

MEMORY AND TEMPORAL AWARENESS

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1. The project

Feeling of pastness

If you remember that p , then the fact that p appears to you as having happened in the past.
Let's specify the content of memory experiences in a way that respects this feature.

2. Specifying “content”

Memory experiences can be correct or incorrect.

The content of a memory experience is what it takes for it to be correct.

To say that the content of M is that p = to say that what it takes for M to be true is that p .

3. “What it takes for M to be true”

Suppose I utter ‘it’s cold here’ (call that utterance U).

In situation A

It’s cold in the classroom, I’m in the classroom and it’s warm outside.

In situation B

It’s cold outside, I’m outside and it’s warm in the classroom.

Consider U in A. What does it take for it to be true?

- In one sense: that it’s cold in the classroom.
- In a different sense: that it’s cold where U takes place.

You could ask ‘do I describe B correctly when I utter U in A’?

In the first sense, I don’t. In the second sense, I do.

So “the content of a memory experience is *what it takes for it to be correct*” is ambiguous.

I mean what it takes for it to be correct in the first sense.

4. The Right Amount of Info test / RAI

Suppose that we are given a proposal about the content of M : M ’s content is that P .

How to evaluate it? For any possible situation W , this should happen:

- If, intuitively, M represents W correctly, then P is the case in W .
- If, intuitively, M represents W incorrectly, then P is not the case in W .

If the proposal fails to meet (i), it attributes too much information to memories.

If the proposal fails to meet (ii), it attributes too little information to memories.

5. The Absolute view

Consider a subject S. Take a memory experience M that S would express by uttering “I remember that q.” Let t2 be the time at which S has M. Then, there is some period of time t1 before t2 such that the content of M is: *q happens at t1*

Trouble with RAI

In W1:

q happens at t1 & you witness it

At t2, you have a memory experience M that you’d express with “ I remember that q ”

In W2:

q happens at t1 & you don’t exist

Absolutist: M represents W2 accurately.

Intuitively: It doesn’t.

6. The Relative view

Consider a subject S. Take a memory experience M that S would express by uttering “I remember that q.” There is some period of time T such that the content of M is: *q happens T-earlier than M*

Trouble with RAI

In W1:

q happens at t1 & you witness it

At t2, you have a memory experience M that you’d express with “ I remember that q ”

In W3:

Q happens at t1 & you witness it. Then, you travel back in time before t1 and have M.

Relativist: M in W1 does not represent W3 accurately.

Intuitively: It does.

7. Causal self-reference view

Consider a subject S. If M is a memory experience that S would express by uttering “I remember that q”, then there is a perceptual experience P that S would express by uttering “I perceive that q” such that the content of M is: *M was caused by P, which was caused by q*

Trouble with RAI

In W1:

q happens at t1 and you have a perceptual experience P that you’d express with “I

perceive that q.” At t2, you have a memory experience M that you’d express with “ I remember that q .” M is caused by P & P is caused by q.

In W4:

q happens at t1 & you have P. Then, you have M at t2. M was caused by P and, on this occasion, P was caused by q. (But, normally, the fact that q would not cause P.)

CSR: M in W1 represents W4 accurately.

Intuitively: It does not.

8. The veridical view¹

Consider a subject S. Take a memory experience M that she would express by uttering “I remember that q”. There is a perceptual experience P that she’d express with “I perceive that q” such that the content of M is: *M was caused by P, which is veridical*

9. Virtues of the veridical view

- It deals with the W2 case:

M in W1 represents W2 incorrectly (M doesn’t happen in W2).

- It deals with the W3 case:

M in W1 represents W3 correctly (M was backwards-caused by a percept experience in W3).

- It deals with the W4 case:

M in W1 represents W4 incorrectly (The perceptual experience in W4 is not veridical).

So what does this have to do with Time and Consciousness?

According to the veridical view, when one remembers something, one is in cognitive contact with the causal history of the very experience one is having.

Presumably, it’s nomologically necessary that: Events in the causal history of your memories are in the past.

By remembering something, then, you are in cognitive contact with events that, as a matter of natural law, are indeed in the past

But the ‘feeling of pastness’ is not the experience of time. It is the experience of origin or causal history.

¹ No pun intended