

The Wixted work does not bear on the issue of whether it is bizarre or “not really coherent” to say “I remember confidently such-and-such, but such-and-such never happened.” Appeals to such judgments is a maneuver typical of philosophers, not psychologists. Psychologists seem content to simply study the relation between confidence rating and accuracy, leaving judgments about bizarreness and incoherence to others. But it is probably not too far of a step to go from (a) asserting that it rarely happens that inaccurate memories are confidently held to (b) stating it is bizarre to assert that one remembers confidently an event that never happened.

Whereas this debate about eyewitness testimony might seem to supply empirical evidence that might bear on the factivity of memory, no philosopher—or psychologist—would find it definitive. First, it is about the confidence people have in their memories, not claims about whether memories are “true” representations of the past. Psychologists largely eschew metaphysical musings about concepts like “truth.” Furthermore, as Wixted cautiously warns, “ideal conditions” must exist for confidence and accuracy to align. The testimony and confidence ratings must, for instance, be collected shortly after the incident. If the delay is too long a time, confidence ratings might not be a good indicator of accuracy. The caveats raise a conundrum that speaks to psychologists’ limited understanding of whether confidence in a memory can speak to its accuracy. In response to Wixted and colleagues’ claims, some psychologists see this limitation as evidence that memory is unreliable and that one can unparadoxically say “I remember such-and-such” even when one knows that such-and-such never happened. But these skeptics of memory’s representational nature must somehow confront the notion that, at least in the short-term, Bernecker’s truth condition seems to hold.

Reading through his volume has been a great treat. It has made me think more carefully about what is at stake in a constructivist approach, or for that matter, an archivist approach. Norman Malcolm’s obsessions turn out not be so bizarre. Indeed, whereas the methods for addressing the truth condition of memory may differ, the issues are not as different as I originally thought way back in graduate school. In other words, psychologists, as well as philosophers, will benefit from this landmark volume.

## References

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## Author biography

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This volume collects essays about memory across subfields including epistemology, applied ethics, and metaphysics. To my mind, its main strength is a combination of both contemporary and historical articles, inviting the reader to think about how the contemporary study of memory compares in focus, method, and aims to various historical attempts to understand memory. And so in this review, I will focus on a few aspects of the philosophy of memory brought to light by this historical context. For brevity, I will use just one historical example.

Deborah Black, in her contribution on Averroes and Avicenna (Chapter 36), details how these two philosophers placed memory in broader theories of cognition. A central issue in her discussion

is the representational format of different kinds of memories. On Avicenna's view, we store both sensory impressions (sensible forms) and non-sensory features of particular objects (intentions). For example, I might encode both a visual image of a black cat (a sensible form) and the idea that this pet was my childhood pet or tended to be very moody (an intention). In recollecting, we attach the two together, either by starting with a sensory impression and associating it with an intention, or by starting with an intention and calling up a sensory image to accompany it. What about universals, such as the idea of humankind or the number seven? For Avicenna, while we have dispositions to access these concepts in thought, we do not remember them. Averroes similarly reserves memory for particulars and their properties, maintaining that there is no internal "storehouse" for universals.

These theories might seem mired in a peculiarly medieval division between universals and particulars, but they reveal two ideas that have deep contemporary relevance. First, knowing something may be entirely distinct from having an internal storehouse that encodes it. Second, the act of remembering may involve a distinct type of content from what is stored in memory.

I will start with the first idea, which reflects Avicenna's distinction between particulars and intentions, which are remembered, and universals, which are learned. Let us reconsider Avicenna's position in light of Sarah Robins' contribution to the volume, "Memory Traces" (Chapter 6). Robins highlights a series of debates concerning what memory traces might be, and why memory requires them. On the latter question, she considers four answers; for my purposes, the most significant is that memory traces might be needed to distinguish remembering from relearning. That is, it seems like there is a difference between learning something again that you have forgotten and remembering something. A natural diagnosis is that in the former case, you did not make use of a memory trace, and in the latter, you did. As Robins convincingly argues, this use of memory traces is more problematic than it appears.

To see where our Avicennian idea might intervene in this debate, let us look at an example. In the past, I broke a jar of water by freezing it, which led me to learn that ice has a larger volume than water. Now, I encounter a diary entry about the incident, which leads me to recall that past incident—or perhaps to re-learn about it. In the contemporary way of looking at it, I remember two things: a fact about the volume of ice and an event involving a jar. On Avicenna's view, I only remember the event. By contrast, I know the fact, but not in virtue of remembering it. The contemporary view, following Robins, needs to differentiate both memories from re-learning, which presents a series of challenges, in part because re-learning based on a cue and remembering based on a cue and also a memory trace seem extremely similar, sometimes indistinguishable to the rememberer herself.

Drawing on Avicenna's idea, we can propose a different solution. Learning results in knowledge, a kind of intellectual habit, relation, or disposition. Memory results in a retained image or other representational content. Thus, assuming that I currently entertain a particular image of the jar incident, the issue cannot be whether I learned that image. We can still ask whether I retained the image from memory or imagined it as a result of the diary, but this question need not have a clear answer; as Felipe de Brigard notes in his entry on "Memory and Imagination" (Chapter 10), there is a wide-ranging set of evidence that suggests that memory and imagination are hard to distinguish, and even importantly intertwined. Accepting this Avicennian answer does not commit us to a deep dichotomy between universals and particulars, but merely to a distinction between having a disposition to infer, and having an actual occurrent mental representation.

The second idea has to do with the process of remembering itself producing a different kind of content than the kind of memory content that is encoded and stored over time. This idea is orthogonal to the claim that memory is constructive; for example, a constructive account might hold that

we actively fill in content while remembering based stored fragments of information, but that the pre-recall stored representation and the richer representation assembled during recall share a single type of content, for example, a proposition concerning a state of affairs in the past.

In his contribution on “The Intentional Objects of Memory” (Chapter 7), Jordi Fernandez considers a range of views concerning the content of episodic memory, divided into objective, subjective, and hybrid views. Objective views take the contents of memories to be mind-independent propositions, such as “here was a house on the corner.” Subjective views take memory contents to be propositions concerning past experiences, such as “I had an experience of a house.” Hybrid views involve a combination of these features, such as “I veridically perceived a house,” or even, “I have this memory because I veridically perceived a house.”

This creates something of a dilemma, as Fernandez points out: we have intuitive reasons to think episodic memories are in some sense objective (i.e. similar to perception) and in some sense subjective (i.e. similar to introspection), but the available ways of combining the two in a hybrid content are excessively demanding. For instance, a memory that I was at the stream can be totally accurate in terms of matching my experience at the time and the actual stream, but counts as incorrect if, unbeknownst to me, I was caused to entertain this content through imagination.

Our second Avicennian idea presents an alternative. On this view, memory content is equivocal—in fact, there are retained contents and contents of recollection, and the two are importantly different. Thus, it might be possible to dissolve the tension that Fernandez notes between objective and subjective as follows. The stored content in memory might include objective and subjective fragments: for instance, I might separately “store” an image of a friend’s face, and a bit of information about how she seemed to me to be angry. Then, at the time of recall, when I am in the business of combining these representations, a hybrid content could arise. Since the hybrid content is now generated through the act of recollection, as opposed to identified with the object of recollection, the demanding nature of the hybrid view is lessened. I still, in some sense, remember correctly even when I fail to correctly position myself in the past event or when my sense of my own perspective is constructed later. That is, the retained information is accurate, whether objective or subjective. However, correct and complete recollection requires putting together retained information correctly, and this process can be incorrect even when all of the retained information are correct. Breaking up memory content into two categories—retained content and recollected content—gives us the advantages that Fernandez sees in a hybrid view without creating unrealistic conditions for veridical memory.

This anthology provides many opportunities to connect threads between diverse projects in the philosophy of memory, as I have aimed to do here. It covers a wide range of topics, though with some notable omissions. For instance, only one article touches on issues of memory in political philosophy, despite a rich engagement with memory in that field on topics such as reparations, national identity, and political legitimacy. The historical section includes some continental philosophers, though there are no contemporary contributions from the continental tradition. It might have been relevant to include recent continental work on the archive or museum as institutions of memory, or on memory in phenomenology. But as a starting point for work on contemporary and historical approaches to memory in epistemology, metaphysics, and philosophy of mind, this volume will serve readers well.

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