

TITLE: "Remembering as a mental action"

ABSTRACT: Many philosophers consider that memory is just a passive information retention and retrieval capacity. Some information and experiences are encoded, stored, and subsequently retrieved in a passive way, without any control or intervention on the subject's part. In this paper, we will defend an active account of memory according to which remembering is a mental action and not merely a passive event. According to the reconstructive account, memory is an imaginative reconstruction of past experience. A key feature of the reconstructive account is that given the imperfect character of memory outputs, some kind of control is needed. Metacognition is the control of mental processes and dispositions. Drawing from recent work on the normativity of automaticity and automatic control, we distinguish two kinds of metacognitive control: top-down, reflective control, on the one hand, and automatic, intuitive, feeling-based control on the other. Thus, we propose that whenever the mental process of remembering is controlled by means of intuitive or feeling-based metacognitive processes, it is an action. This view therefore goes farther than alternative accounts of mental action, according to which mental agency is restricted to the preparatory, top-down intention formation processes that invite the initiation of automatic content-production processes. Aside from that aspect of mental agency, we hold that, in the case of episodic memory, agents can exert control also over the reliability of the mental content production process, by means of intuitive metacognition, in the form of the epistemic feelings specific to remembering. This allows for a more robust conception of remembering as a mental action, that is in turn more consistent with the phenomenology of memory.

Santiago Arango-Munoz  
Juan Pablo Bermúdez