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Remembering events and remembering looks

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Abstract:

I describe and discuss one particular dimension of disagreement in the philosophical literature on episodic memory. One way of putting the disagreement is in terms of the question as to whether or not there is a difference in kind between *remembering seeing x* and *remembering what x looks like*. I argue against accounts of episodic memory that either deny that there is a clear difference between these two forms of remembering, or downplay the difference by in effect suggesting that the former contains an additional ingredient not present in the latter, but otherwise treating them as the same thing. I also show that a recent ‘minimalist’ approach to episodic memory (Clayton & Russell 2009; Russell & Hanna 2012) fails to give a satisfactory explanatory account of the difference between the two types of remembering. I finish by sketching an alternative approach to episodic memory, which turns on the idea that episodic recollection recruits a specific form of causal reasoning that provides for a concrete sense in which remembered events are remembered as belonging to the past.

Keywords: episodic memory, imagination, types of memory, temporal representation

Remembering events and remembering looks

Originally coined by the psychologist Endel Tulving (1972), the term ‘episodic memory’ has, over the last decade or so at least, become common currency amongst philosophers writing about memory.¹ There is a fairly broad consensus that the term refers to a form of memory that is supposedly different in kind from other forms of memory in virtue of the fact that it involves remembering particular past events or situations. Yet, I think despite this consensus and the adoption of a common terminology, there is in fact still a fair amount of disagreement as to how exactly episodic memory is to be demarcated from other forms of memory. Part of my aim in this paper is to identify what I take to be one particularly important dimension of such disagreement, which is often not explicitly recognized in the literature on episodic memory. The disagreement I have in mind turns in particular on the question as to how we should think of the relationship between episodic memory, on the one hand, and the type of memory involved in sensory imagination, on the other.

As I will put it, the claim I want to argue for, and the claim that is implicitly denied by some other approaches to episodic memory, is that there is a distinction in kind between *remembering seeing (an) x*, on the one hand, and *remembering what (an) x looks like*. At least that is a way of describing one instance of the relevant distinction, involving vision. Much the same distinction can of course also be drawn in the context of other sensory modalities, for instance between *remembering hearing (a) y* and *remembering what (a) y sounds like*. But, for the sake of simplicity, I will

¹ The history of the term is in fact slightly more complicated than I am portraying it here; see Hoerl (2001, p. 315). Recent discussions of memory in the philosophical literature that use the term ‘episodic memory’ include Martin 2001, Genone 2006, Fernandez 2006, Byrne 2010, Sutton 2012, Soteriou 2013, ch. 7.

concentrate on the visual case in what follows. (It should be fairly straightforward to make out how my arguments can be extended to the case of other sensory modalities.) I will also drop the parenthetical ‘an’ or ‘a’, and speak simply of ‘remembering seeing x ’ and ‘remembering what x looks like’. There are substantive issues that are being set aside in making this move, but I don’t believe they affect what I will have to say.²

By ‘remembering seeing x ’ I simply mean what is otherwise referred to as episodic memory. I don’t think there is an existing name for what I describe as ‘remembering what x looks like’. One could perhaps have referred to it as ‘iconic memory’, but in psychology that term is already in use for something else.

Remembering what x looks like shares certain important characteristics with episodic memory. Most significantly, both episodic recall³ and recalling what x looks like involve having a mental image of what is being recalled.⁴ That episodic recall involves having an image of the recalled situation before your mind is, I take it, fairly uncontroversial, although there are of course various quite different ways of spelling out what exactly that implies. And I think there is also a fairly obvious sense in which, in order for you to recall what the *Mona Lisa* looks like, for instance, you have to call to mind an image of the *Mona Lisa*, though again there might be different ways of unpacking that idea.

² The kinds of issues I have in mind here relate to the claim, made e.g. by M. G. F. Martin (2001), that the content of episodic recollection is intrinsically particular, whereas that of sensory imagination is not. For the purposes of this paper, I will largely set aside the question of the extent to which this is true, though some of the material in section 1 may bear on it.

³ I will typically use ‘remembering’ to denote a standing condition, and ‘recalling’ or ‘recollecting’ to denote an episodic occurrence.

⁴ At least in central cases. As I discuss in section 2, it is possible to conceive of cases in which, e.g., an actual physical picture substitutes for a mental image.

Yet, there is also an intuitive difference between remembering seeing x and remembering what x looks like. It is true that, if I remember what the *Mona Lisa* looks like, there must have been an occasion when I saw what the *Mona Lisa* looks like. But that doesn't mean that, in recalling what the *Mona Lisa* looks like, I recall that occasion. Or so it seems, at least.

As we will see, though, some work is required to explain what exactly the difference here comes to, and indeed there are some philosophers who have in effect challenged the idea that there really is a difference in kind here.⁵ To see how to respond to them, and to make progress in this area generally, we first need to have a better grip on why one might think that there is a distinctive kind of memory that consists in remembering what x looks like. I believe we can do so by thinking of remembering what x looks like as the epistemic face of visual imagination. In the next

⁵ Where different theories stand on this issue can sometimes be difficult to make out. For instance, Hopkins (forthcoming) puts forward what he calls the 'inclusion view' of episodic memory, according to which "[e]pisodic memory is experiential imagining put to a particular purpose, or occurring in a particular context" (ibid., p. 2). Assuming a sufficiently broad understanding of 'experiential imagining' (crudely: generating mental images, where this need not just be for the purpose of making things up) the view that there is a difference in kind between remembering seeing x and remembering what x looks like is compatible with at least the first of those claims. However, on a narrower understanding of 'experiential imagining' (crudely: generating mental images for the purposes of making things up), it is also plausibly read as a version of a view that Hopkins thinks the inclusion view is opposed to, which he calls the 'no overlap view'. This is the view that "imagining and [episodic] memory lack any common components at all". Even if, on a high enough level of abstraction, we can speak of one cognitive ability exercised in both episodic recall and visual imagining (understood in the narrower 'making things up' sense), it is possible that different exercises of that one cognitive ability (in episodic recall and such visual imagining, respectively) yield mental states that have no ingredients in common.

section, I will try to clarify the idea that there is an epistemic dimension to sensory imagination. I will do so by showing that a version of this idea can already be found in Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*, but also that Descartes' discussion demonstrates that some care is needed to spell it out properly. In section 2, I then turn to a position which effectively denies that there is an important distinction between remembering seeing x and remembering what x looks like – a position which treats the two as the same thing in at least some cases. After criticising this extreme view, I turn, in section 3, to a somewhat less extreme one – sometimes referred to as the *empiricist theory of memory* – according to which episodic memory contains an additional ingredient not present in mere remembering what x looks like, but which otherwise treats the two as the same thing. My discussion in this section draws upon and clarifies some existing criticisms of traditional empiricist theories of memory, but in section 4 I go on to argue that much the same criticisms also affect more recent accounts of episodic memory that appeal to the idea of a distinctive kind of representational content it possesses. The particular example I discuss is a theory put forward by James Russell together with a number of colleagues, which they term minimalism about episodic memory. I end, in section 5, by sketching an alternative approach to episodic memory, which turns on the idea that episodic recollection recruits a specific form of causal reasoning that provides for a concrete sense in which remembered events are remembered as belonging to the past.

1. The epistemology of sensory imagination

If I am to imagine the *Mona Lisa* hanging on my living room wall, I must know what the *Mona Lisa* looks like. My imagining the *Mona Lisa* hanging on my living room

wall, in so far as I can pull it off,⁶ must therefore involve recalling what the *Mona Lisa* looks like. This is what I mean by saying that we can think of remembering what *x* looks like as the epistemic face of visual imagination.

The idea that there is an epistemic dimension to sensory imagination does in fact have a considerable philosophical pedigree. Something like it can already be seen at work in Descartes' discussion of the dreaming argument in the first of his *Meditations*. However, the idea is somewhat obscured by the way Descartes presents matters.

As part of the overall project of the First Meditation – namely that of finding out what can rationally be called into doubt – he considers the possibility that everything that he takes himself to know about his current situation might in fact be false because, as he puts it, “[h]ow often, asleep at night, am I convinced of just such familiar events – that I am here in my dressing-gown, sitting by the fire – when in fact I am lying undressed in bed!” Yet, immediately after thus pointing out how the supposition that he might be dreaming might serve as the basis for a sceptical argument, Descartes adds an important qualification:

⁶ Of course I may fail to do so. I might be dramatically wrong, and what I think of as the *Mona Lisa* is in fact Delacroix' *Liberty Leading the People*. In which case what I will imagine hanging on my living room wall will, contrary to what I believe, be *Liberty Leading the People*. Or I may find that my imagination simply gives out, because I can't recall what the *Mona Lisa* looks like. The point here is that *if* I succeed (and in so far as I succeed), it will be because I possess knowledge about the *Mona Lisa*, *viz.* knowledge of what the *Mona Lisa* looks like. Note also the 'in so far' here: What I imagine may only match the *Mona Lisa* to a certain degree of accuracy, and I may get some details wrong. The ability to visually imagine something comes in degrees. I may be more or less successful in visually imagining the *Mona Lisa*, depending on the amount of knowledge I possess of what the *Mona Lisa* looks like.

Nonetheless, it must surely be admitted that the visions which come in sleep are like paintings, which must have been fashioned in the likeness of things that are real, and hence that at least these general kinds of things - eyes, head, hands and the body as a whole - are things which are not imaginary but are real and exist. For even when painters try to create sirens and satyrs with the most extraordinary bodies, they cannot give them natures which are new in all respects; they simply jumble up the limbs of different animals. Or if perhaps they manage to think up something so new that nothing remotely similar has ever been seen before – something which is therefore completely fictitious and unreal – at least the colours used in the composition must be real. By similar reasoning, although these general kinds of things – eyes, head, hands and so on – could be imaginary, it must at least be admitted that certain other even simpler and more universal things are real. These are as it were the real colours from which we form all the images of things, whether true or false, that occur in our thought. (Descartes [1641] 1984, pp. 13f.)

Descartes thinks of the issue here in terms of an analogy between what happens when we are dreaming and the activity of painting. Even when painting a mythical creature such as a siren or a satyr, Descartes observes, painters draw on knowledge they possess of existing things in so far as they use their knowledge of existing body parts of human beings or animals to give those creatures such body parts, too. And even when the picture is of a kind of thing quite unlike a person or an animal – a kind of thing that has never been seen before – the painter still uses his knowledge of something he has seen before, namely, for instance, of the colours that things can

have. In a similar way, Descartes argues, even dreams are manifestations of knowledge the dreamer possesses. In so far as they, too, are “fashioned in the likeness of things that are real”, they feed off certain kinds of knowledge.

Yet, the very analogy Descartes employs to make his point, and the way he develops it, are also apt to mislead. First of all, when he says that, whilst the painter might manage to think up something so new that nothing remotely similar has ever been seen before, “at least the colours used in the composition must be real” (Descartes [1641] 1984, p. 14), it sounds as though he is talking about the colours the painter puts *on the canvas*. Carried over to the case of dreams, the analogous claim would go something like this. Whilst none of the things, or kinds of things, that appear in our dreams may actually exist, we can at least be certain of the mental occurrences that constitute the dream itself.

This latter claim would obviously fit in well with the general epistemological outlook of the *Meditations*, which splits reality into an ‘inner realm’ we can have some form of direct, infallible, knowledge of, and an ‘outer realm’ knowledge of which is deeply problematic, so that it must ultimately be underwritten by God.⁷ But in fact such a picture is completely at odds with the underlying epistemological insight in the passage I quoted before. Perhaps the best way to bring this out is by noting that Descartes’ analogy between the case of painting and that of dreaming is also misleading in a second respect.

The second respect in which the analogy is misleading is that Descartes might be taken to suggest that visualizing, say, an animal of a certain sort is ultimately simply a matter of visualizing colours arranged in a certain way, just as a painting is,

⁷ Two important discussions of this feature of Descartes’ epistemology are Burnyeat (1982) and McDowell (1986).

in some sense at least, merely a matter of colours being arranged in a certain way. As against a similar view of perceptual experience, Peter Strawson has made the point that, in order to get right the phenomenology of everyday perceptual experience, we need to use sentences such as “I see the red light of the setting sun filtering through the black and thickly clustered branches of the elms; I see the dappled deer grazing in groups on the vivid green grass...” (Strawson 1979: 97). By an effort of will, we may perhaps be able to bring it about that all we come to see, when we look at our environment, is a pattern of distribution of colours. And maybe being able to do this is what is actually required to become a certain kind of painter. But this is clearly not what everyday experience is like. To accurately capture the nature of everyday perceptual experience, we have to make use of a much richer vocabulary than just colour terms – a vocabulary that also includes such concepts as ‘deer’, or ‘branches’.⁸

If this line of thought is along the right lines, an analogous point arguably also applies to imagination. Even though imagined scenes may be a great deal less detailed than perceived ones, in as far as they too can contain branches, deer and grass, and the like, I need to use words like ‘branches’, ‘deer’ and ‘grass’ to accurately describe the phenomenology of the state I am in when imagining them. (Similar considerations also apply to the way in which particulars can figure in imagination.)

Yet, if there is a difference between merely imagining a certain arrangement of colours and imagining, say, a scene in which deer, branches and grass figure, what does that difference come to? It is here, I think, that we get to the real epistemological insight behind the caveat that Descartes raises about the dreaming argument, which

⁸ More recently, philosophers have used the term ‘the admissible contents of experience’ to frame discussions about the precise range of things or properties that can figure directly in visual experience. See, e.g., Hawley & Macpherson, 2011.

gets somewhat lost in Descartes' own discussion. That insight is that even imagination feeds off knowledge about the world, and that what such knowledge we have determines what we can imagine. Thus, in so far as I can visually imagine a scene in which deer, branches and grass figure, for instance, my doing so draws on perceptually acquired knowledge of such things. It is because deer have a recognizable look and I know from having seen deer what they look like, for instance, that I can visually imagine a scene in which *deer* themselves figure, rather than, say, just being able to imagine a scene in which things of a certain shape and colour figure, where those things just happen to look the way deer look.⁹

This, then, is what I mean by saying that there is an epistemic dimension to visual imagination, and that we should think of remembering what *x* looks like as the epistemic face of visual imagination. Even visual imagination, in as far as things

⁹ It might be objected here that it is possible for someone to imagine – and even produce a picture of – e.g., a species of animal that they have never seen for themselves, as is the case of Albrecht Dürer's famous woodcut of a rhinoceros, which was based on the description of a rhinoceros in a letter (plus a very rough sketch). It seems to me, though, that in so far as Dürer can count as having imagined a rhinoceros, this is not merely due to what he visually imagined. Rather, what Dürer had to do was to visually imagine *an* animal that fitted the descriptions in the letter, and in addition to that he had to suppose that, in so visually imagining, he was imagining a member of the existing species of animal described in the letter. Similarly, one can of course imagine a unicorn by visually imagining a horse with a horn projecting from its forehead and in addition supposing that it is the species of animal featuring in certain myths. In these cases, visual imagination alone does not make it the case that the mental image is one of the specific (supposed) species of animal in question. This is different, I would argue, for the case in which someone has seen deer before and now draws on her perceptually acquired knowledge of deer in visually imagining a scene featuring deer. (Compare here also the analogous contrast between visualizing an individual of whom one has only been given a verbal description versus visualizing an individual whom one has actually met oneself.)

belonging to certain visually recognizable kinds can figure in it, feeds off and is a manifestation of a certain type of knowledge. And, contrary to how Descartes seems to interpret his own argument, the knowledge in question here is knowledge of certain facts about the world. In Descartes' case, for instance, if he really is dreaming about stretching out his hands by the open fire, he can do so only because he knows what such things as hands and a fire burning in a fireplace look like.

2. Martin and Deutscher's painter

So my claim is that there is a specific type of knowledge involved in visual imagination, and there is therefore also a specific type of memory that consists in the retention of such knowledge.¹⁰ Such memory consists in remembering what x looks like.

Yet, it might be questioned whether there really are good reasons to think that remembering what x looks like is different in kind from remembering seeing x , i.e. whether it is really distinct from episodic memory. If you remember what the *Mona Lisa* looks like, the thought might go, it must be because you have seen what the *Mona Lisa* looks like, so when you recall what the *Mona Lisa* looks like you in fact recall a particular past encounter (or past encounters) with the *Mona Lisa*, or at least with a reproduction of her. That is to say, you have an episodic memory.

A view somewhat along those lines can be found articulated in Martin and Deutscher's influential paper 'Remembering', in which they discuss the following example:

¹⁰ For more on the general idea of memory as retention of knowledge or acquaintance, see Martin (2001) and Soteriou (2013, ch. 7).

Suppose that someone asks a painter to paint an imaginary scene. The painter agrees to do this and, taking himself to be painting some purely imaginary scene, paints a detailed picture of a farmyard, including a certain colored and shaped house, various people with detailed features, particular items of clothing, and so on. His parents then recognize the picture as a very accurate representation of a scene which the painter saw just once in his childhood. The figures and colors are as the painter saw them only once on the farm which he now depicts. We may add more and more evidence to force the conclusion that the painter did his work by no mere accident. Although the painter sincerely believes that his work is purely imaginary, and represents no real scene, the amazed observers have all the evidence needed to establish that in fact he is remembering a scene from childhood. What other explanation could there be for his painting being so like what he has seen? (Martin & Deutscher 1966, pp. 167f.)

Martin and Deutscher's paper pre-dates Tulving's coinage of the term 'episodic memory', but their subsequent discussion of this example is framed in terms of the question as to whether "remembering *X*" requires believing "that the past event occurred" (ibid., p. 168), which they take their example to show it does not. It is therefore plausible to interpret their claim as one about what would nowadays be called episodic memory, i.e., as the claim that, in at least some cases, visually imagining something and episodically recollecting it can in fact come to the same thing. Alex Byrne (2010, p. 21) also interprets Martin & Deutscher's argument in this

way,¹¹ and endorses the latter claim – similarly for Robert Hopkins (forthcoming, ms. p. 6).

It is worth noting that there are in fact *three* features that make Martin and Deutscher's example unusual, and that might be thought to raise doubts as to whether, contrary to what Martin and Deutscher, Byrne and Hopkins all appear to hold, it constitutes a case of episodic memory. First of all, the painter's cognitive performance involves the production of an actual physical picture. Secondly, the painter does not believe that he is remembering. And thirdly, the painter takes himself to be painting a purely imaginary scene. As I want to argue, the first two features should not affect our judgement as to whether we are dealing with a case of episodic memory; but the third should.

Anybody should, I think, allow for the possibility of cases in which a memory performance involves the production of a physical picture, and indeed of cases in which this is essential to it. A crime witness may, for instance, struggle to conjure up a definite memory image of the perpetrator, but may be able to use photofit technology to put together an accurate representation of him. In such a case, it seems appropriate to say that, once the photofit picture has been put together, the witness has remembered the perpetrator, in a way in which she was not able to do so before. We

¹¹ Elsewhere, Byrne also says: “[S]uppose I have seen many skunks, and on that basis can recall what skunks look like. When I recall what skunks look like, I visualize a prototypical skunk, a perceptual amalgam of the various skunks I have encountered. Such a memory is best classified (at least initially) with paradigmatic episodic memories – recalling seeing a skunk in my garden this morning, for instance” (Byrne 2010, p. 17). Byrne does not expand on the qualification “(at least initially)”. One thing he might have in mind is that we might well ultimately decide to reserve the term ‘episodic memory’ for what he calls ‘paradigmatic episodic memories’ here, but that this is in fact just a verbal move. I discuss such a view at the end of the next section.

can also imagine other cases, in which some other external performance partly constitutes the act of remembering, as is illustrated by another example Martin and Deutscher themselves give:

Suppose that someone has never dog-paddled. He is not good at visualization and has never learned any words which would describe swimming. His method of representing the one time at which he saw a man dog-paddle is his actually doing the dog-paddle stroke. We can imagine him trying to remember the curious action that the man went through in the water. He cannot describe it, and cannot form any picture of it. He cannot bring it back. He gets into the water, experimenting a little until suddenly he gets it right and exclaims, "Aha, that's it!" (Martin & Deutscher 1966, pp. 161f.)

Note that we are supposed to think of this as an example, not (or not just) of a person's remembering *how to* dog-paddle, but of the person's remembering a particular past event when he saw someone else dog-paddle. As such, it may perhaps be unusual, but I don't think we should rule out that there could be a case like this, and that it would constitute an instance of episodic recall. At any rate, nothing in my argument in what follows requires ruling this out.

The example just mentioned is different from Martin and Deutscher's example of the painter, amongst other things, in that the swimmer, once he gets the dog-paddle stroke right, believes that he has remembered. Yet, I think we can agree with Martin and Deutscher that this, too, is not always necessary for episodic memory and that there can be cases in which we have a genuine episodic memory, but do not believe that we do so. Clearly, the capacity for episodic recollection is fallible, and there are

cases in which it merely seems to us that we remember seeing x , when in fact we do not do so. Once we realize that our capacity for episodic recollection is fallible in this way, however, there may well also be cases in which we believe that it merely seems to us that we remember x , when in fact we do.

However, the example of Martin and Deutscher's painter is not an example of the kind just mentioned – i.e., one in which it seems to the painter that he is remembering, but he does not trust his memory. Rather, in so far as the painter, too, does not believe that he is remembering, he does so for quite a different reason – namely, he does so because he takes himself to be painting a purely imaginary scene. It is this specific feature of Martin and Deutscher's example of the painter that is of relevance to the question as to the relationship between episodic memory and sensory imagination. Martin and Deutscher take this feature, too, to be compatible with the *de facto* existence of an episodic memory, thus in effect denying that, in as far as visual imagination involves a form of remembering, this form of remembering is necessarily different in kind from episodic memory. Instead, they think that episodic memory can come in two varieties, one in which I am consciously recollecting a particular past event or scene as such (call this 'conscious episodic memory'), and one in which I in fact recollect a particular past event or scene, but am not conscious of it as such (call this 'unconscious episodic memory'). Cases of the latter kind are ones where an exercise of the visual imagination coincides with an instance of episodic recollection. Episodic memories, on this view, are episodic in virtue of fulfilling a particular set of causal conditions, rather than because of the type of conscious awareness they involve.

I want to raise two problems for this kind of view.¹² First, note Martin and Deutscher's stipulation that the painter has seen the type of scene represented in the picture "just once in his childhood". I will suggest that this is too restrictive as a general stipulation about episodic memory. However, Martin and Deutscher in fact need to make it, on pain of ending up with a conception of episodic memory that is far too liberal.

It is, I think, fairly obvious that there are cases of what Martin and Deutscher would classify as conscious episodic memory (and what I would argue is the only type of episodic memory there is) that result from repeated perceptual encounters with the same thing, even if the subject is now unable to distinguish between individual of these encounters. Suppose I used to live in Paris for a number of years, but have since moved away, and, during my time in Paris I occasionally visited the Louvre to admire the *Mona Lisa*. Intuitively, when I now think back to these occasions, I have a genuine episodic memory, even though my memory may not single out one of these visits amongst others by some unique feature. The phenomenology of casting my mind back to the past is the same as that involved in recollecting a one-off event.

It is true that both philosophers and psychologists sometimes write about episodic memory as if episodic memories had to be memories of singular, unrepeatable events.¹³ But allowing that they can also sometimes derive from repeated past events

¹² For another criticism of it, which is somewhat in line with what I will suggest in section 5, see Debus 2010.

¹³ Note also, though, that this is a stipulation that goes beyond the basic characterization of episodic memory provided by the typical kinds of theories of episodic memory that have been offered recently. It does not follow, for instance, from the idea that episodic memory has a representational content that includes the information that what is being remembered lies in the past (Byrne, 2010, pp. 23ff.), or

in fact also fits in better with a number of other claims often made about episodic memory. For instance, one role sometimes claimed for episodic memory is that of grounding the use of memory demonstratives such as ‘that tree’, said of a tree encountered on a past walk. Yet, as John Campbell (2001, p. 171) notes, memories can play that role even if they are memories of repeated events. Thus, the walk on which ‘that tree’ was encountered may have been one I took several times, which I can no longer differentiate between.¹⁴ Similarly, it is often thought that there is neuropsychological evidence for the distinction between episodic memory and other forms of memory, in the form of selective amnesias that affect episodic memory but not other forms of memory. In so far as there is such evidence, though, it suggests that the ability to remember repeated past events is impaired alongside the ability to remember one-off events. Thus, Endel Tulving writes of patient K. C., whom he supposes to have a selective episodic memory impairment:

He knows many objective facts concerning his own life, such as his date of birth, the address of his home for the first 9 years of his life, the names of the some of the schools he attended, the make and color of the car he once owned,

that the present memory experience causally derives from past perceptual experience (Fernandez, 2006, p. 162).

¹⁴ Campbell’s example involves demonstrative reference to an object encountered in the past. However, it is also plausible to think that a key role of episodic memories lies in grounding demonstratives referring to past events. The defender of the idea that there can be episodic memories for past events of a type that happened repeatedly need have no qualms about this. She can simply say that, in those cases, the relevant demonstratives are plural demonstratives (‘those visits to the Louvre’, for instance).

and the fact that his parents owned and still own a summer cottage. He knows the location of the cottage and can easily find it on a map of Ontario. [...] Like many other typical amnesic patients, K.C. is impaired in his ability to pick up novel generic information from his everyday world and in his ability to remember ongoing experiences: He has deep anterograde amnesia for both personal experiences and semantic information. However, his retrograde amnesia is highly asymmetrical: He cannot recollect any personally experienced events, *whether one-time or repeated happenings*, whereas his semantic knowledge acquired before the critical accident is still reasonably intact. [...] The outstanding fact about K.C.'s mental make-up is his utter inability to remember any events, circumstances, or situations from his own life. (Tulving 2002, pp. 13f., my emphasis)

Thus, there are considerations from phenomenology, from memory's role in grounding certain types of demonstrative thoughts, and from the psychology of amnesia, all speaking in favour of allowing for there to be episodic memories that are the result of repeated perceptual encounters with the same thing.

Returning to Martin and Deutscher, though, it is far from obvious how they could allow such a thing. Once we allow that episodic memory need not involve consciously recalling past occurrences as such, but can also be present in cases in which the subject herself thinks she is merely imagining, it seems we would then have to count just about any form of activity involving the use of visual imagery as involving an exercise of episodic memory, in so far as it draws on knowledge obtained through past perceptual experience. Thus, Martin and Deutscher's construal of episodic memory leaves them forced to choose between two extremes, one of

which they plump for, but neither of which seems attractive. (I will return to the question as to how a different construal of episodic memory might escape the choice between those extremes.)

A second, related, problem for Martin and Deutscher's view arises from the fact that, on their view, whether a mental state is an episodic memory turns purely on facts about that mental state's causal ancestry, irrespective of the conscious character of the subject's mental state. On closer inspection, it is in fact far from obvious that, in explaining the painter's performance in terms of episodic memory, thus understood, Martin and Deutscher manage to give a satisfactory, or at any rate the most plausible, explanation. In effect, as Martin and Deutscher construe it, the painter's performance might as well be an example technique of automatic drawing championed by the surrealists, in which the hand is supposedly freed from any conscious control. This would still leave the performance rather baffling.

In so far as we are looking for an explanation of the painter's performance, it is much more plausible to think that we are in fact after some conscious knowledge he can be credited with, that doesn't make his performance appear a complete fluke. And here the idea that there is a type of conscious memory, remembering what x looks like, which is distinct from consciously remembering seeing x , can at least go some way along the way of making the painter's performance explicable. His painting is a manifestation of some conscious knowledge – he knows what a farmyard, a horse, or some peasants' dresses looks like, and that's why he can draw these things. But he has to draw them one determinate way or another, and that is where there is room for his performance to be influenced by the particular past experiences he has had without him necessarily being aware of it being thus influenced – so that we get the specific resemblance between what he draws and a scene he has actually witnessed. Thus, by

drawing a distinction between remembering seeing x , and remembering what x looks like, we ultimately get a more satisfactory explanation of Martin and Deutscher's example of the painter than they themselves can provide.

In other words, we need the distinction between remembering seeing x and remembering what x looks like in order to get right the extent to which the painter's performance still admits of an explanation, even though it also defies an explanation of a kind we would normally expect. Yet, that distinction does not seem to be available to Martin and Deutscher themselves, for it cannot be made on purely causal grounds, nor is it a distinction between a conscious and an unconscious form of remembering, but rather a distinction between two distinct forms of conscious remembering.

3. The idea of a 'memory indicator'

The question as to what distinguishes (what we would now call) episodic recollection from sensory imagining is in fact a recurrent theme in modern empiricism, where it is typically answered by invoking the idea of what Holland (1954) calls a 'memory indicator'. Put in the terms I have been using, the idea is that remembering seeing x is different from merely remembering what x looks like in virtue of some form of additional ingredient in the way things are being recalled that is present in the former case, and in virtue of which we can tell that we are engaging in episodic recall.

Holland groups theories involving an idea along those lines together under the label 'empiricist theories of memory'.

As Holland notes, the conclusion that there must be a memory indicator, understood along the lines just sketched, can be made to appear inescapable by the following line of thought:

[I]t seems that the connexion with a past reality which distinguishes memory from imagination does not merely have to exist; it also has to announce its existence to the person who remembers at the time when he remembers. Had it existed clandestinely, as indeed it might have done, then although memory and imagination would have been different, we should never have learned to distinguish them: the difference between them would have been useless, would have meant nothing to us. (Holland, 1954, p. 465)

Yet, as Holland goes on to argue, existing attempts to identify such an alleged memory indicator, by which we can tell episodic memory apart from sensory imagination, have in fact fared rather badly. Given that there are at least some cases in which we don't have any trouble distinguishing between recollecting and imagining, the nature of such a memory indicator should be fairly unmistakable. Yet, not only have different philosophers come up with quite different suggestions as to what it might consist in, the most prominent attempts to frame it, e.g., in terms of notions such as 'vivacity', as Hume ([1739] 2007, I.1.iii) does, or 'familiarity', as Russell (1921, lecture IX) does, are also notoriously unsatisfactory.

For Holland, these problems with existing empiricist theories of memory are in fact symptomatic of a deeper misunderstanding of the difference between episodic memory and sensory imagination involved in the empiricist's approach. As he puts it the empiricist assumes that it is possible to

contemplate an idea of the memory and an idea of the imagination and, *feigning ignorance of their origins*, begin to distinguish them afresh by means

of a difference in their respective qualities. (Holland 1954, p. 486; emphasis in original)

Yet to think this is possible, Holland argues, is to ignore the fact that recollecting and imagining are (at least in central cases) goal-directed activities, and instead to construe them as occurrences we undergo entirely passively.¹⁵ He illustrates this point with an example that bears a structural similarity to Martin and Deutscher's example of the painter.

Suppose, Holland asks, you were instructed to imagine a Norman castle. If that is all that is being requested, he points out, one legitimate way in which you can comply with the request would be by calling to mind an image of a particular Norman castle you are familiar with – say, an image of Caernarvon castle, which you can call to mind since you have visited Caernarvon castle. Yet, suppose to the original request to imagine a Norman castle was added a further one, namely that the castle you imagine should, unlike the real Caernarvon castle, be a made-up Norman castle. As Holland explains, what is required now “is that your imagined castle should [be] a castle that is imagined in a further, additional sense over and above the one prescribed in the original example.” (Holland 1954, p. 470)

What Holland notes is that, in this case, it is clearly possible that you fail to comply with the request in a way that you don't notice. Specifically, as he says,

you might be picturing to yourself a castle which you believe to be a fictitious one, a product of your inventive genius, while all the time it is some actual

¹⁵ Holland also connects this with the idea that episodic recollection is not a source of knowledge, but rather a manifestation of knowledge.

castle which you have previously seen [...]. Maybe you discover the truth later when a friend shows you a picture of Caernarvon Castle and reminds you that you visited it long ago; you realize then with surprise that it was precisely this castle that you had had before your mind. (Holland 1954, p. 471)

What is clearly not possible, though, is that you should think that you are complying with the request, and yet at the same time believe you are failing in this way.

Holland then raises the question what the source of this impossibility is. The empiricist, it seems, has trouble explaining it in a satisfactory way. Clearly, the impossibility here can't be explained by invoking the idea of a memory indicator. It does not have anything to do with how things happen to come before your mind. Rather, it is an impossibility of a practical kind, as carrying out the project of freely imagining is incompatible with at the same time taking what you imagine to be something you have encountered before. Yet, this seems to undermine the empiricist's idea that we distinguish between remembering and imagining because of the presence or absence of a memory indicator. Rather, the reason why we can distinguish between remembering and imagining in a case like that described by Holland seems to lie with the fact that they are two distinct mental activities, with distinct goals. The knowledge, in other words, that allows us to distinguish between them is not knowledge of some mental item or feature that happens to accompany episodes of recollection and happens to be absent in episodes of imagining; it is a form of practical self-knowledge, i.e. knowledge of what we are doing.¹⁶

¹⁶ The idea that our ability to distinguish between episodes of remembering and episodes of imagining rests on a form of practical self-knowledge is also explored in Soteriou 2013, pp. 317ff. It sometimes encounters the objection that recollecting is not always an exercise of agency, as there can be such a

What, then, about the empiricist line of thought described by Holland in the passage I quoted at the beginning of this section, which seemed to make the idea of a memory indicator so inescapable? A diagnosis of where exactly the problem with it might lie, which is in line with Holland's criticism of empiricist theories of memory, has been offered by J. O. Urmson (1971). For Urmson, the empiricist's mistake lies in running together two quite separate notions of imagination and thus two distinct possible motivations for postulating the existence of a memory indicator. First, one might be motivated by a concern about the reliability of one's memory, and look for a justification for believing that one isn't simply making things up instead of genuinely remembering. The sense in which we might speak of things being merely imagined in this context is simply that our memory might be faulty. Secondly, one might wonder how, in a case in which we consciously engage in an act of imagining, we distinguish between doing so and consciously engaging in an act of recollecting. In this context, imagining means that "someone freely and creatively invented, made up, such and such, as a piece of imaginative fiction" (Urmson 1971, p. 85).¹⁷

thing as, e.g., involuntary remembering. There is no scope to discuss this objection in this paper, but see, e.g., Hopkins (this issue, section 1) for some material that could be used to respond to it.

¹⁷ See also Pears, 1991, pp. 40f., who draws a related distinction between what he calls the "question about meaning" and the "question about truth" with respect to mental images. Bernecker (2008, p. 85), who quotes Pears, concurs that there is a difference between the question as to how one "know[s] what kind of cognitive activity one is engaged in" and the question as to how one "know[s] whether one succeeds in this activity." Yet, he construes both of those questions as sceptical questions. In so doing, Bernecker arguably commits the very same mistake that Urmson and Pears accuse the empiricist of – i.e. to assume that they are questions requiring a unified treatment. The question as to how we can distinguish between defective and non-defective exercises of a cognitive capacity is indeed best construed as a sceptical question, because we can't normally tell the two apart from each

Once we have thus distinguished between the two senses of imagining in question, Urmson argues, it also becomes obvious that the search for a memory indicator has been misguided. For it should be clear that looking for a memory indicator in response to the first concern is hopeless. There is no specific mark internal to memory by which we can tell, on an individual occasion, whether we are recollecting accurately or inaccurately.¹⁸ The temptation to think that there might be such a thing arises only out of conflating this case with the quite different second one, in which it is indeed quite obvious to us whether we are imagining or remembering, but which involves imagination in quite a different sense. And in that second case, it seems unnecessary to invoke the idea of a memory indicator to explain how we can tell memory and imagination apart. Indeed, the idea of a memory indicator seems to be quite the wrong thing to provide the relevant explanation. Rather, what allows us to tell whether we are recollecting or imagining, when these are understood as activities we are carrying out consciously, is our “knowing what we are at” (Urmson 1971, 90), which Urmson suggests is a matter of knowing what would count as succeeding in the mental activity we are engaged in.

As Urmson also points out, recognizing the distinction between the two senses of ‘imagination’ that allows us to unravel the confusion in the empiricist’s line of thought leading to the idea of a memory indicator, also implies recognizing a related

other. But in as far as we do sometimes succeed in imagining in Urmson’s second sense, and do at other times succeed in episodic recall, there is little question that we are able to tell these two kinds of cases apart from each other, and it makes sense to enquire into the grounds that enable us to do so.

¹⁸ As Urmson acknowledges, there may of course be particular situations in which I have specific reasons for suspecting my recollections to be more unreliable than usual – e.g. when trying to recollect a childhood incident whilst running a high fever – but this is a different matter.

distinction between two senses of 'recollection'. He explains this point with the help of an analogy:

Nobody is going to say that in putting my hands in my pockets I am mimicking a respected teacher just because he also often put his hands in his pockets. But what if, when engaged in philosophical controversy, he was accustomed to groan, hold his head in his hands, ruffle his hair, and the like, and I am accustomed to do the like in the same circumstances. Am I now mimicking my teacher? Of course, I may be doing so quite deliberately. But perhaps I indignantly and sincerely deny that I am doing any such thing; in which case, if my behaviour is very like his you will perhaps say that I must be unconsciously mimicking him, with justification. But there remains the difference between 'imitate' or 'mimic' as the name of a distinctive and intentional human activity and the same words as a causal hypothesis to explain a similarity. In the same way there is a derivative use of 'recollect' to offer a causal hypothesis as well as the primary use to name a goal-directed human activity. (Urmson 1971, p. 88)

Note the difference between the way Urmson sets up the relations between different concepts of recollecting here, by distinguishing a primary and a derivative use of the concept of memory, and Martin and Deutscher's view, which basically takes as definitional of the general concept of recollecting the use Urmson describes as derivative, and then distinguishes two sub-varieties of recollecting – conscious and unconscious. In effect, Urmson's critique of the empiricist theory of memory turns on the idea that the empiricist is still wedded to a version of Martin and Deutscher's

view, but adds to it a proposal as to what conscious episodic memory consists in. On this proposal, what distinguishes conscious episodic memory is that there is not just the relevant causal connection to the past, but also a sign by which the subject herself can tell that this causal connection obtains – the memory indicator. On Urmson's view, this sort of composite view ignores the primacy that the case of conscious episodes of recollecting or imagining have in our understanding of these concepts. The possibility that the concept of remembering might also be applied to cases which don't involve conscious recollection (as Urmson says, "to offer a causal hypothesis") only comes into view when we look at cases in which I am consciously exercising my imagination with the goal of imagining something made up, and then consider how such cases might be defective. Similarly, the possibility that the concept of imagination might also be applied to something other than such conscious exercises of the imagination only comes into view when we look at cases in which I am consciously trying to recollect some past circumstance and consider how such cases, too, can be defective.

When first confronted with the example of Martin and Deutscher's painter, it is perhaps tempting to think that the dispute over whether or not it constitutes an example of episodic recollection is a purely verbal one. This is perhaps a line someone holding an empiricist view of memory might take, as on such a view all that really distinguishes the case of the painter from a case of conscious episodic memory is the absence of a memory indicator. By contrast, if the critiques of the empiricist view that I have discussed in this section are along the right lines, they also indicate an important sense in which we are dealing with more than a purely verbal dispute here. What they indicate is that, by (in effect) describing the painter as having an episodic memory, Martin and Deutscher ignore a difference in kind between the case

of the painter and the case of conscious episodic recollection – a difference that means that the latter cannot simply be decomposed into the former plus some additional ingredient, as the empiricist would have it.

4. Minimalism about episodic memory

The kinds of empiricist theories of memory discussed in the last section have generally fallen out of favour, and it may therefore be considered odd that I should devote so much time to discussing them. Yet, traces of the general empiricist approach can still be found in contemporary accounts of episodic memory, especially those that try to explain the distinctiveness of episodic memory in terms of a distinctive kind of representational content it possesses.¹⁹

In this section, I will examine in some detail one particular recent account of episodic memory, and try to show that it, too, is open to objections that trace back to what are essentially empiricist elements in it. The approach in question has been put forward by James Russell together with a number of co-authors across several papers (Clayton & Russell 2009, Russell & Davies 2012, Russell & Hanna 2012). They call it a *minimalist approach to episodic memory*. In a paper written with Nicola Clayton, Russell characterizes the key idea behind this minimalist approach in terms of the idea that “[e]pisodic memory involves re-experiencing situations” (Clayton & Russell 2009, p. 2334). In contrast to other forms of memory, Clayton and Russell argue, it thus shares certain essential features with perceptual experience itself. Or, as they put it, “the process of re-experiencing [in episodic memory] will inherit what is essential to adequate objective experience itself” (ibid.).

¹⁹ Byrne (2010), for one, is explicit about the empiricist heritage of his representationalist account.

This is a minimalist approach, as Clayton and Russell explain, in so far as “it is not the possession of certain concepts or conceptual abilities [...] that marks the difference between episodic memory and other kinds of memory” (Clayton & Russell, 2009, p. 2335). The kinds of views Clayton and Russell explicitly contrast theirs with involve views according to which episodic memory requires, for instance, a grasp of the concept of the self, or the conceptual capacities required to grasp the causal dependence of one’s memory on prior experience.

What then are the essential features of perceptual experience that episodic memory, according to the minimalist approach, inherits? Clayton and Russell mention three in particular. First, as they see it, episodic memory has a content that is non-conceptual. Second, it has an egocentric spatial content. And third, it has temporal content. I will focus in particular about what they say about the spatial and temporal content of episodic memory.

One way of characterizing the idea that perceptual experience has egocentric spatial content is in terms of the thought that, in perceptual experience, the spatial layout of the perceived scene is presented in such a way that it is possible to triangulate back to the perceiver’s own position, without the perceiver him- or herself being amongst the objects that are being perceived. Thus, when you look at a map, even if you know that the map represents the place where you are amongst the places it represents, you won’t simply be able to read off the map where you are, unless a ‘you are here’ sign has been added to the map. In perceptual experience, by contrast, the perceived objects are given as being to the left or to the right, or closer and further away, because the way you experience them depends in part on the relation between them and the position you yourself occupy.

I won't consider here the claim Russell and his colleagues take from Kant that the very possibility of perceptual experience turns on its having egocentric spatial content. My main focus will be on the idea that what makes episodic memory distinctive is its possession of such egocentric spatial content. Clayton and Russell want to make this idea intuitively plausible with the following examples.

If, for example, Jake says that he can remember seeing a goal being scored at a soccer match he attended last week while being adamant that he has no memory of where he was sitting in relation to the goal-scoring (behind the net, on its left or right) and that he has no memory of whether he was sitting at the back of the stadium or right down the front, then we would be inclined to say that this report was not truly a case of re-experiencing. Similarly, if he says he recalls being interviewed for a job but has no idea where the various interviewers were sitting in relation to him, or cannot recall whether he sat at the head of the long rectangular interview table or whether he sat before its side with the panel ranged behind the other side then we would be inclined to say that Jake was not re-experiencing the event. We do not of course claim that the accuracy must be perfect in these cases, but it must be at least partial. (Clayton & Russell 2009, p. 2335).

As I said, Clayton and Russell also claim that episodic memory, like perceptual experience, has temporal content. Again with a nod to Kant, they explain this idea in terms of the thought that when we remember experiencing an objectively unfolding series of events, we do this in virtue of being aware of the fact that the resulting

sequence of experiences was not simply determined by us (as it can be when we observe a static scene), but was imposed upon us. Here is how they put the point:

[A]n organism can be related to a temporal sequence either as [a mere] observer or as an agent. In the first case, it will perceive A, then B, then C; and the world imposes this particular order on it. In the second case (e.g., when scanning a complex object like a room) the organism can determine the order for itself (ceiling, then floor...) and indeed reverse the order at will. The conjecture we derive from this is that if the organism is re-experiencing a particular engagement with reality then it should be able to recall whether this engagement was perceptually 'passive' or 'active'. (Clayton & Russell, 2009, p. 2336)

Note that Clayton and Russell, in characterizing the sense in which episodic memory, on their view, has both egocentric spatial content and temporal content, speak of the subject remembering *whether certain things were the case* – i.e., whether she had one vantage point or another on the remembered scene, and whether her engagement with the scene was perceptually active or passive with respect to the sequence of experiences. For these phrases not to imply some form of reduction of episodic memory to another form of memory, and also for them to be compatible with the idea of a minimalist approach to episodic memory, we need to find a way of understanding them as descriptions of aspects of episodic memory itself. What Clayton and Russell in fact seem to have in mind is that episodic memories inherit from perceptual experience not just the generic features of *having* an egocentric spatial and a temporal content, but that they inherit the specific spatial and temporal content of the

experiences they are memories of. Thus, in recollecting a sequence of events, the egocentric spatial content of my memory matches (to at least some degree of accuracy) that of the original experience, and the sequence itself is replayed in memory in the original order (again, to at least some degree of accuracy). Moreover, with respect to *both* the egocentric spatial and the temporal content of her memory, the subject is aware that how things are being remembered is not up to her – she relates to them in a passive way – and this can explain the sense in which she is re-experiencing the sequence. Or so the thought goes.

I think it is possible to take issue with Clayton and Russell's on phenomenological grounds at this point, and argue that there can be genuine episodic memories that do not match the original experience to this extent. Thus, the question would be whether we are really dealing with *necessary* features of episodic memory here.²⁰ However, the question I want to press in what follows is whether Clayton and Russell's account gives *sufficient* criteria for episodic memory, and in particular whether – in the terminology of the present paper – it succeeds in distinguishing remembering seeing x from remembering what x looks like.

Consider, for instance, a situation in which you have to remind yourself which way is clockwise and which way is anti-clockwise – suppose you are trying to loosen a rusted-on screw. Succeeding in your task here will involve engaging in an exercise of the visual imagination – reminding yourself what something turning clockwise

²⁰ For instance, one worry one might have here is that Clayton & Russell's position seems to imply that only 'field' memories can qualify as episodic, whereas 'observer' memories can't. For the field vs. observer distinction see, e.g., Nigro & Neisser 1983.

rather than anti-clockwise looks like.²¹ That knowledge can't be retained in purely propositional form. More to the point, though, you will have to exercise your imagination in a way that involves some sensitivity both to your imagined egocentric spatial perspective and to the fact that what you imagine before or after what, within your imaginative project, is not up to you. If, within your imaginative project, you couldn't make out parts of the movement as going from left to right, and others from right to left, as determined by your spatial perspective, the difference between clockwise and anti-clockwise would be lost to you. And it would equally be lost to you if you thought the temporal order in which you imagine things to be incidental to your imaginative project. But being thus related to the contents of your imagination, and in particular to the way they unfold over time, in a passive rather than an active way in no way entails that you represent what you are imagining as a past event – as lying behind you in time. Whether or not you do so seems an entirely separate matter.

I suggested at the beginning of this section that the minimalist approach to episodic memory, as advocated by Russell and his colleagues, can be seen to inherit the general empiricist outlook of traditional theories of memory featuring the idea of a memory indicator, as discussed in the previous section. The focus on the spatial and temporal content of episodic memories may obscure the similarities somewhat, but, as I hope to have brought out in my discussion, a further key ingredient in the minimalist approach is the idea that we are passive with respect to the crucial spatiotemporal features of the content that is recalled. The role this specific kind of passivity is meant

²¹ At least that is the case I will focus on, given the general focus in this paper on visual imagination.

Of course, you could also remind yourself of which way is clockwise by imagining turning something clockwise with your hand, for instance, or by imagining touching something that is turning clockwise. My argument in the main text carries over to cases of this type involving the imaginary employment of modalities other than vision.

to play in Russell's theory is arguably just that of a memory indicator, as characterized by Holland.²² Yet, as we have just seen, as with other such alleged indicators such as Hume's 'vivacity' or Bertrand Russell's 'familiarity', it cannot in fact play this role, because episodes of sensory imagination can feature the same kind of passivity with respect to their spatiotemporal content.

Whilst I thus think the minimalist approach to episodic memory fails, because it ultimately fails to give a satisfactory *explanatory account* of the difference between episodic memory and other forms of memory, I nevertheless also think that Russell and his colleagues do in fact give the right description of what that distinction *consists in*. For the reason they place so much emphasis specifically on the idea that, in episodic memory, we often re-experience sequences of events, is because they think that our doing so *ipso facto* also involves a primitive form of appreciation that what we now re-experience happened in the past. And it is the latter feature that is distinctive of episodic memory.

This idea is spelled out in its most detailed form in a paper written by Russell and Robert Hanna (2012), which delves deeper into the supposed Kantian underpinnings of the minimalist approach. I have already said that the minimalist account assumes that, in so far as we can re-experience sequences of events in memory, it is because we are sensitive to the fact that the order in which the events were experienced and are now recalled is, as Russell and Hanna (2012, p. 39) put it, "determined externally". This contrasts with a case in which what was experienced, and is now being recalled, is a static scene, where the order in which we focus first on

²² In fact, one of the empiricist critics of Holland also argues that I can tell that I am remembering from the fact that "the whole incident is being presented to me forcibly, independent of my will; the details are not malleable" (Furlong 1956, p. 545)

one aspect of the scene and then another is something we can determine.²³ Russell and Hanna take this contrast to imply that, in so far as we recall a sequence of events, there is also a sense in which we are sensitive to the fact that the events recalled belong to the past. We may not necessarily locate them in a linearly organized past, but we will have a basic grasp of them as *completed*. This is so, they think, because unlike in the case of looking at a static scene, in which I can enjoy the same experience repeatedly by looking at the same place again and again, the earlier events in a sequence are not ones I can, in a similar way, simply decide to experience again, because they are no longer part of the present. As Russell and Hanna put it:

It is [...] the observation of dynamic events, set against the active pick-up of non-dynamic scenes, that can present to the developing child an essentially nonconceptual experience of Time's Arrow – the immediate experience of unidirectionality, containing completed and irretrievable elements" (Russell and Hanna 2012, pp. 39f.).

If what I said above about the example of reminding yourself which way is clockwise is along the right lines, it indicates that Russell and Hanna are running together two separate thoughts here. In as far as perception and episodic memory might involve an element of passivity with respect to the temporal order in which things are being perceived or recalled, the same analogously goes for imagination. Thus, the kinds of Kantian considerations put forward by Russell and Hanna are at best considerations

²³ The specific source of inspiration here is of course Kant's 'Second Analogy' in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (Kant 1781/87). See also Strawson (1966, pt. 2, ch. III) for an influential discussion of Kant's argument in the Second Analogy.

about what is involved in representing one thing happening *before* or *after* another thing – i.e. representing events as standing in what McTaggart (1908) called *B-series* relations to each other. They do not explain the sense in which episodic recollection, uniquely, also involves locating the remembered events in what McTaggart called the *A-series*, i.e. representing them as having taken place in the *past*.²⁴ We need to turn elsewhere for an explanation of this distinctive feature of episodic memory.

5. The Pastness Element

Despite thus ultimately disagreeing with Russell and his colleagues' minimalism about episodic memory, I have suggested that they do manage to identify the particular feature that sets remembering seeing *x* apart from merely remembering what *x* looks like. It is the grasp we have, when remembering seeing *x*, of what we remember as lying in the past, or being completed, which they try to explain – unsuccessfully, as I have argued – in terms of the idea of a specific type of temporal content episodic memories themselves possess in virtue of being memories of sequences of events that unfold over time.

In fact, I believe it is this element of episodic memory that allows us to escape from the dilemma I have sketched for Martin and Deutscher's approach, of being forced to choose between the two extremes of adopting an implausibly restricted conception of episodic memory that rules out the possibility of episodic memories that are based on more than one perceptual encounter with the same thing, or an implausibly liberal conception of episodic memory, on which virtually any exercise of the visual imagination counts as an instance of episodic recall. Instances of remembering seeing *x* can be based on more than one perceptual encounter with *x*,

²⁴ See Hoerl & McCormack 2011, sec. 4, and Hoerl 2009 for discussion of related issues.

without collapsing into a form of generic memory such as merely remembering what x looks like, because they involve an appreciation that what is being remembered can in some sense not be encountered again in the same way. I want to finish this paper by giving a brief sketch of how I think this ‘pastness’ element in episodic memory is to be accounted for.²⁵

One way of approaching the issue is by connecting it to a particular element of a theoretical account of episodic memory put forward by Martin Conway. As Conway sees it, the workings and function of episodic memory – at least episodic memory for non-recent events – have to be viewed within the context of a hierarchical system, which he calls the autobiographical knowledge base. Apart from episodic memories themselves, the autobiographical knowledge base also contains conceptual knowledge in the form of ‘lifetime period’ and ‘general event’ knowledge. I will focus specifically on lifetime period knowledge, of which Conway writes:

‘Lifetime periods’ are the most abstract and temporally extended AM [Autobiographical Memory] knowledge structures. They contain knowledge about others, activities locations, feelings and evaluations common to a period as a whole. [They are] abstract mental models of the self during [such] a delineated period of time usually defined by a theme or common set of themes, e.g. school, work, relationships, etc. (Conway 2001, p. 1377)

Conway provides empirical evidence that the integration with such ‘lifetime period’ knowledge plays a crucial role in the functioning of episodic memory. For instance,

²⁵ Some of the ideas sketched below are discussed in more detail in Hoerl 2007 and Hoerl & McCormack 2011.

he claims that episodic memories are “only retained in a durable form if they become linked to conceptual autobiographical knowledge [such as ‘lifetime period’ knowledge]. Otherwise they are rapidly forgotten” (Conway 2005, p. 613). And the integration of episodic memory in the broader autobiographical knowledge base is also crucial to the way Conway conceives of the function of episodic memory, which he does in terms of connections between episodic memory and the self.

I will leave these particular aspects of Conway’s theory to one side. Rather, I want to suggest that the interconnection between at least some episodic memories and lifetime period knowledge might also be seen in a different light. What I want to suggest, in short, is that the way in which my memory is bound up with lifetime period knowledge may sometimes be the only factor that makes it the case that I can remember seeing x , rather than merely remember what x looks like.

Just that, I would say, is what is going on in my earlier example, where I can remember seeing the *Mona Lisa* on my frequent visits to the Louvre while I lived in Paris, even though I cannot recall anything that would allow me to distinguish one such visit from another. My knowledge of a delineated period of time during which I lived in Paris, which was followed by periods spent elsewhere, can provide for a way of making concrete to myself a sense in which what I remember when I recall those visits is something that will not occur again – thus giving the distinctive episodic flavour to my memory, even though there is also a generic aspect to it, in so far it covers a run of events of the same type.

The role of lifetime period knowledge, as envisaged here, is somewhat different from that envisaged by Conway. For instance, there is no suggestion that episodic memory can only be genuine or be retained over time if it is bound up with lifetime period knowledge. Often we may have far more specific knowledge, allowing

us to fit what we remember in a specific causal sequence with particular other events.²⁶ Rather, the view is that lifetime period knowledge may at least sometimes provide the only conceptual resource available to the subject for making concrete the idea that what is being remembered belongs to the past. This is because lifetime period knowledge is one possible source of knowledge I can draw on in engaging in a kind of causal reasoning that is necessary for episodic memory generally. In this type of causal reasoning, I think of the events or situations I remember as having been superseded, in some concrete respect by other events or situations, providing for a sense in which they are events or situations that won't occur again and thus belong to the past.

In general, then, my suggestion is that what generates the element of 'episodicity' or 'pastness' in episodic memory, which makes remembering seeing x different from merely remembering what x looks like, is the way in which episodic memory recruits other knowledge and a particular kind of causal reasoning. When we remember episodically, we have an idea of some concrete way in which things have changed since the events or situation we remember, providing for a sense in which

²⁶ And our being able to do is arguably required if episodic recollection is to play a particular epistemic role it sometimes plays. For instance, if episodic recollecting is meant to help me decide, whilst on my way to work, whether or not I have left the stove on at home, it is clearly no good simply bringing to mind an episode (or episodes) of turning off the stove and finding some way or other of making concrete to myself that what I thus remember lies in the past. Rather, what I need to do is reconstruct the particular sequence of events that led up to my being on my way to work now. Note also, though, that it would be wrong to tie the very concept of episodic memory too tightly to the fact that episodic memory can sometimes play an epistemic role of this kind. There are clearly many episodic memories we have that cannot play such an epistemic role, because they have no particular implication for what is the case in the present.

those are events or situations that won't occur again. And, in so far as memory mobilizes causal reasoning of this sort, it is episodic. I have explained how viewing episodic memory as involving this kind of causal reasoning helps escape the dilemma I have sketched for Martin and Deutscher's account, of having to adopt either an implausibly restrictive or an implausibly liberal conception of episodic memory. However, doing so also implies acknowledging an important sense in which the subject herself is actively involved in episodic recollection, which empiricist theories of episodic memory miss.²⁷

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