

---

## CONSTRUCTION, PRESERVATION, AND THE PRESENCE OF SELF IN OBSERVER MEMORY: A REPLY TO TRAKAS

### Construcción, preservación, y la presencia del yo en la memoria de observador: Una respuesta a Trakas

CHRISTOPHER JUDE MCCARROLL <sup>a</sup>

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7555-1355>

chrismccarroll@hotmail.com

<sup>a</sup> Centre for Philosophy of Memory, Université Grenoble Alpes, Grenoble, France.

#### Abstract

Observer memories involve a representation of the self in the memory image, which is presented from a detached or external point of view. That such an image is an obvious departure from how one initially experienced the event seems relatively straightforward. However, in my book on this type of imagery, I suggested that such memories can in fact, at least in some cases, accurately represent one's past experience of an event. During these past events there is a sense in which we adopt an external perspective on ourselves. In the present paper, I respond to a critical notice of my book by Marina Trakas. Trakas argues that my account of observer memory unfolded against the background of a problematic preservationist account of episodic memory, and that I failed to adequately account for the presence of self in observer memory. I respond to these worries here, and I try to clarify key points that were underdeveloped in the book.

**Key words:** Episodic Memory; Observer Memory; Visual Perspective; Mental Imagery; Theories of Memory; Self-Presence.

#### Resumen

Los recuerdos de observador involucran una representación de sí mismo en la escena recordada, la cual es presentada desde una perspectiva distanciada o del exterior. Que tal imagen de la escena sea diferente a como uno la experimentó originalmente puede parecer obvio. Sin embargo, en mi libro sobre este tipo de imagen, yo sugerí que, de hecho, tales recuerdos, por lo menos en algunos casos, pueden representar precisamente como uno experimentó el evento originalmente. Durante estos eventos pasados, en cierto sentido adoptamos una perspectiva externa sobre nosotros mismos. En este artículo, yo respondo a una nota crítica de mi libro, escrita por Marina Trakas. Trakas sostiene que mi explicación de la memoria del observador se desarrolló en el contexto de una suposición preservacionista problemática de la memoria episódica y que no pude explicar adecuadamente la presencia del yo en la memoria del observador.

Respondo a estas preocupaciones aquí y trato de aclarar los puntos clave que estaban poco desarrollados en el libro.

**Palabras clave:** Memoria episódica; Memoria de observador; Perspectivas visuales; Imagen mental; Teorías de la memoria; Presencia del yo.

I think in the frozen images of a photograph. Not an image on a plate, but one traced by a fine pen, a small and perfect memory with the soft volumes and warm colors of a Renaissance painting, like an intention captured on grainy paper or cloth... From an infinite distance I am looking at that picture, which includes me. I am spectator and protagonist. I am in shadow, veiled by the fog of a translucent curtain. I know I am myself, but I am also this person observing from the outside.

Isabel Allende (*The Stories of Eva Luna*, pp. 1-2)

## 1. Introduction

Openness to critical inquiry is a sensitivity required of philosophical writing. If no criticism is possible, the writing is a piece of art or dogma, but not a real philosophical work. So writes Marina Trakas in her critical notice of my book *Remembering From the Outside*. I agree. Trakas has written a perceptive, insightful, generous, and, yes, critical commentary of my work, and I thank her for it.

Without veering into the realm of dogma or art, the work of philosophy permits one to push back against criticism too, however. That too is part of the process of philosophical creation. Trakas offers an extremely rich critique, and raises many interesting questions and concerns, not all of which I can reply to here, but in this short piece I focus in on the main objections or worries that Trakas raises and respond to them. Trakas offers two main lines of criticism. The first deals with notions of construction and preservation of content in episodic memory. The second relates to the presence of self in observer memory.

## 2. Construction and Preservation in Episodic Memory

Observer memories involve a representation of the self in the memory image, which is presented from a detached or external point of view.<sup>1</sup> That such an image is an obvious departure from how one initially experienced the event seems relatively straightforward. Yet I

<sup>1</sup> Observer memory is contrasted with field memory, which maintains one's original visual perspective (Nigro & Neisser, 1983).

suggest that such memories can in fact, at least in some cases, accurately represent one's past experience of an event. During these past events there is a sense in which we adopt an external perspective on ourselves. These memories are not only true, in that they accord with some past event, they can also be authentic, in that they accord with one's initial experience of that event.

Trakas notes that the *Constructive Encoding* approach I introduce to explain how this is so is not itself problematic; it is, she suggests, "a compelling and original thesis that is backed up with scientific data" (2020, p. 126). The issue is, rather, that introducing the *Constructive Encoding* approach to explain observer memory presupposes a problematic understanding of episodic memory to begin with. This is the assumption that episodic memory merely *preserves* content from perceptual experience. It is this notion of preservation that Trakas takes issue with, and it is this same preservationist way of thinking about the content of episodic memory that renders the *Constructive Encoding* approach problematic in her eyes.

I understand this worry. The notion of preservation has enjoyed a particularly poor reputation in the philosophy of memory recently.<sup>2</sup> This is especially so given that science has shown that memory is inherently constructive: much of the content of episodic memory is generated at the time of retrieval, drawing on sources of information other than content that was preserved from perceptual experience (e.g., Addis, 2018). Memory is hence constructive, not preservationist.

In fact, in the book I wanted to distance myself from this notion of preservation. I wanted to emphasise the fully constructive and reconstructive nature of episodic memory. Yet, according to Trakas, the *Constructive Encoding* approach ends up being a moderately preservationist view. It is *quasi-preservationist*, in that "it allows memory to incorporate new content that was not included in the original experience, whereas a strict preservationism considers that a memory representation does not include content not included in the original representation" (Trakas, 2020, p. 128). The worry is that the *Constructive Encoding* approach paints itself as constructive but ends up being (moderately) preservationist. There is a sense in which Trakas is right: the view I endorse is one that invokes a moderately preservationist understanding of memory. In this paper I'll try to

<sup>2</sup> There is a separate issue in the epistemology of memory about whether memory preserves or generates epistemic justification. See, for example, Lackey (2005) and Senor (2007).

explain why the view is not as problematic as Trakas thinks. I'll also try to clarify the way in which my view does in fact eschew a particular notion of preservation in episodic memory.

Trakas suggests that there are ways of explaining how observer perspectives can be genuine memories without invoking the notion of preservation of content. She observes that although the preservation of content is an integral part of the classical causal theory of memory (Martin & Deutscher, 1966), and even causal theories of constructive memory (Michaelian, 2011), there are other theories of memory that one could adopt to explain the veridicality of observer perspectives without an appeal to preservation. Trakas provides two examples: Fernández' functionalist theory (2019) and Michaelian's simulation theory (2016). Yet part of the reason I appeal to a moderately preservationist view actually becomes clear in Trakas' brief take on theories of memory. I view the causal theory of constructive memory to be the most plausible account of episodic memory. The causal theory of constructive memory may not be without its problems (Michaelian, 2016), but it helps explain a range of features of everyday human remembering (Bernecker, 2010; Robins, 2016; McCarroll, 2020). Part of the reason I adopt a moderately preservationist framework for thinking about observer memory is that I think constructive memory requires a causal connection to the past event, which is maintained by a memory trace.

In fact, it is not clear that these distinct theories Trakas appeals to, as providing potential preservation-free explanations of observer memory, entirely give up on the notion of preservation either. According to Fernández, an important virtue of his functionalist account is that it captures the fact that “episodic memory seems to register and store the contents of those (typically, perceptual) experiences that we had in the past by producing mental images which are aimed at preserving the contents of those experiences”, and that this “preservative aspect of memory is of great importance to us” (2019, p. 37). Indeed, even on Michaelian's simulationist view, preservation plays a role in the majority of episodes of successful remembering: “In many cases, remembering no doubt involves the sort of continuous causal connection described by the classical causal theory, and at least the sort of approximate content similarity described by the causal theory of constructive memory” (Michaelian, 2016, p. 111; cf. Michaelian & Sant'Anna, 2019). Preservation (in the sense of encoding and storing information from perceptual experience) plays a role in most theories—both scientific and philosophical—of memory (cf. Fernández, 2019, section 2.3).

Of course, simulationism is not a preservationist account of memory; simulationism is a reaction to preservationist accounts, and it helps elucidate what is wrong with a naively preservationist view. The simulation theorist wants to, and does indeed, move away from preservationism, and hence it may be possible to defend observer perspectives without appeal to preservation on this account. But this also comes with what may be considered a price: to do so may require blurring the distinction between memory and imagination. On the simulation theory, remembering just is a form of imagining. I do not want to give up on the idea that remembering is a distinct kind of state to imagining, however. And the notion of a causal connection in the form of a memory trace, which preserves content from perceptual experience, is one way to maintain this distinction between memory and imagination. The preservation of content encoded during perceptual experience provides an explanation of one of the ways in which our memories are constrained by the past.

Perhaps there are versions of constructive causal accounts that can give up on the notion of preservation? Trakas suggests that Sutton's version of a causal theory of memory, which adopts a distributed conception of memory traces (1998), holds that both field and observer memories are the products of construction and both can be accurate and genuine. The key point for Sutton, as Trakas explains, is the idea that construction's equation with distortion or error "only makes sense against a background assumption that genuine personal memory must replay or archive the past in an exact copy of an original experience" (Sutton, 2010, p. 33). But I think the move to reject preservation wholesale that Trakas sees in this picture is too quick here, or rather it implies a particularly problematic notion of preservation. Sutton himself articulates a powerful case for the notion of distributed memory traces that encode content from one's original experience, albeit implicitly. There is something that is preserved from one's original experience of an event. This is why it is a version of a causal theory of memory.

What is it that we reject when we reject preservationism? What Sutton (rightly) rejects, and what I want to reject too, is a particular notion of preservation. Preservationism on this view means that memory passively encodes sensory content during perception, and that this content is statically stored (archived), and then retrieved or replayed when one engages in episodic recall (Robins, 2017). On this understanding of preservationism, all the stages of memory—encoding, storage, retrieval—are passive, and the retrieved representation is (roughly) the same as the encoded representation, with no changes

being made to the representation at any stage. This is the view that memory is preservationist.<sup>3</sup> This is the view that I reject. Yet if we mean by preservation the idea that information from one's experience of an event is encoded, stored in a way in which it can be regularly reconsolidated, and then is reconstructed at retrieval, then this is a view that I advocate. This is not a preservationist view of memory, but one that acknowledges that memory does preserve information from perceptual experience. There is a difference between a preservationist account of memory and the idea that memory preserves information from perceptual experience. What I was trying to do in the book was combine what is right about preservation—that information is maintained from perceptual experience—with the evidence on constructive memory (see also Robins, 2016).

For Trakas, the quasi-preservationism inherent in my view goes against my “explicit endorsement of a constructive and active nature of memory’ (Trakas, 2020, p. 128). I disagree. What the *Constructive Encoding* approach claims is that perceptual experience itself, right at the moment when the encoding of episodic memories begins, is itself active and constructive: the content of perceptual experience is much richer than the mere passive intake of sensory information, and can involve information from various sources (not just sensory information) that is selected, abstracted, and integrated with background knowledge. My view is (moderately) preservationist in that it accepts that information from perceptual experience is carried over (preserved) to the time of

<sup>3</sup> Michaelian and Sant’Anna (manuscript) suggest that the debate about preservationism is not about activity or passivity, but rather preservationism is a thesis about the relationship between the content of a retrieved representation and the content of the corresponding experience; in effect, the thesis is that the content of the retrieved representation must match (more or less) the content of the corresponding experience. The debate about activity/passivity is related not to *preservationism* but to *reconstructivism*, they suggest, where this latter notion is a thesis about the nature of the *process* leading from an experience to a retrieved representation: on reconstructivism, remembering is an active process that does not reduce to the mere encoding and retrieval of static traces. However, I think that the notion of passivity and static traces is inherently linked to preservationism. For example, the view that memory is reconstructive is frequently contrasted with the idea that memory is reproductive, (passively) replaying stored images in much the same way as a video camera would (e.g., Schacter & Addis, 2007). Indeed, Schacter and Addis tell us that “[a]ny discussion of constructive memory must acknowledge the pioneering ideas of Bartlett (1932), who rejected the notion that memory involves a passive replay of a past experience via the awakening of a literal copy of experience” (p. 774). Preservationism, as I understand it, is a view that combines content matching with a purely passive process. It is this notion of preservationism that I reject.

episodic recall. But it is not preservationist in that it rejects the idea that this information at encoding is passively received and pristinely preserved. Construction is an inherent part of the preservation of content. My view of episodic memory is constructive-preservationist.

Another way of accounting for genuine observer memories without adopting a preservationist framework, Trakas suggests, would be to “dissociate construction and post-event generation of content from distortion and falsehood by arguing that field memories are also the product of constructive processes which may include post-event information or by showing that in many cases new content is needed in order to construct a faithful and accurate memory of the past” (2020, p. 129). I like this two-tiered suggestion, and my intention was precisely to show how both field and observer perspectives are the products of constructive and reconstructive processes, but I think dissociating *post-event* generation of content from distortion and falsehood would be extremely difficult to accomplish. The addition of post-event information is typically seen as a sign that what is encoded is different than what was retrieved and that the memory is hence distorted or false (De Brigard, 2014). This is reflected in the distinction psychologists employ between errors of omission and errors of commission. Errors of omission involve forgetting; errors of commission are thought to be false memories, where one “falsely remembers details, words, or events that weren’t actually experienced” (Intraub & Dickinson, 2008, p. 1007).

There are ways of dissociating post-event generation of content from distortion and falsehood (Michaelian, 2016). Indeed, post-event information may sometimes lead to a *more* accurate memory than a representation that does not include post-event information (Sutton & Windhorst, 2009; Michaelian, 2013). The problem with post-event information is not just about inaccuracy in memory, however. There is also an issue about the memory process. Theories that emphasise that the content of memory is preserved from perceptual experience to retrieval involve a diachronic understanding of the content of memory—content is maintained over time. The more post-event information we allow into the memory process the more the content of memory is generated synchronically, at the moment of retrieval (Michaelian & Robins, 2018). A question then arises for Trakas’ proposal: how much post-event information is compatible with genuine memory? This is particularly pressing given that accounts that stress the synchronic construction of memory content, such as the simulation theory, blur the boundaries between memory and imagination. Indeed, synchronic accounts of memory arguably have difficulty explaining certain everyday features

of human remembering, such as the semanticisation of memory and childhood amnesia (McCarroll, 2020). These features seem better explained by invoking a moderately preservationist understanding of memory, which stresses the diachronicity of mnemonic content.

A further series of questions arises for the second strand of Trakas' proposal to dissociate post-event information from distortion. If new content may be needed in order to construct a faithful and accurate memory of the past, then where does this information come from? What are the sources of post-event information? Indeed, what constraints are there on the post-event information? Take Trakas' own example. She tells us that, when remembering a traumatic event, a field perspective, which focuses on a salient feature such as the weapon, "to the detriment of other important details, contains less information and thus is less faithful to the past event than an observer memory that presents a visualization of the entire scene from a bird's eye view" (2020, p. 129). The bird's eye point of view of an observer perspective may contain more information, and even more accurate information, but exactly what information can legitimately be incorporated into this type of memory representation and where does it come from? Objectively accurate information about the event may include content that was not even available to me at the time of the experience, but does this count as legitimate post-event information?

For example, to return to the case of weapon focus, it could be that as I was fixated on the weapon my attacker was wielding, behind me and entirely out of range of my sensory perception (visual, auditory etc.), a child ran past to hide from the person with the gun. Including this information about the child (from testimony or video evidence, say) would increase the (objective) accuracy of the event, but it was not something that I *experienced* or perhaps even could have experienced. This type of information may augment memory accuracy (in an objective sense) at the expense of accuracy about what I experienced. Memory accuracy may be increased but is it a mnemonic process that gave rise to this increase in accuracy? There is a sense in which the way we individuate an event that we remember depends on one's experience of that event as it occurred. In the example of not witnessing the child behind me, this information is not included in my memory because it was not part of the event for me—it was not part of my experience. A memory representation that includes such information may be objectively *more* accurate, but it is *less* faithful to how I experienced the event. The more we allow for (third-personal) post-event information to be included in memory, the more we move away from a first-personal



understanding of episodic memory (McCarroll, 2020). There is an important and underexplored tension apparent here between notions of truth and authenticity in memory.

A further worry that Trakas raises about the *Constructive Encoding* approach is that it is in tension with the idea that there can be a “plurality of perspectives at retrieval”. Trakas suggests that this tension becomes apparent by isolating three separate theses in my view that are “mutually incompatible” (2020, p. 130):

- (a) the observer perspective of memories is determined at encoding;
- (b) the observer perspective of memories is determined at retrieval;
- (c) visual perspectives are multiple and even simultaneous in a memory so there is no pure observer memory or pure field memory.

Trakas then observes that I do not explain how these theses may be compatible or not, but that I merely suggest “in the last page of the concluding chapter (...) that there are different kinds of observer memories, those that are the product of a switch of perspective operated at retrieval, and those that originated in observer perspective experiences” (p. 130).

The idea that there may be different kinds of observer memory is, as Trakas suggests, one that needs more work. However, I do draw out and explain this idea earlier in the book, and in such a way as to dissolve the tension between the three theses.<sup>4</sup> First, I think that there can be a plurality of perspectives not just at retrieval, but also at the moment of encoding. This means that the pool of information that the constructive processes of memory can operate on and encode can include information salient to either a field or an observer perspective. In most cases we will attend to egocentric visual information, which will tend to result in the encoding of a field memory. At other times we will attend to non-egocentric information that tends to result in the construction of an observer perspective.

Importantly, I argue, “This is not to suggest that the content of memory will be fixed forever at encoding—the content of memory remains open to change at later stages—but, rather, that certain aspects of the information attended to and encoded will tend to result in observer (or field) perspective imagery” (McCarroll, 2018, p. 44).

<sup>4</sup> I suggest that “my ‘Swing’ memory is likely to be the result of *reconstructive* processes at retrieval, and my ‘Cardiff’ memory is likely to be the result of *constructive* processes at encoding (McCarroll, 2018, p. 62).

Neither field nor observer perspectives are *determined* once and for all at the point of encoding. Hence there is no tension in the idea that *some* observer perspectives are constructed at encoding and *some* are reconstructed at retrieval, or even that these perspectives can shift. The perspective is determined (in a loose sense, rather than fixed forever) by the information that is attended to or available to the processes of memory and can shift depending on the context or type of information that is available (at encoding and retrieval). In fact, because the processes of memory can draw on a mix of (egocentric and allocentric) information to construct and reconstruct a representation of the event, this helps explain how a single memory may involve both perspectives.<sup>5</sup>

Trakas then poses a perceptive question about the status of observer memories that have shifted perspective at retrieval:

If the authenticity of observer memories is grounded in the fact that observer perspectives are available during the encoding of the experience, as the Constructive Encoding approach suggests, it is natural to wonder if memories that are “converted” to observer memories at retrieval are more reconstructed and so less authentic than those originated in observer perspective experiences. (2020, p. 131)

The answer to this question depends on how exactly we understand the notion of authenticity and the type of information that it relates to. If, by authenticity, we mean that the representation has to accord with one’s initial experience of the event, where experience relates to the *experiential content* one had at the time of the original event, then “converted” observer memories, which have switched from a field perspective, are indeed less authentic. The detached visual perspective was not part of one’s original experience of the event.<sup>6</sup> If, however, we

<sup>5</sup> I do not actually suggest that there is “no pure observer memory or pure field memory”. Indeed, Trakas suggests that although mixed perspectives may occur in “stream of consciousness” memory experiences, in which we entertain multiple thoughts and images, and which is empirically well-documented, the “simultaneity of perspectives in a single ‘frozen snapshot’ of a visual memory is a much stronger thesis” (2020, p. 131). Yet it is precisely this latter (stronger) claim that mixed perspectives can occur in a single image that is discussed in the empirical literature. I did not introduce it but made an attempt to explain it. I suggested that because multiple sources of information are available to construct an image, this helps make sense of the idea that some memories may in fact involve both perspectives.

<sup>6</sup> In just the same way, however, some field memories may also be less authentic. Field memories too may be converted memories. For example, one may have been

understand authenticity as relating merely to the *informational content* that was available to one at the time of the original event, where this content was part of one's experience but not attended to, then such memories can still be authentic.

In the book I outlined an approach along the lines of the latter response. I suggested that:

even if one were not attending to this non-egocentric information at the time of the experience, even if this information were not part of one's experiential content, it may still be present and available for subsequent retrieval (...) As information such as perceptual detail is lost over time, the observer perspective imagery can be reconstructed from the more enduring non-egocentric information that was an unconscious element at the time of the original event. (2018, p. 62)

On this understanding, "converted" observer memories are still authentic because the information necessary to construct them was an (unconscious) element of one's original experience. There is a sense, then, in which they are not converted at all, but draw on information that was available but unattended to at the time of the event.<sup>7</sup>

The notion of preservation in memory was one of the main worries that Trakas raised for my account of observer memory. Another, connected worry, relates to the way in which I explain the presence of self in observer memory.

---

attending to information about the self, which was salient to the construction of an observer perspective, but one ends up reconstructing the event from a field perspective.

<sup>7</sup>This may be to weaken the notion of authenticity too much, however. Authenticity is usually thought of as an internal criterion, whereby memory must not only accord with objective reality (and hence satisfy a truth condition), but one's memory representation must accord with one's past representation of reality (Bernecker, 2015). This suggests that our conscious experience at the time of remembering matches our conscious experience at the time of encoding. If this is right, however, then even though converted observer memories would seem to be less authentic, I would not want to say that they are not genuine. A response to this worry would be to say that even though there are two conditions (truth and authenticity) that play a role in determining whether a memory is genuine or not, the weight given to each condition may be context-dependent. For example, a semanticised memory may arguably satisfy the truth condition (but not authenticity), and can still be genuine; a memory of a hallucination may arguably satisfy authenticity (but not truth) and be a genuine memory of one's past experience (cf. Bernecker, 2015). These are complicated issues that, as Trakas observes, merit more work.

### 3. The Presence of Self

Observer memory involves a representation of the self in the remembered scene. I suggest that even though there is this presence of self in observer memory, these states are, like field memories, implicit *de se* thoughts that are immune to error through misidentification (IEM). In order to cash out this claim I make two moves that Trakas takes issue with. First, I suggest that the identity of the self in observer memories is given immediately and non-inferentially. Second, I suggest that the presence of self in observer memory is given by a particular way of thinking—a mode of presentation—of the past event.

Even though the imagery of observer memories involves seeing oneself from the outside, they are importantly different from seeing oneself in an image such as a photograph. In photographs, one has to identify oneself as a person in the scene, whereas in observer imagery there is no such identification required. Of course, in photographs one may actually identify oneself immediately and non-inferentially, but this is only a contingent rather than a necessary feature of identification in photographs. Trakas sees this disanalogy between photographs and observer memory as problematic. She suggests that there are some observer images, just like photographs, that may in fact involve a non-immediate and inferential process of identification. She provides a nice example to illustrate this point: a memory in which she is unsure of the identity of the person who was driving on the Sydney to Melbourne coastal drive. Was it Trakas who was driving, or her partner? She is unsure; there seems to be room for doubt about the identity of the protagonist in the observer image.

There may be a sense in which Trakas is right. Observer memories may be constructed from different sources of information and hence have different aetiologies. Depending on the type of information used to construct the image, there may be cases in which the self in an observer memory is not immediately given. Indeed, observer memories that are constructed from information that does not secure immunity to error through misidentification (e.g., visual information or testimony), may themselves not manifest the property of IEM. Whether judgments based on observer memories are immune to error or not may depend on the type of information that is used in the construction of such images.

On the other hand, there is still an important difference between identification in observer imagery and photographs, I think. The point I wanted to stress through the comparison with photographs is the way in which typical or everyday cases of observer memory, unlike

photographs, do not involve visual information about the self or visually identifying the self. In observer memory one is not remembering seeing oneself from the outside. The images of memory are not objects in consciousness; we cannot simply inspect them and identify some person in the remembered scene, in the way in which we identify people in photographs. If there is any doubt about the identity of the person in the remembered scene, this does not come from visually inspecting the memory image. This becomes apparent in Trakas' own description of the way in which she is unsure of the identity of the protagonist in her observer memory image. Her partner claims that it was he who drove, and she tells us "This makes me doubt about the identity of the driver and, without still being convinced that he was the one who drove all along, *this doubt makes the image of me driving blurry*, and so the human silhouette of the driver is not anymore identified with me in an immediate and non-inferential fashion" (2020, p. 134, emphasis added). This doubt does not arise in the same way as a photograph. The doubt about the identity of the protagonist comes *first*, and then modifies and blurs the memory image. The memory image becomes indeterminate as to the identity of the driver, but this doubt does not arrive by visually inspecting the memory image. The way we identify ourselves in visual memories is different from the way we identify ourselves in photographs.

Why is the self presence of observer memories so different from that of photographs? I suggest that the presence of self in observer memory is given implicitly through a particular mode of presentation of the past event. Trakas has two main worries about this idea. First, she suggests, "it is not very clear in the argumentation how the localization of the self in the mode of presentation helps to avoid an identification component in observer memories and thus to prove that they are IEM" (2020, p. 135). This is particularly salient, Trakas emphasises, because my claim that the presence of the self in observer memory is (typically) constructed from interoceptive information and other forms of internal embodied imagery "suggests that the presence of the self in observer memories is given by the nature itself of the information and not by the mode of presenting it" (2020, p. 135). The worry here is about the usefulness of the notion of a mode of presentation in accounting for the presence of self in observer memory. The mode of presentation seems to be redundant.

There are two separate issues here though. The first is the nature of the information that can be used to construct the presence of self in observer memory and whether this information secures IEM. I suggest that both field and observer perspectives are usually constructed from

the same type of interoceptive information. Both field and observer perspectives have a presence of self. And in both cases this presence of self (typically) manifests immunity to errors through misidentification (McCarroll, 2018). It is here that the notion of a mode of presentation becomes relevant. What accounts for the difference between field and observer perspectives? Both involve a presence of self, which is constructed from internal (not visual) information, but there is a difference in the way this information is presented. There is a difference in the mode of presentation of the information in both field and observer perspectives. It is this mode of presentation that accounts for the way in which the self appears from the outside in observer imagery, even though it is constructed from internal (and hence implicit) information. The type of information secures IEM in both field and observer memory, but the mode of presentation accounts for difference between the two types of images in the way this information is presented.

The second main worry relates to the overall conceptual adequacy of the notion of a mode of presentation. Trakas has a concern that the concept, as I use it, is tangled and unhelpful. She notes that I make implicit use of a primary mode of presentation to even get a grasp on field and observer memory. The idea is that *both* field and observer memories share the same intentional object, which is subsumed under an *episodic* mode of presentation. This (episodic) mode of presentation, Trakas thinks, is the only thing that can distinguish an episodic memory from a semantic memory. This is a fundamental mode of presentation. But then the worry that unfurls is that the relation between this more fundamental mode of presentation and other modes of presentation (e.g., perspectival modes) that I invoke becomes confusing. There are modes within modes within modes.

A first point to mention in response is that I am not sure that a mode of presentation is the only way of distinguishing between episodic and semantic memory. In my use of the notion of mode of presentation I broadly follow Rowlands (2016), and suggest that modes of presentation relate to *aspects* of the object, ways in which the object can be presented to the subject. And Rowlands does indeed assert that the difference between episodic and semantic memory lies in the episodic mode of presentation, whereby the memory “presents an episode *as* one the person formerly witnessed, orchestrated or otherwise encountered” (Rowlands, 2016, p. 41). Yet, for Rowlands, there is no difference in kind between episodic and semantic memory; there is only a difference in degree. While I think that this idea is plausible, I didn’t assume it in my use of the notion of a mode of presentation. Indeed, if, *contra* Rowlands,

episodic and semantic memory are in fact different kinds of mental states or processes, then, going beyond a mode of presentation, they will involve different act types or attitudes. I remain neutral on the precise relation between episodic memory and semantic memory and so I have no need to invoke a mode of presentation to explain the difference.

Further, even if the difference between episodic memory and semantic memory is indeed marked by a difference in the mode of presentation, I do not share Trakas' pessimism about the multiplicity of modes. Understanding a mode of presentation as relating to an aspect of an object, a way in which an object can be presented to the subject, means that there can be multiple modes of presentation in episodic memory. This, again, is something that Rowlands acknowledges, highlighting the "rich and complex emotional phenomenology of modes of presentation as they feature in episodic memory" (Rowlands, 2016, p. 50). I, like Rowlands, embrace this rich and complex nature of modes of presentation in episodic memory. Indeed, part of the project of book was not only to defend observer perspectives as genuine instances of episodic memory, but to acknowledge and emphasise the multiple sources of information that we can have about an event. Moving away from a purely preservationist understanding of memory and perception was to recognise the many different ways that we can think about an event, the many different aspects of an event (internal and external) that we can be presented with. Acknowledging this multiplicity was part of the project of explaining the perspectival mind and the ways we have of getting outside of ourselves.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Trakas has written an extremely perceptive and thought-provoking critique of some of the ideas I presented in my book. The process of philosophical creation, as she observes, is one that is sensitive to criticism, in which there is a dialogue between people who may disagree but share a common goal of understanding a phenomenon. Her ideas have certainly helped me get clearer about my own ideas. So I end with a call to Trakas herself to continue her process of philosophical work. The philosophy of memory would benefit from more of her creations.

#### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank Marina Trakas and Paloma Muñoz for helpful comments on a previous draft. This work is supported by the French

National Research Agency in the framework of the “Investissements d’avenir” program (ANR-15-IDEX-02).

## References

- Addis, D. R. (2018). Are episodic memories special? On the sameness of remembered and imagined event simulation. *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand*, 48, 64–88.
- Allende, I. (1989/2016). *The Stories of Eva Luna*. Atria.
- Bernecker, S. (2010). *Memory: A philosophical study*. Oxford University Press.
- Bernecker, S. (2015). Visual memory and the bounds of authenticity. In D. Moyal-Sharrock, V. Munz, & A. Coliva (Eds.), *Mind, language, and action: Proceedings of the 36th International Wittgenstein Symposium* (pp. 445-463). De Gruyter.
- De Brigard, F. (2014). Is memory for remembering? Recollection as a form of episodic hypothetical thinking. *Synthese*, 191, 155-185.
- Fernández, J. (2019). *Memory: A self-referential account*. Oxford University Press.
- Intraub, H., & Dickinson, C. (2008). False memory 1/20<sup>th</sup> of a second later: what the early onset of boundary extension reveals about perception. *Psychological Science*, 19(10), 1007-1014.
- Lackey, J. (2005). Memory as a generative epistemic source. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 70(3), 636-658.
- Martin, C. B., & Deutscher, M. (1966). Remembering. *Philosophical Review*, 75, 161-196.
- McCarroll, C. J. (2018). *Remembering from the outside: Personal memory and the perspectival mind*. Oxford University Press.
- McCarroll, C. J. (2020). Remembering the personal past: Beyond the boundaries of imagination. *Frontiers in Psychology: Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*.
- Michaelian, K. (2011). Generative memory. *Philosophical Psychology*, 24(3), 323-342.
- Michaelian, K. (2013). The information effect: Constructive memory, testimony, and epistemic luck. *Synthese*, 190(12), 2429-2456.
- Michaelian, K. (2016). *Mental time travel: Episodic memory and our knowledge of the personal past*. The MIT Press.
- Michaelian, K., & Robins, S. K. (2018). Beyond the causal theory?: Fifty years after Martin and Deutscher. In K. Michaelian, D. Debus & D. Perrin (Eds.), *New directions in the philosophy of memory* (pp. 13-32). Routledge.



- Michaelian, K., & Sant'Anna, A. (2019). Memory without content? Radical enactivism and (post)causal theories of memory. *Synthese*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-019-02119-7>
- Michaelian, K., & Sant'Anna, A. (manuscript). From authenticity to alethism: Against McCarroll on observer memory.
- Nigro, G., & Neisser, U. (1983). Point of view in personal memories. *Cognitive Psychology*, 15(4), 467-482.
- Robins, S. K. (2016). Representing the past: Memory traces and the causal theory of memory. *Philosophical Studies*, 173, 2993-3013.
- Robins, S. K. (2017). Memory traces. In S. Bernecker & K. Michaelian (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Memory* (pp. 76-87). Routledge.
- Rowlands, M. (2016). *Memory and the self: Phenomenology, science, and autobiography*. Oxford University Press.
- Schacter, D. L., & Addis, D. R. (2007). The cognitive neuroscience of constructive memory: Remembering the past and imagining the future. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 362(1481), 773-786.
- Senor, T. D. (2007). Preserving preservationism: A reply to Lackey. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 74(1), 199-208.
- Sutton, J. (1998). *Philosophy and memory traces: Descartes to connectionism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sutton, J. (2010). Observer perspective and acentred memory: Some puzzles about point of view in personal memory. *Philosophical Studies*, 148(1), 27-37.
- Sutton, J., & Windhorst, C. (2009). Extended and constructive remembering: Two notes on Martin and Deutscher. *Crossroads*, 4, 79-91.
- Trakas, M. (2020). Observer memories and the perspectival mind: On *Remembering from the Outside* by Christopher McCarroll. *Análisis Filosófico*, 40(1), 123-138.

*Received 15<sup>th</sup> September 2020; accepted 25<sup>th</sup> September 2020.*