

References

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Author biography

Lisa Bortolotti is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Birmingham, affiliated both with the Philosophy Department and the Institute for Mental Health. She works in the philosophy of psychology and psychiatry, specialising in the study of behavioural manifestations of irrationality, such as delusional beliefs, cognitive biases, distorted memories, and failures of self-knowledge. Her latest books are *Irrationality* (Polity 2014) and *Delusions in Context* (Palgrave 2018).

Reviewed by: Felipe Rocha L Santos, *Faculdade de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas, Universidade Federal da Bahia, Brasil*

The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Memory, edited by Sven Bernecker and Kourken Michaelian, should be considered one of the main references for those who want to have at the same time a panoramic view of the philosophical problems concerning memory and a more in-depth view. The book has 48 chapters, divided into eight thematic parts, focusing mostly on the analytical tradition of philosophical investigation. Unfortunately, as highlighted by the editors in the introduction, many relevant and interesting problems could not be placed in the book, given the lack of space. What is interesting about this book is that even with an approach to analytic philosophy and even focusing on themes such as “Memory and Time” (Part 5, Chapters 16–18), “The Epistemology of Memory” (Part 7, Chapters 22–26), and “Metaphysics of Memory” (Part 2, Chapters 4–7), the book devotes 18 chapters to the history of the philosophy of memory, discussing from classical philosophers as Plato (Chapter 30) and Aristotle (Chapter 31), to contemporary philosophers such as Ludwig Wittgenstein (Chapter 46) and Paul Ricoeur (Chapter 48), with an interesting inclusion of chapters on the philosophy of memory in Classical Indian philosophy (Chapter 32) and Chinese Buddhist philosophy (Chapter 34).

Given the wide variety of themes discussed in the handbook, I will focus on one of the parts that attracted my attention, since it discusses themes that are not only relevant to philosophy, but also which are very important to our everyday life, namely, “Memory and Morality” (Part 8, Chapters 27–29). This part has three chapters wherein a different aspect of memory and morality is discussed in each. In fact, there is not yet exhaustive literature on memory and morality, especially addressing topics such as the use of memory modification technologies (MMTs) and contemporary legal aspects such as the legal concept called *the right to be forgotten*. Having said that, I will briefly comment on the chapters that form this section and the possibilities they open for the discussion of the ethics of memory.

In “A Duty to Remember” (Chapter 27), Jeffrey Blustein briefly discusses what cases we are or should be obliged to remember. What is interesting here is the brief historical approach, searching in classical antiquity for antecedents to this discussion, and seeking to compare modern ethical

theories such as consequentialism and deontology to the duty to remember. This seems to be the most discussed topic in memory ethics, mainly due to events that marked the history, such as the Holocaust, the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs, and other events that killed large numbers of innocent people.

In “An Obligation to Forget” (Chapter 28), David Matheson seeks to describe what conditions are sufficient for a moral obligation to forget some information about another person. Matheson argues that even if the act of forgetting is an apparently involuntary act, there is enough scientific evidence to consider that forgetting is not merely a cognitive process, but an epistemic activity susceptible to moral obligations. And not only individual agents should be susceptible to the obligation to forget when they meet the conditions, but also corporate agents like Google or Facebook. With this argument, Matheson elaborates a defense of the concept of *the right to be forgotten*. Finally, in “The Ethics of Memory Modification” (Chapter 29), S. Matthew Liao discusses MMTs, which are technologies that can improve, erase, or even create new memories at a biological level. That is, the text seeks to discuss MMTs in the form of drugs that may act on memory, the negative ethical consequences of using these technologies, and when it should be permissible to use MMTs for positive purposes.

What these three chapters have in common is that, in general, the memory that is the object of moral action (remembering or being forgotten) is always in the mind of an individual (or in the database of an institution, e.g. Google). Even when we discuss the obligation to remember heinous crimes like the Holocaust, we are talking about reliving the memory of individual members of a collective. However, with the advancement of philosophical theories such as the *Extended Mind* (discussed in Chapter 19 of the handbook), we can raise other types of questions that I believe are of primary importance when talking about ethics of memory. For example, it is known that transitive memory systems are the kind of systems that go into operation when we trust part of the information to another person, storing it externally. I can trust a person to store specific information and can consult this person when I need the information. However, transitive memory is not only distributed between individuals and social groups. Recent research (see Lynch, 2016; Sparrow et al., 2011; Ward, 2013) suggests that technologies increasingly function as transitive memories, as more of our cognitive tasks are “outsourced” by our technological devices. That way, if a friend takes photos of a trip that we took together, uploads these photos to Facebook and tags me in the photos, I can trust that whenever I want to see the photos, I can go on my profile to search the photos I was tagged in (a sort of memory trace), and find the desired image. This memory could be considered a type of transitive memory, or even a type of shared extended memory. So, the question is, “To whom does this memory belong? To me? To my friend? To both? If for some reason, he decides to erase all the photos from his social networks, would he be committing an immoral action by erasing my memories, against my will?”

The central point of my reflection is that, in addition to being important to discuss moral questions about certain mnemonic activities (remembering, forgetting, memory alteration, etc.), it also seems fundamental to discuss moral issues about the ownership of memory. To give an example, in 2017, US President Donald Trump published on his twitter: “Despite the constant negative press covfefe.” More than 120,000 people re-tweeted it. Despite that, he realized it was not a good tweet and decided to delete it. We can ask, “Do his followers (or any person, actually) have the right to bring this tweet back—remembering, even against his will?” Before answering this question, it is necessary to assess the moral weight of the content of the memory in question to discuss ownership. A president, by voluntarily sharing something in public, apparently loses the ownership of the information and therefore is not allowed to delete it. He could try to force companies such as Google and Twitter to erase any vestige of published information from the network. The given information is already part of the memory of those who use these technologies either as transitive

memory or as shared extended memory. In this way, as citizens, it seems to be the case that we have a moral obligation to remember this kind of fact, even when the author himself tries to erase it.

And why is it a moral obligation or a duty to remember this kind of fact? Here I can recall Blustein's article (Chapter 27) where he writes that remembering "is just what one ought to do as an integral part of the caring relationship," and that on the view defended by him, "remembering is a manifestation of ongoing caring" (p. 352). We live in society and it can be said that we are part of a caring relationship with each other. Thus, we should act and follow our democratic duties in order to improve and help our society to flourish, including remembering facts that are of public interest that help us make better political decisions, for example. Some people may argue that this is not a strong argument, but the discussion of consequentialism and deontology in Blustein's article may shed a light on this argument. On a consequentialist point of view, one may argue that to make better political decisions, we must have available the maximum of information about the political actors and political actions. Remembering a president's tweet is relevant because it can make explicit the president's moral character and his competence as a leader. Hence, remembering this kind of fact may promote better outcomes. And on a deontologist point of view, one can say that this is a duty to remember since it is based on the moral principle of justice and the moral principle of autonomy (Blustein, pp. 360–361).

Another interesting case that can be interpreted in terms of memory ethics is the case of whistleblowers. Edward Snowden, for example, was responsible for developing many of the systems used by the US National Security Agency (NSA) and had access to many of the documents stored by this organization. These documents can be considered part of the organization's memory. Is the leaking of such unauthorized memories analogous to cases of revenge porn, where one partner publicly makes available without the consent of the other videos or intimate photos of the other? The idea behind the legal concept of *the right to be forgotten* applies to the latter cases, forcing Google and other companies to erase all records of what was made available on the grounds that, in cases like these, the person has the right to be forgotten. Cases of whistleblowers and revenge porn seem to be structurally equivalent, at least according to Matheson's analysis in Chapter 28. Given Matheson criteria for an obligation to forget, one has this obligation just in case (1) S_1 knows i because S_1 performed the epistemic activity of learning i ; (2) S_2 has not for S_1 waived a moral right to privacy that S_2 has with respect to i , and (3) S_1 can successfully perform the epistemic activity of forgetting i without unduly diminishing her ability to care for herself or others in morally appropriate ways. That is why cases of whistleblowers and revenge porn seem to be structurally equivalent, but the diagnosis for each case is different. This is because there seems to be an important difference of ownership and moral value of memory that would change the diagnosis of cases, especially related to second criteria. I am suggesting that in cases of whistleblowers, given the moral value of the information, the original owner loses his ownership on that information, making it information of public interest (and ownership).

Some people might argue that cases like the US President's tweet or those of whistleblowers are not cases concerning memory ethics. In fact, they are cases that can be analyzed ethically from different perspectives. But one cannot deny that there is the perspective of memory, especially when we consider hypotheses like the extended mind. The legal discussion about the right to be forgotten, discussions about MMTs and the duty to remember is a great opportunity to advance the discussions about memory and morality, however, it is necessary to include in the analyses questions about extended mind, extended memory traces, and memory ownership, besides the moral weight of the memory that is the object of the moral action. Therefore, the chapters of this handbook are of great importance for having already taken an important step in this direction, but we still have a lot of work to do.

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Author biography

Felipe Rocha L Santos is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Universidade Federal da Bahia (UFBA) in Brasil. He works mainly on Epistemology and Philosophy of Science. Recently, he has been researching the intersection between technology, democracy, and science, with a few papers published on this topic. His latest book is called *Epistemology and Intellectual Virtues: From Knowledge to Understanding*.

Editor's response, Sven Bernecker and Kourken Michaelian

When *Memory Studies*' book review editors originally proposed the idea of this review symposium, the intention was for us, as editors of *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Memory*, to respond to the reviewers' criticisms of the volume. When we received the reviews, however, they turned out (we are pleased to say) to contain few real criticisms. After consultation with the editors, we have therefore opted to combine our responses to the reviews (which, we wish to emphasize, constitute valuable contributions to the growing field of philosophy of memory in their own right) with reflections on topics that either have garnered increased attention since the publication of the handbook or are poised to in the near future and hence might be included in a potential second edition of the handbook.

Some context may be of use here: we began work on the handbook in 2014. This was well before Issues in Philosophy of Memory (IPM), the first major international conference in the area, took place in Cologne; indeed, the handbook had just been published when the conference occurred in 2017. As we write this introduction in 2019, IPM2 has just taken place in Grenoble, and we are already looking forward to IPM3 in Bogotá in 2021. There have, in the intervening years, been more workshops, special issues, authored books, and edited books in the area than we can hope to list here; indeed, there is now even a book series dedicated to the philosophy of memory and imagination.¹ If, in 2014, the idea of the philosophy of memory as a distinct field of research was still something of a novelty, this is now, in 2019, most definitely no longer the case. The contours of the field have become much clearer, and reflecting on the similarities and differences between the topics covered in the handbook and those that have figured most prominently in subsequent discussions will provide a sense of the field's current directions and possibilities.

The handbook is divided into nine parts: (I) The nature of memory; (II) The metaphysics of memory; (III) Memory, mind, and meaning; (IV) Memory and the self; (V) Memory and time; (VI) The social dimension of memory; (VII) The epistemology of memory; (VIII) Memory and morality; and (IX) History of philosophy of memory. Six of the book's nine parts, in other words, are dedicated to descriptive questions, two are dedicated to normative issues, and one is dedicated to historical approaches. An informal survey of the recent literature² makes it clear that the topics covered in the descriptive section—such as the phenomenology of memory, the causal theory of memory, memory traces, observer memory, memory and narrativity, and memory as mental time travel—continue to attract the lion's share of attention. Judging by the contributions to IPM2³ and