is not directly treated by Leibniz in a specific work and is connected with the problem of the *petites perceptions* — is, together with attention, a crucial faculty that partially constitutes the consciousness of human monads. Molinari further explains, with an extensive analysis passing through Hegel's major works, how *Errinnerung* and *Gedächtnis* play a crucial role in the emergence of the subject from a flux of confused perceptions, and in the constitution of the world as a linguistic construction.

Alessandro Carrieri (*Un presente rivolto indietro Tecniche della memoria in Bruno e Benjamin*) compares the philosophies of Benjamin and Bruno, focusing on the question of memory. Carrieri carries out the comparison by analyzing the connection between memory topography and history in both authors' works. He concludes that, as the 'true measure of life', memory provides a 'timeless seal' in which history stops. Remembering thus opens the possibility of a utopian redemptive possibility, understood as a retroactive reference of the present to the past. According to Carrieri, in both Bruno and Benjamin, memory is not merely an artifice of mind, but rather a process able to develop implicit links and connections and thereby weave the canvas of reality. Thus, the art of memory is not just expedient rhetoric, but also and crucially a new instrument for knowing and representing reality.

Sigmund Freud's perspective is addressed by Alessandra Campo's essay, focused especially on the concept of *Nachträglichkeit* (delay), and in a way again with the traditional association between memory and time. As Campo remarks, memory is, to Freud, the very essence of the psychic and a proteiform faculty

based on a multiplicity of signs. Still, the notion of *Nachträglichkeit* opens a non-linear conception of temporality to the understanding. In this conception, the direct and timeless action of what lies in our unconscious, causes consciousness as its secondary effect (though not chronologically); accordingly, the time of the *Nachträglichkeit* is trans-chronic and, in a way, amnesic, since the relation between cause and effect in the memory of trauma does not associate them on the scheme of a causal-chronological sequence. This is, for Campo, the opportunity to read in Freud's *Id* the door opening on actual infinity, not so far from that of Bruno or Spinoza.

The article by Rocco Riccio deals with the role of memory in Rudolf Carnap's theory of experience, and especially with his work *Logischer Aufbau der Welt*. Carnap is known for having built a gnoseological system in which the scientific concepts can be reduced to data of immediate experience (*Elementarerlebnisse*). As Riccio stresses, Carnap identifies a unique relation, the *Ähnlichkeitserinnerung*, as the connection between these data, involving memory's activity as a subject. Thus, the essential role played by memory – a role making the very condition of knowledge – is that of recognizing, in the present experience, one or more experiences that the subject previously had. But, how is intersubjectivity possible, within that scheme? On the other hand, Riccio shows that Carnap's system has no subject, and should be considered as purely 'intersubjective'. He ends by trying to show how is it possible to combine both of these, apparently contrasting, aspects of Carnap's system.

Paolo Missiroli's contribution (*Ricordare un nulla. Günther Anders e Jean-Paul Sartre tra antropologia negativa, memoria e identità personale*) addresses memory by comparing two positions: that of Günther Anders and that of Jean-Paul Sartre, to which Missiroli adds, that of Merleau-Ponty as a third possible alternative. Missiroli examines the similarity between Anders' and Sartre's perspectives starting from their common adoptions of negative anthropology (the existentialist conception of man as a non-being), which allows thinking of the human being in terms of "pure action", fully eradicated from past and the world. For both Anders and Sartre, memory is a crucial element in the constitution of personal identities, but not in the constitution of the human as a non-being. To Anders, memory (as recall) is what grants to our consciousnesses a minimum grade of identification, by hiding the radical contingency and our original freedom. For Sartre, the use of memory already involves bad faith, being a radical objectification of ourselves. In both authors, memory is the faculty by which we attempt to root and identify our existence, which is originally unrooted. Conversely, for Merleau-Ponty, one can understand time only as a 'lived time'. Accordingly, remembering is not just reconstructing the past starting from a present project, nor is it a matter of hiding the subject's condition of being un-rooted and deprived of identity; rather, it is a matter of placing ourselves in a specific past moment, which always is within a world. Man can be such a place, in which time appears, just because it is into the world.

Leaving the historical focus, the issue continues with the article by Daniele Poccia (*Logica dell'embrione. Memorie e ritmi tra 'morte dell'uomo' e storicità della natura*). Poccia treats memory in its biological dimension by juxtaposing the approach of several contemporary political philosophers and philosophers of mind (Foucault, Ruyer, Prodi and Ellenberger). His aim is to show how memory is a "rhythmic phenomenon". To do so, he makes use of the key role played by molecular biology in framing the human-nature relationship. Accordingly, memory can be understood in terms of a "logic of the embryo", which takes more than a repetitive function into account. However, coherently approaching a 'logic of the embryo' requires one to overcome the limits of a philosophy of nature, and to embrace the 'dual memory' that François Ellenberger (1948) has studied in relation to the dream experience. According to Poccia, this perspective is relevant for the field of scientific knowledge organization, as much as it is for philosophy, in that it is part of the ever-changing ontology characterizing scientific progress.

Luigi Laino (*Memoria e catene operative: contributi alla metrica dell'esperienza naturale*) deals with memory as the basic form of "natural experience". Laino surveys two levels of the definition of memory: on the one hand, he deals with its phenomenological determination, which seems to be compatible with neurophysiology and palaeoanthropology; on the other hand, he tackles the phenomenon of "exteriorization", in which he points out a specific feature of human memory: the capacity of a given symbolic language to reproduce itself. Laino shows that this is a shared feature with both natural language and mathematics. Mathematics is hence the first, fundamental form of comprehension of natural experience, and in such a context, implicit memory seems, to Laino, to be already an active evolutive strategy in the evolution of human adaptation to the environment. From this perspective, memory could be thought of as a dynamic apparatus, able to self-regulate and to implement itself by exteriorizing itself. In such an exteriorization, mathematics would provide, before natural language, a basic, expressive tool.

Lucrezia Compiani's article offers a Neo-Naturalist account of personal identity, by recasting the notions of present and of memory in the framework of the *Spread Mind Theory*, the idea, defended especially by Manzotti, that one's experience of an object is identical with the object itself. From such a perspective, memories are not considered as mental contents but rather as physical objects, which present causal proximity with our bodies, different from normal perception. Thus, Compiani argues, what we call our present is not a spatiotemporal instant, but rather a set of physical objects connected with our physical bodies. Accordingly, Compiani criticizes the common use of the concept of person, by claiming that we, as subjects, are not bunches of ideas or mental states, neither are we the mechanical functioning of our brain-body. Rather, subjects are identical with that part of the physical world which takes place relative to our physical body and despite our mnemonic representations, neither past nor future objects actually exist.

Shin Sakuragi's article (*On Philosophical Concepts of Memory*) defends two parts of a traditional 'tripartite' taxonomy of memory (the concepts 'propositional memory' and 'experiential memory') from recent attacks by Werning and Chen (2017) and Bernecker (2010). Contrary to Werning and Cheng's critique, Sakuragi argues that 'propositional' and 'experiential' memory are not *essentially* characterized by English grammar. Contrary to Bernecker's claim that the boundaries between these categories are somehow problematically «not sharp», Sakuragi argues that the phenomena is not due to conceptual ambiguity, but rather, it is the result of different ways of memory attribution.

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