AN ESSAY ON MEMORY

With Particular Reference to the Role of Imagery

by

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1. The 'sceptical' approach

Nearly every work on 'remembering' introduces us to the 'sceptic' whose task it is to show us not only that memory plays us false, but that our memories, however essential they are to the everyday conduct of our affairs, should never be trusted since nothing can ever conclusively prove that any given memory is not false. We can reply to this sceptic that the same kind of arguments as he uses could equally well be employed to show that we cannot prove conclusively that a given memory is not true, that by seeking logical criteria for what is essentially an empirical question he is setting himself a logically impossible task. I believe therefore that the introduction of this sceptic, whilst it may be a useful device for raising questions, may well be harmful to the enquiry in that it suggests to us that a sceptical or tentative attitude to all of our memories can be a reasonable position to hold. Clearly it is not. We all of us answer questions about our past experiences without any hesitation or doubt, we sit on chairs with the utmost confidence that they will support us, we walk along familiar roads with complete certainty that they will lead us to where we wish to go.

It may be objected that the sceptic does not in fact doubt the authority of all his memories, he only insists that memory is always
logically open to doubt, that though in fact many memories are reliable, and are known to be reliable, it is still logically possible that none of them is. But if this is all he claims he is a poor sort of sceptic, for few if any people would wish to disagree with him. Being sceptical involves rejecting, or holding strong reservations about, some view seriously put forward by its adherents. A man may be sceptical about the virtues of socialism or the truth of the Christian doctrines. In these cases some idea is put forward for his consideration, which has not, or need not have been, previously entertained at all.

But when we first come to consider the credentials of memory we have already tacitly accepted them, have taken memory for granted, trusted it implicitly, and experienced surprise and alarm when it has proved unworthy of that trust. It is not the ordinary function of memory, but its capacity for giving us unpleasant surprises, that first leads us to enquire into its workings. The natural question which presents itself is not 'How is it that memory can be informative?' - but - 'How is it that memory is sometimes misinformative?'. The proper formulation of our problem, therefore, is not - 'why should we trust our memories?' - but - 'Why may we be led sometimes to doubt them?'

2. The initial authority of memory

I say we are led sometimes to doubt them. It is certain that we do not always, or even often, doubt them. Our memories have an initial authority which usually cannot be gainsaid. Even when evidence
to the contrary is very strong we are inclined to stand by the authority of our own memories. A book is not where I remember leaving it. I ask who has moved it. Everyone assures me that he has not. Yet I am quite confident that somebody must have done so. I find the reply, 'You must have made a mistake' a quite unconvincing answer to my insistence that I remember putting it there.

Perhaps I have made a mistake. Perhaps I came back and moved it myself 'unthinkingly'. Perhaps I left it there yesterday, not today. Certainly, assuming that nobody is lying, somebody is misremembering. The saving fact is that if such a question is pursued long enough, the misrememberer nearly always finds himself out. For other people this 'finding out' will simply amount to the recall of something which had been temporarily forgotten. For the agent it may be a matter of revising or repudiating what he had regarded as his memory of the event.

What I have called the initial authority of memory - the belief about the past which is quite independent of any outside evidence - is inseparable from whatever we accept as remembering. We would not regard ourselves as remembering otherwise. But it is present in varying degrees, so that sometimes it is possible for us to 'back down', to admit that we are probably wrong, not because of any revision or variation of our memories, but simply because we have the experience of misremembering, and in the light of this the degree of confidence we feel in our memories is insufficient to withstand the pressure of
external counter-evidence. But at other times we feel absolutely sure, on the authority of the memory experience alone, that we are not mistaken.

The great difficulty here is deciding what it is to be 'absolutely sure'. Frequently two people claim to be absolutely sure of incompatible things. And which of them has the better right to be sure cannot be decided wholly according to which of them happens in fact to be right. If, for instance, one savage believes the earth to be flat because he has observed that unsupported bodies always fall, whilst another believes it to be globular simply because this seems to him a more satisfactory shape, then the second happens to be right in his belief, but the first seems to have the better right to hold his belief. In the case of direct remembering, however, there seems to be at least a prima-facie case for allowing the one who is in fact right the right to be sure.

But, whilst 'head-on collisions' do sometimes occur between initially authoritative memories, they are comparatively rare. For every irreconcilable 'memory' there are countless others that fit easily and naturally into the general scheme of known fact. Our strongly authoritative memories are rarely challenged, either by the memories of other people or by the facts as presented to us. Our less strongly authoritative memories can usually be made to dovetail with the testimony of other people and with the facts as we find them by minor, and quite 'painless', modifications. Most of our
memories have both 'strong' and 'weak' parts. If I 'remember' coming to work at 9.30 a.m. yesterday, and I am told by my neighbour that he saw me at home at 9.45, I am quite happy to reconsider my 'memory'. Had he claimed that he saw me at home all day my reaction would have been quite different. I remember very definitely that I went to work, but much less definitely that it was at 9.30 a.m.

Nevertheless the whole of the original 'memory' had some degree of initial authority, the weakness of which became apparent only when my claim was challenged. In fact it is generally only when any memory is challenged by presented facts, or by the testimony of other people, or by subsequent memories of one's own, that the question of the degree of its initial authority arises at all. And because it is so easy to say, after a successful challenge - 'No, I wasn't remembering that at all' or 'Of course, that was the day before' or 'It certainly happened; it doesn't much matter where', we are apt to overlook the fact that all our memories come to us in the first place with the same kind, if not the same degree, of initial authority. We are apt to overlook it, that is, until a discrepancy of the 'head-on' kind forces us to wonder just what sort of authority a memory can ever really have.

3. The causes of doubt

The question, 'Wherein does the authority of memory lie?' is not just a 'philosopher's puzzle', it is a problem which must present itself sooner or later to any thinking person. The man who seems to
remember something quite clearly but discovers that he must be mistaken is bound to ask himself - 'What is peculiar about this case? How is it that my memory, usually so reliable, has let me down this time?'. And when the only peculiar thing he can find is that his memory gave him the wrong answer, he must inevitably wonder how many of his memories which happen not to have been challenged have been equally false, and how he can ever know that he is not being deluded.

Moreover, the errors of memory are by no means all of the same kind. There does not seem to be any situation, or group of situations, in which we can say 'Here I must be on my guard against delusion', or 'Here I am completely safe'. Why then are we so confident and unhesitant about our memories? Is it simply a matter of a beneficial stupidity as some pragmatically inclined philosophers have suggested? Or is there a secure and indubitable basis of memory that justifies our belief that whatever errors of remembering we may make, further remembering can eventually set matters right for us; that doubt, though it can exist, cannot go on forever?

It does not seem enough to say that our memories are more often found to be right than wrong, that we are comparatively rarely surprised; this is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for our confidence. Very few people are ever struck by lightning, but in general people are apprehensive of lightning in a quite different way from that in which they are apprehensive of being misled by their own memories. Our memories seem to be 'in our own control' in a way
that lightning is not. We seem to have some ground for assurance more fundamental than the mere averaging of instances. The guarantee that I get with my watch does not ensure that it will not go wrong, only that if it does the makers will replace it with another—and if necessary another again—until I have one which is reliable. They are in a position to give such a guarantee because, in addition to their observation that their watches do not in fact generally go wrong, they have a knowledge of their design and structure which satisfies them that the watches ought not to go wrong. Therefore if one of them does so it must be as the result of some accidental departure from that design and structure. We feel that if we had some analogous insight into the structure of memory itself, we should be able to understand why, and not only how, particular memories are false. We should be able to guarantee our memories in the way that the watchmaker guarantees his watches. But when we turn from the specific failures of memory to the business of remembering in general we find that each specific failure seems to have its counterpart in a general problem. Let us, then, first consider in detail the particular ways in which memory can play us false, and then go on to look at the general doubts which these errors raise about the authority of memory.

a) Specific Errors of memory

   i. Errors of Omission

   Whatever can be remembered can also, ipso facto, be forgotten. Forgetting, i.e. failing to remember what we are in a position to remember, may be total or partial.
a. **Total forgetting.** This can take the form of a complete failure to recollect some past experience. Of course, since the fact that I am not now recollecting a certain experience does not entail that I never again shall do so, the only occasions when I can be said to be totally forgetting are those when the temporary total forgetfulness is made apparent; when I am asked what I did on a certain day and am quite unable to answer, or I am asked how I enjoyed the film I saw on the previous evening and I look blank and ask 'What film?'. The question of forgetting can only arise when the assumption is made that something is, or should be, remembered.

Other forms of total forgetting are the failure to recognise and the inability to perform once mastered tasks. A house in which I know that I once lived looks quite unfamiliar to me; a man who appears to be a total stranger shows by his behaviour that I ought to know him; I am surprised to hear that a new coat I have bought is 'exactly like' one I had some years ago. I mount a bicycle after many years of driving a car and fall off because I simply cannot balance; or when I am asked to work out the square root of a number by simple arithmetic I find that I have forgotten where to start. In all these cases, as in the first, the failure of memory is apparent only as the result of other knowledge, not itself direct memory.

b. **Partial forgetting.** It is the partial 'lapses of memory' which most commonly concern us, because they are continually brought home to us without the aid of any independent authority. I do recognise a
man's face but cannot remember his name; I remember, however, that I have heard it. I distinctly remember a certain cricket match but cannot remember who was wicket keeper, though I remember remarking how good he was. Such omissions of memory we find particularly irritating. For memory tells us enough, as it were, to make us feel that it should tell us more; it supplies the blanks but refuses to fill them.

c. **Omission as error.** In all these cases we are not so much doing something as not doing something. And it may be felt, therefore, that whilst they are omissions, they are not strictly errors. We do not say that the boy who has not even attempted the examination question has got it wrong, but this boy gets no more marks, and may even get less, than the boy who has attempted it and got it wrong. And consider the case where we are confident that only three people were present at a meeting we attended, not because we did not notice the fourth at the time -- we may have spoken to him -- but simply because, quite unaccountably, we do not remember him. A three-man conference is clearly a different thing from a four-man conference. Omissions, though not themselves errors of memory, are certainly a source of such errors.

ii. **Errors of commission**

We now turn to the positive case, less frequent perhaps, but by no means infrequent. I 'remember' locking the door, but when I come home it is not locked. I am asked what colour my friend's car is and I immediately reply 'Blue'. I 'see it quite plainly' -- but when he arrives it is brown, and it has not been re-painted. The distressing thing is that, although I must accept the evidence in such
cases, and sometimes am able to say 'Of course - it is Bill's car that is blue', or 'It was yesterday that I locked the door', there are other times when the original 'memory' seems to persist as strongly authoritative as ever, and I must simply allow myself to remain mystified for fear of becoming a bore on the question.

iii. The 'George IV case'.

So called because George IV is alleged to have 'remembered' leading a charge at Waterloo, this type of error is sometimes regarded simply as an extreme case of error of commission. But we may well feel that the difference from the cases cited above is not only one of degree. Those cases seem to rest upon the misplacement rather than the sheer invention of a memory. I have locked doors and have seen blue cars, but George IV never led a charge anywhere. The difference seems parallel in many ways to that between illusion and hallucination: the one has a basis in fact which the other has not. It is true, of course, that there was in fact a Battle of Waterloo which did not include George IV, just as there are elephants which are not pink; even an hallucination must be relatable to actual fact in order to carry the conviction which it does. Nevertheless the distinction between being relatable to fact in this way and being based on fact in the manner of a misplaced memory or misinterpreted visual experience should be quite clear. I shall therefore call such extreme cases 'mnemonic hallucinations'. These are not to be confused with memories of hallucinations, memories which may themselves be
perfectly veridical and in no way deceptive. But the somewhat grandiose term 'hallucination' must not mislead us into thinking that something like a charge at Waterloo must be involved. A man is doing the same kind of thing as George IV, though less spectacularly, if, having seen his colleagues at school with boils on their necks, and having vividly imagined how unpleasant such a boil would feel, he subsequently 'remembers' having a boil on his own neck as a boy.

Both ii. and iii. deal with 'remembering' what in fact is not the case, but ii. is the insertion of a memory into the wrong context, iii. is the taking of imagination for memory. 1

iv. Memory not recognised as such

We now consider the reverse position: what is in fact memory is sometimes taken to be mere imagination. A man awakes in the morning after a wild night out, quite dispassionately he contemplates the picture of his friends and himself climbing lampposts, breaking windows, being apprehended by the police - and suddenly he realises that it all really happened. We might say here that his drunken state had given a dream-like quality to his experiences so that the recall of them felt at first more like imagining than remembering. But there is no reason why this same error should not occur under perfectly normal conditions, and ample evidence that it sometimes does. A composer may be dismayed to hear played on the radio the very melody which he

1 At this stage I am simply setting out the apparent 'kinds of error'. In ch. VI I shall argue against any rigid distinction here.
himself had just 'composed', and realise that he must have been remembering, not imagining, as he wrote. It is very hard to be certain of the complete originality of one's own work. I have, for instance, a shrewd suspicion that my example of the boil on the neck in the preceding paragraph is something I read once, though I cannot say where or when. Nor is this error confined to what we might call 'creative activity'. A friend of mine recently showed surprise at finding a full packet of cigarettes in his pocket. I asked him if he did not remember buying them and he replied that he 'supposed he did'. He had been aware, he said, in some way, of having gone into the shop for them, but he had not thought it had really happened.

v. Unexplained familiarity—déjà vu.

Most of us have at some time experienced the rather uncanny feeling that some incident, some view, some group of words or sounds, was familiar to us, so that, although this strange familiarity is felt after the event (or is noted by us after the event) it seems as if from the first instant we could have predicted exactly what would follow; the feeling of familiarity is like the feeling we have when watching a film for the second time. We do not generally think of these experiences as remembering. Rather we should be inclined to describe them as 'as if we were remembering', and to suspect that the odd experience is caused by some unplaced or 'unconscious' memory of a very similar incident. The worrying thing is that if we ask why it feels as if we are remembering, the only answer possible seems to be that we have a
sense of familiarity. But, since this also seems to be all we can say when we are asked what it is like to recognise something, and since some epistemologists have regarded this same sense of familiarity as the feature which distinguishes memory from imagination, when something feels familiar we like to know why it feels familiar. If, in the déjà vu case, we can have a sense of familiarity for no reason that we or anybody else can discover, what right have we to regard this same sense of familiarity as the hallmark of recognition and recollection?

vi. Conflicting memory

Perhaps the greatest confidence shaker of all is the conflict which arises between our own memories. I am describing some event I have experienced - 'Last Saturday afternoon - no, morning - I'm sorry, Sunday morning, a fellow got out of a black car - no, it was a green utility - and walked straight into a puddle without looking, - wait, I remember now, he did see it but...' and so on. A fairly normal reconstruction, we may say, by the time-honoured method of trial and error. But why the error; why the need for trial? Why did the wrong answers come up in the first place? And if one correction is necessary how do we know another is not - and another? For these changes are not always simply modifications or elaborations, they are often downright contradictions.

The extent of the problem is seen more clearly when the contradictions are spaced out, as it were, in time, when we remember both the event and our earlier 'remembering' of it, and find that
they do not tally. We are frequently obliged to correct one memory-claim in the light of another later memory of the same event. There is the further difficulty that even when one memory-version has given place to another, this does not mean that it is vanquished for all time. When we are climbing hills, it often happens that just before we reach what we have been taking to be the peak another 'peak' comes into view. This can happen many times in the same climb. But when we do reach the real peak there can be no further doubt about it. Conflicting memories are not like this; there is no simple set of fixed criteria for distinguishing the true from the false.

Each of the specific failures of memory brings its own contribution to our suspicion about the validity of memory as a whole - not just an empty suspicion that 'it could always be otherwise', but a real suspicion that 'it always may be otherwise'. We now turn to the more general difficulties which seem to confirm this suspicion.

b) General problems of memory

i. Unaccountability

It seems wholly natural to think of memory, rightly or wrongly, as being closely akin to perception. Yet on examination the analogy soon runs into difficulties. We see things by looking with our eyes, hear things by listening with our ears, and the things we see and hear and there for anybody to see and hear. But memories seem almost to come and go of their own accord; all we can say is that we are aware of them, or aware of something because of them. A man can lose his
memory just as he can lose his eyesight, but whereas in the latter case we can tell by physically examining him that he is incapable of seeing, in the former case all we can know is that he does not in fact remember anything prior to a certain time. Or, with a different kind of loss or failure of memory, we know that he is very poor at remembering things. Seeing and hearing and smelling and tasting and touching are all in some way like each other; there is a uniformity about them; we can in certain enquiries predict discoveries about one from the observation of another. But memory does not seem to be like anything else. We seem driven to allow that our ability to remember things is a quite unaccountable 'brute fact' which defies any attempt at 'structural analysis'.

ii. The independence of knowledge of the past

We might say that even if memory is totally unlike perception from a physiological or organic standpoint, at least it is like it from a functional standpoint; memory provides us with knowledge of the past just as perception provides us with the knowledge of the present. But this will not do. Whilst it might well help to convey to a child how the word 'remember' is used, it can cast no light upon what remembering is, nor is it strictly true. Both perception and memory are needed for our knowledge of both the past and the present. That we could not know the past without memory is true only because we could not know anything without memory, in the ordinary sense of 'know'. That I know about some past event is no proof that I remember the event in question; I could be reading about
it in a book. And, because this is so, the fact that I am able to relate some incident that I did in fact witness is no proof that I am actually remembering it at the time. My inability to relate an incident may prove that I am not remembering it (allowing that I have no language difficulty), but my ability to relate it is no more than a fair indication that I am remembering. It is sometimes very hard indeed to sort out our actual memories from knowledge acquired by other means. This is amply illustrated by what Von Leyden has called 'the childhood test case'.

iii. The 'childhood test case' – its general applicability

This is, in effect, the general problem arising out of errors of commission as such, and 'mnemic hallucinations' in particular. Most of us have some favourite memories of our own childhood: our first visit to the seaside; or the time we climbed on to the back of the pony and were thrown off. Not uncommonly such memories are accompanied by quite vivid visual imagery. It is alarming, therefore, when we discover, on revisiting the seaside place, that it is simply nothing like our 'memory' of it, or we learn from a visiting uncle that it was not ourselves at all but our brothers who were thrown from the pony. On reflection we realise that we were, in any case, far too young to remember so clearly. We guess, rightly no doubt, that our images were built up in our imaginations by stories we heard our

1 'Remembering', p.38ff.
parents and their friends tell, and that these images became so familiar to us that they felt like memories — and still do feel like memories. In a sense, perhaps they are; they are the memories of our earlier imaginings. But this is not what we took them to be.

We may then begin to wonder how many more of our childhood memories are memories only in this derivative sense. The real problem is not those that are plainly false but those that are substantially true. After all, if our uncle had confirmed instead of denying that we were thrown by the pony, we should still think we remembered the incident itself though our 'memory' would not be one whit different. And why only childhood memories? If there is nothing save counter evidence to show us the difference between our remembered experiences and our remembered imaginings, and if we are capable — as clearly we are — of imagining situations involving ourselves as they are reported to us, then how can we ever know what we are really remembering and what we only seem to be remembering?

iv. The 'subjective element' in factual memory

Closely allied to this is another difficulty arising out of the free play of our imaginations. When we remember a state of affairs we remember it as it appeared to us. This is quite natural, right and proper, so long as we always remain capable of distinguishing the state of affairs from our own attitudes towards it. But do we always? I remember very little about a certain Latin master except that he was a great villain with a cruel smile and a rasping
voice. If I were to meet him again it is not improbable that I should find him a charming gentleman. I remember the annual fair on Greatham village green as a much more grand affair than any such local fairs are nowadays, yet it seems unlikely that it really was so. Everyone can supply examples of this kind of distortion from his own experience. Some time ago the name of a lad I was at school with came up in conversation and I immediately had a clear visual image of him. But on reflection I realised that the image was of a man my own age, not of a boy at all, almost as if the memory had grown up with me. Because I had always thought of him as my contemporary I remembered him as my contemporary.

Now, suppose I make an ordinary perceptual error; I think that it is Black and not White that has won the race I am watching. I then see my error and know that the winner is White. Notwithstanding this there is no small chance that I will subsequently 'remember' seeing Black win. I have quite genuinely thought this, seen what I took to be this, why should I not remember this? Samuel Alexander may perhaps have overstated the case when he wrote: 'Though we do not often attend to our past mental states, we never remember a past object without some consciousness however faint of the past state',¹ but there can be little doubt that our feelings and attitudes and interpretations frequently do intrude into our recollections of past

events we have witnessed, and that, within the memory, the event and the attitude (the subjective colouration of it) are very hard to separate.

v. No memory can guarantee its own permanence

When we ask 'Do you remember the night the bomb fell?' we may be told 'Yes – and I'm not likely to forget it', or even 'Yea, I shall never forget it'. But this last is a somewhat reckless claim; 'permanent memories', like permanent waves, are not always permanent. There is no intrinsic difference between those memories which last a lifetime and those which soon disappear forever. Even the fact that I remember having 'remembered' something every day for the past year, cannot guarantee that I shall ever remember it again. Nor can it guarantee that, if I do remember it again, I shall not misremember it in some way. We may say with some justification that the fact that I have remembered it correctly many times in the past makes it inductively probable that I shall remember it correctly again, but this is to assume that my remembering of my previous memory is accurate. And it always is a matter of assuming; the only checking available to us is to think again. This brings me to the last and greatest difficulty.

vi. The problem of confirming memories

It may be protested that remembering again is not the only way we have of confirming memories. If what I remember is that I have bought milk each day this month the account from the milkman surely
confirms this. And my memory that I have promised to take my wife to the theatre is surely confirmed by the fact that she has just entered dressed in her best clothes. Certainly these occurrences do not specifically establish that the events I claim to remember did occur, but when the initial authority of my memories has already provided the hypotheses all that is required is that these be strengthened.

All this is true. Indeed it would be a bad look-out for us if it were not. But there are a number of reasons why it can only relieve, cannot solve, the problem we are faced with.

a. Adequate cause/effect evidence is not always available. At best cause/effect evidence tells in favour of this or that memory. If it always told in favour no problem would arise. But, as we have seen, all too often the evidence points to our having misremembered. The successful confirmation of one memory, therefore, does not necessarily increase the probability of the truth of another. I grant that we may discover from experience that we tend to remember more reliably in dealing with one type of question than in dealing with another type. But the value of such a discovery rests upon our ability to 'classify' questions, and can never be more than a useful rule of thumb. Each individual memory may stand or fall quite independently of any others without detriment to such a 'rule'. The point is that it is not always obvious how we can confirm a memory in the way that it is obvious how we must verify a perception. If it were obvious the cross-questioning of witnesses would be a waste of time. For instance, I
may remember very clearly that I saw a man pedal down the road on
a bicycle at 5 a.m., but how could I possibly prove it, even to
myself?

Even if independent supporting evidence were always available, it
would be quite impossible in practice to confirm every memory by it;
there simply would not be time. Only when we have already cause to
doubt do we seek confirmation to allay that doubt. We seek it in
further memories, in the testimony of other people, and in present
conditions as we perceive them. What evidence we are able to find is
an empirical question, dependent upon the circumstances of the case.
And whether or not it does in fact allay our doubts is ultimately a
psychological question. The expression 'reasonable doubt' may be
used in the law. But what constitutes reasonable doubt cannot be laid
down by the law or by any other source of decisions.

b. 'Cause/effect' is dependent upon memory. Even when independent
evidence does support a particular memory, such evidence can never be
conclusive. For, no matter what form it takes, it always presupposes
the accuracy of some other memory or memories. If I remember that
the vicar called, and then support this memory by remembering that my
wife remarked how shabby his coat was and that my daughter spilled
tea over his trousers, I may well be satisfied that my original memory
is correct. But it is hanging, so to speak, by a sky-hook; the
supporting memories are not themselves independently supported. If
I rely on the testimony of other people - the neighbours agree that
the vicar did call that day - then I am only adding their memories to my own to give it extra weight. If I find his hat left in the hall I must remember that it is his hat, and even if it has his calling card inside it marked with the date of his visit, I can take this as conclusive evidence of his visit only on the assumption that such objects do not materialise in such places of their own accord. And this assumption, arising as it does out of our ability to associate observed instances with similar previously observed instances, presupposes the validity of memory. Furthermore, even when the assumption has become an accepted maxim it can be retained, as a maxim, only by memory. Even an established inductive rule can be forgotten. Under strong emotional stress men have been known to try to walk through walls, and children are notoriously capable of forgetting that eggs break when dropped on the floor.

c. The impossibility of direct comparison. Memory is concerned with the past - and simply because the past is past it cannot therefore be held up for present comparison. It is as if some object lay on the other side of a high wall and we could see it only with the aid of a mirror held aloft. We may complain that the mirror reverses what we see, and overcome this difficulty by using two mirrors periscope fashion. We may suspect that part of what we see is a fault in the mirror itself and demand a better mirror, or a whole battery of mirrors to enable us to compare the reflections. But if we ask how we can know that the mirrors do in fact show us what is on the other side of the wall, no amount of improved mirrors will help us.
Now, suppose all the mirrors were slightly distorted and each showed a slightly different picture; and suppose also that they were flexible and liable therefore to change the nature of their distortions when directed to a new object, thus making it impossible to check them by comparing the reflections they showed with any visible object. We might well feel then that we could never know exactly how the thing on the other side of the wall looked. The only really satisfactory course would be to climb the wall and see for ourselves the thing as it actually is. But the 'wall' we are concerned with is time, and this by its nature can be 'climbed' only from one side.

d. The need to remember the remembering. There is a further difficulty which is not always fully realised. Not only is it impossible to compare our memories with the events of which they are the memories; but because the present is, as it were, always slipping away from us into the past we cannot even compare our memories with what purport to be the effects of the original events (or, more properly, with our inferences from those 'effects'). For what I am comparing must always be, not the memory itself, by my memory of that memory.

Suppose that today I remember building, a short while ago, a castle in the sand. Tomorrow I go to the beach and there it is. I say, 'Yes, just as I remembered it yesterday'. But how do I then know it is just as I remembered it yesterday? The sight of the sand castle itself may well influence my memory of my previous remembering. Again, suppose I 'hear' for my children a poem they are committing to
memory and notice that they make a number of errors and omissions. When they are finished I say nothing; I just hand the book back to them and they read it again for themselves. They may well be quite satisfied that they got it exactly right. Of course, if they had written the poem instead of just saying it their errors would have been there to be seen, and in any case they generally believe me when I assure them that they did say this or that wrong. But in most cases when we wish to confirm a memory we have neither record of, nor independent witness to, our actual 'act of remembering'.

vii. The apparent impossibility of 'credentials'.

It seems that at every stage a further question can be asked, a further doubt raised. It is not merely that no memory carries within itself its own credentials; it does not even seem possible to know what such credentials would be like.

What if a true memory always felt different from a false one? But then there would just not be any false ones. Nothing could then count as a 'false memory' since, being false, it would be seen not to be a memory. (We can, of course, distinguish remembering from imagining — however hard it may be to describe the difference in terms of experience itself — but do we want to call imagining false remembering? And what would have to count as one memory? How could we separate the true part from the false part if, say, I remembered a pair of black brogue shoes instead of a pair of brown brogue shoes.
The only sort of 'feeling different' we seem able to conceive is in our own degree of confidence - the initial authority of the memory itself. And this, as we have seen, far from preventing errors of memory, is the very thing which promotes them.

4. **Being unable to doubt a memory**

Nevertheless, we say, there **must** be some memories which we simply cannot doubt; the sceptic, after all, is just a device, not a real man. Our task now is to discover what, in view of all that we have said, this **inability** to doubt can amount to. Initially there are two quite distinct possibilities: 'I cannot doubt' could refer simply to an empirical or psychological fact, or it could mean that it would be logically self-contradictory to doubt.

a) **Psychological indubitability**

It is simply a matter of fact that I cannot seriously doubt, (which means that I cannot doubt), that I am now in Canberra, that I had bacon and eggs and tomatoes for lunch today, that I have a wife and two children. I could be misremembering - I could be dreaming - but I happen to know that I am not. These are plain facts, and, however hard they may be to reconcile with some philosophical theories, to deny them is to be guilty either of frivolity or of blatant falsehood. Nor do I need to justify, in any ordinary sense of that word, these and other similarly certain beliefs.

But our concern is not to justify particular memories but to examine memory itself in the hope of discovering **why** certain memories
are self-justifying. And if we reject the 'beneficial stupidity' thesis, we seem bound to allow that the psychological certainty we are aware of must rest in some way upon logical certainty or at least strong logical probability — else what can 'rational grounds for believing' mean?

b) Logical indubitability

We may say that it is logically demonstrable that some memories are true — for otherwise the question of the truth of falsity of any given memory could not arise at all. Our only grounds for doubting one memory are, or at least include, our assumption of the reliability of others. Here it may be protested that the incompatibility of two 'memories' proves only that at least one is false — not that the other is true. But the very notion of incompatibility can derive only from the assumption that memory is reliable. If our experience were other than it is we should not hold the same pairs of instances incompatible, but when we say that our experience is such and such we are presupposing that we remember it (in general) correctly.¹

But it is not enough to establish that there are true memories; we must also be able to identify them, to distinguish them from false ones as they arise. And, as we have seen, every attempt to achieve

¹ H.H. Price makes this point at length in his contribution to the Symposium: Memory-Knowledge — ARISTOTELIAN SOCIETY Supplementary Volume XV — 'What can Philosophy Determine' — 1936, p.16ff. I am only claiming, however, that the truth of some memories is presupposed by our questioning the authority of memory. I make no claim that the infallibility of any memory is presupposed.
this distinction by logical demonstration must fail since the demonstration always assumes part of what it seeks to prove.

There is, however, another possibility. To say that in the case of a particular class of memories it is logically indubitable that what I remember actually occurred may mean that this particular class of memories is of the wrong logical type for doubt to apply to.

I cannot climb Everest; I am neither trained nor fit enough. I cannot at once both climb and descend (except perhaps by walking up the 'down' escalator); this is logically contradictory. And I cannot climb the floor; this is simply inapplicable — floors are not things to be climbed. Now, propositions, judgments and inferences are the sort of things it makes sense to doubt. Events, entities, qualities, are not the sort of things it makes sense to doubt; we can only doubt something about them. The categorical difference between those things we can doubt, in the normal sense of that word, and those things we simply cannot, may be made plainer by the following distinction.

When we say a proposition is false we are saying something about the proposition itself. But, when we apply the term 'false', as in common speech we often do, to such things as teeth and hair and the bottoms of suitcases, we are really saying that these things are designed (or simply happen) to make us think that they are something other than they are and so lead us to formulate false propositions, to make false inferences; we are saying that they are, in some way, misleading. Now, nothing is intrinsically misleading. Whether and
to what extent anything is misleading is a contingent empirical
question - whether and to what extent it does in fact mislead somebody.
It is important also to realise that a thing is not necessarily mis-
leading because it is false. The message on the old man's placard -
'The end of the world is at hand', is almost certainly false; but it
is misleading only if somebody takes it seriously and starts repenting.

There is another way in which this could be misleading and that
is if the natural inference that the old man bearing it is a religious
crank is in fact not true - he may be a spy or a detective. The
placard is then a sign for most of us of something which is not the case -
it is a misleading sign. And, conversely, a true statement at the
literal level can be grossly misleading, as Macbeth discovered to his
cost. If I say 'I didn't give the chocolate to the baby' when in fact
I had put it on the table and watched him take it, then I am being both
truthful and misleading at the same time. This is why inflections
play so large a part in everyday speech.

The importance of this distinction is that, whereas what is false
is simply false and that is all there is to it, that anything is
misleading is contingent upon someone's being misled by it. A sign
is always of something for somebody. It is always possible therefore
that some other person will be 'rightly led' by the same sign, or that

"'And be these juggling fiends no more believed,
That palter with us in a double sense;
That keep the word of promise to our ear,
And break it to our hope.'"  
Act V, Sc. VIII
the one originally misled will correct his error although the object which operated as a sign remains unaltered. Examination may show that a great deal of what we call 'remembering' lies at the sub-inferential level. Therein we may find the warrant we are looking for to justify the psychological certainty we do in fact achieve about most of our memories. Our task now is to discover what kinds or parts of memory, if any, can be properly said to be true or false, and what kinds or parts, if any, can properly be said, at worst, to be misleading.
Chapter II

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'REMEMBERING'?

1. Various attempts to frame a definition

Before going any further we must try to decide just what is to count as memory. We must remember, however, that we are discovering, not legislating about, what memory is, and give an equal hearing, therefore, to every claimant that seems to be an instance of remembering. Various 'definitions of memory' have been advanced by philosophers but they all seem to be either too restrictive, begging the point at issue by an arbitrary dismissal of inconvenient facts and awkward experiences, or too wide, embracing a good deal that does not even seem to be memory - and thus failing to define.

a) The standard restrictive definition

William James defines¹ 'memory' thus: 'It is the knowledge of an event or fact, of which meantime we have not been thinking, with the additional consciousness that we have thought or experienced it before'. He is very definite in his view that the mere occurrence of an image in the mind without this additional consciousness does not constitute a memory, even though the image may be a faithful representation of some previous experience. 'Such a revival is obviously not a memory, whatever else it may be; it is simply a duplicate, a second event,

having absolutely no connection with the first event except that it happens to resemble it.' The same view - that to be remembering we must know we are remembering - seems to be implicit in Bertrand Russell's claim: 1 'If we are to know - as it is supposed we do - that images are "copies", accurate or inaccurate, of past events, something more than the mere occurrence of images must go to constitute this knowledge. For the mere occurrence, by itself, would not suggest any connection with anything that had happened before'. The idea that to remember is always to refer back, consciously, to the past commends itself to common sense and seems generally to accord with common usage. But it raises certain difficulties.

1. 'Memories' and 'remembering'

I feel that we must distinguish the memories which we have from the remembering which we do. If I speak of a memory I am having then clearly I must be consciously aware of some happening as belonging to the past. Yet it does make sense, I believe, to say of some other man that he is remembering certain past events even though that man is not then conscious of these events as past. It is enough that he is able to relate, recognise, perform or verify because he has in fact had a certain experience in the past, whether or not he is aware at the time of the connection between that past experience and his present activity. Thus James' definition, whilst it may well be applicable to those

1 The Analysis of Mind, p.160.
particulars we call memories, cannot be applied to remembering as an activity. We can speak, quite properly and normally, after the event of having remembered, even though the particular memories in question were not recognised as such. I may, for instance, make an assertion of fact and, when I am asked how I know, reply, after some consideration, that I remember it. Under these circumstances it would seem very odd to say that I started to remember it only when replying to the question—especially as my reply shows that, since my knowledge is based upon my own past experience, I must have been remembering it already.

ii. The assumption of reflexiveness

Prima-facie, remembering is one way of knowing things. It has been strenuously denied by some writers that remembering is a way of getting to know things, but it would seem simply perverse to deny that it is a way of actually knowing something here and now.

Now, if I could not know that a bird is sitting on that chimney pot without also knowing that I know that a bird is sitting there, then I could not know this without knowing that I know it—and so on ad infinitum. It follows that I need not be (though I may be) aware that I know something in order to know it.

And if the 'knowing' in question is remembering, whereas I might know that I am remembering a certain event, I could remember it perfectly well without any 'additional consciousness' at all. Russell

1 E.g. G. Ryle – Cf. The Concept of Mind, p.274ff.
is quite right when he says that something more than the mere occurrence of an image is necessary; it is also necessary that we recognise it, that is, see it as something. But it is a further, and usually quite unnecessary, step to see ourselves as seeing it as something.

iii. Real memory – imagined imagining

One of the problems we considered in chapter I \(^1\) is simply ruled out by the present definition. If to remember is to know that we remember, we could not remember something and think ourselves to be only imagining it. To preserve the definition we should have to say that remembering commences only when we realise that we are remembering, notwithstanding that nothing else is changed thereby. And if, as is certainly possible, we never do realise this, we should never have remembered the event at all. We should have imagined it, even though every detail is in fact a representation to us of our own past experience.

iv. Intermediate stages of remembering and 'discarded candidates'

Whether we are deliberately trying to remember something or simply allowing our memories to 'wander', the arrival at a particular piece of remembered information may be the culmination of quite a long process, involving, as we saw in the previous chapter, \(^2\) the consideration and rejection of various propositions and images. Suppose, for example, that

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\(^1\) See p.11.

\(^2\) See pp.13 and 14.
an old wartime colleague telephones to say that he is in Canberra and asks me to meet him. As I try to remember his appearance a number of images arise in my mind. Each one is quickly replaced by another - I know that they are not of the man in question - until at last I have an image which I know immediately is the one I want.

But who are these other gentlemen in Naval uniform whose images appeared to me? They are not the man I was 'looking for', so I did not stop to enquire - yet it seems highly likely that each was a real person, not just a figment of my imagination and, if so, can we say anything but that I must have been remembering them? The same thing applies when we remember the face but not the name; the names which suggest themselves to us are usually real names, names we have actually encountered, though not the name we want. And if, instead of simply discarding the 'unsuccessful applicants', we take the trouble to try to identify them, we are often successful. It is when we are interested only in who they are not, rather than in who they are, that they must remain anonymous. I do not need to maintain that we can always identify or 'place' these 'intermediate stages of memory'. If we can sometimes do so this shows that those 'identified' are in fact memory-images; but they are made memory-images, according to this definition, only by our stopping to consider them. And there is every reason to suppose that most of such passing images are in fact identifiable if we pause to consider them. The definition seems to demand a third group of experiences, neither memory nor imagination
yet in some way of the same 'kind' as these, a sort of 'potential memory', and I can see no justification for the postulation of such an additional class. If we wanted to call anything 'potential memory' surely it would be those experiences we have had and might remember.

Now, I have been talking as if these 'discarded candidates' were something quite extraneous to, and in no way connected with, the event or individual finally remembered, but this is not so. These images may play a vital part in the remembering of that event. The man whose image occurs to me probably served in the same ship as my friend, or performed the same duties at another time, or looked rather like him, or was his close associate. The image, although it is itself the wrong one for my present purpose, somehow helps to produce the right one. I may perhaps pause in my pursuit to say - 'No, that's old Jim. He joined us later' - but my doing does not seem to make any difference to the fact that it is old Jim, and that I am remembering him.

b) Knowledge of the past

We have found our first 'definition' too narrow. We now consider one which is also too wide. It is tempting to define 'memory' as 'Our knowledge of the past', or, less incautiously, 'Our knowledge of our own past experience', because this seems to be straightforward and clear-cut and to embrace everything we might want to call memory. But as a definition it fails on both counts.
i. **It is too wide**

As we saw in chapter I,\(^1\) knowing the past is not necessarily the same thing as remembering the past, even when the past in question is our own. It may be suggested, therefore, that in order to make the 'definition' function as a definition we rephrase it as — **Direct** knowledge of our own past experience. But what does the word 'direct' mean here? We cannot say 'intuitive'. This would not make it any clearer and would put memory on a par with clairvoyance, which we certainly do not want. It must be knowledge of the past in a particular though quite ordinary way. But the only description we can give of this particular and ordinary way is — remembering.

Perhaps we can give a negative definition: Remembering is being certain about past facts without the aid of testimony and inference. This is, in effect, the position adopted by Sir Roy Harrod. 'A memory', he says, 'is an imaginative structure to which the truth symbol adheres without there being any apparent grounds for the adherence. Memories, in fine, are members of the class of wholly irrational beliefs recognised as such (definition)'\(^2\). He argues that the irrationality of the beliefs does not render it irrational to hold them. But even if we accept this argument the definition is hardly satisfactory. It is difficult to see how it can exclude articles of faith and mere

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1 \(p.15ff.\)
2 Foundations of Inductive Logic, \(p.187.\)
prejudices. We might extend the definition to exclude these specifically but then I cannot but feel that we would be defining memory by what it is not - making it a mere residue after the more specific kinds of belief have been extracted.

There is also a more formal objection. The definition accepts as memory whatever commends itself to us as memory, and it makes no provision for memory which is not recognised as such, memory to which the 'truth symbol' does not adhere. Unless, that is, we take the 'truth symbol' to be nothing more than our failure to judge 'this is false'.

ii. It is too narrow

As a definition 'Knowledge of our past experience' is at once too wide and too narrow. By adhering to the factual criterion it abandons the psychological criterion altogether. If it isn't true it isn't remembered. This may be a quite reasonable stand (though, as we shall see shortly, it involves serious difficulties). But this is not all. 'Knowledge of my past' is not the same thing as 'knowledge that this is my past' yet how are we to make clear the distinction and so avoid the charge of the assumption of reflexiveness made against the first definition? We seem obliged to resurrect the distinction between factual knowledge and mere acquaintance, so that we can deal with those cases where I in fact remember my past experience without registering that it is my past experience by saying that I am acquainted with my past. We would then reformulate the definition as 'Acquaintance with
our own past experience'. But the knowledge/acquaintance distinction is a very shaky one to say the least. Whether, and if so how, it can properly be made we shall consider later in the essay. In any case 'acquaintance with our own past' seems to serve as a description rather than as a definition of memory. For there is about it a strong suspicion of circularity.

If we define 'remembering' as 'knowing the past' how do we define 'the past'? The Concise Oxford Dictionary gives 'gone by in time'. But our concept of temporal sequence seems, prima-facie at least, to rest heavily upon our ability to distinguish the perception of events from the memory of events by the natures of the experiences involved. There have been several different attempts to free the concept of the past from that of remembering, some of which we shall be examining in the final chapter of this essay, but unless and until this is convincingly achieved our present definition is useless. In order to make the 'pastness' of the event contemplated the criterion of our remembering that event, we must first show how our concept of the past is derived without reference to any 'memory-experience'.

iii. 'Memory' and 'knowledge'

There is obviously a strong case for insisting that 'remember', like 'know', should apply only to what is in fact the case (or was the case). And it may seem that we are tacitly following this rule whenever we say 'I seem to remember'. For it may be argued that there would be no point in saying 'seem' unless we felt that something over
and above the present experience itself were needed to qualify the event as a memory. Thus 'seem to remember' may stand to 'remember' much as 'believe' stands to 'know'.

But at what point, then, would we be justified in dropping the 'seem to'? Only when 'independent evidence' is produced? 'I seem to remember' usually denotes a low degree of 'initial authority' — 'Don't put too much weight upon this recollection, it may be wrong'. Certainly there is not the same prima-facie absurdity in saying 'I seem to remember it clearly, yet it could not have happened' as there is in saying 'I believe it, but it is not so'. The two cases are not really parallel. For when I say 'I know' I am saying 'I believe and I have adequate grounds for believing', but when I say 'I remember' am I saying 'I seem to remember and...' and what? Does it make sense to talk of adequate grounds for seeming to remember? This is a question which must come up again when we consider the relation of memories to claims,¹ but it is certainly not a question to which we can provide a quick answer. 'Knowledge of our past' provides us with neither an exclusive definition of memory nor an effective criterion by which we can identify instances of memory when they occur. All the examples in the previous chapter show very clearly that no memory has 'its truth stamped upon its face'. So that our only means of establishing that some event did in fact occur is by more remembering of the same

¹ Chapter IV.
kind. Therefore, to say that a seeming memory is really a memory
only if it is true, though it tells us something about how we
normally use the word 'memory', provides no means of identifying our
memories as such.

c) Learnt and not forgotten

A fairly recent attempt to cut away the aura of mystery from
memory is the claim that 'remembered' means simply 'learnt and not
forgotten'. The advantage of this move is that it seems to give clear
rules for deciding what is remembered and what is not: – Did I learn
this by instruction, perception, practice? Have I retained what I
learnt, i.e. am I now capable of relating, recalling, performing,
properly? – Then I remember. And if it be objected that I may not be
remembering that I ever learnt the thing, the advocates of this view
are generally prepared to say that this is of no importance, that it
is sufficient that it is the kind of thing which would have to be
learnt. The only valid test for memory is the ability to perform
appropriately when called upon to do so.

This definition, like the previous one, limits memory to 'true
memory' and must encounter the same difficulties. I may consider that
I am performing appropriately, i.e. according to what I have learnt,
whilst someone else considers that I am not. How could the issue be
decided except by reference to the learning process remembered in

some other way? But, as a definition, it suffers from the more serious
defect that it attempts to define the 'genus' in terms of the
'differentia'. This is apparent when we consider the assertion 'I
remember his face'. I certainly never 'learnt his face'. And though
I may perhaps have learnt to describe his face, a moment's reflection
will show that 'I remember his face' not only is not equivalent to 'I
can describe his face', it does not even entail that I have even
attempted (let alone learnt) to do so. The failure of the definition
is even more evident when we ask two pertinent questions:

i. What does 'learnt' mean?

We know well enough what we are doing when we are learning
something - a part in a play, or how to swim, or the order of colours
in the rainbow, or our twelve-times tables - we are committing some-
thing to memory, or, if you prefer, acquiring a skill. But when we
ask what it is for that something to have been learnt, what can we say
but that, as a result of past efforts, we can do, or do know, the
something in question? Learning is one kind of remembering: remem-
bering directed to the acquisition of some particular talent. For,
when we consider how we learn anything, what the 'efforts' in question
amount to, we find that, insofar as they effect the issue at all,
these efforts are themselves simply 'little rememberings'. The
observation of anyone learning a part in a play, or going through the
eyearly stages of learning to drive, will show this very clearly. What
could learning be except piecemeal remembering? I can see a rainbow a thousand times but unless I remember which colour joins which I shall never learn the order of the colours. Learning entails remembering - having learnt entails having remembered, and going on remembering. Now, what of not forgetting?

ii. What is the criterion for 'not forgotten'?

It is notorious that things we cannot remember today may come back to us as clear as ever tomorrow. Sometimes events from long ago come back to us with surprising clarity, and some psychologists believe that nothing we have experienced is ever totally lost to us, a belief which is supported in some measure by the 'unearthing' of lost memories under hypnosis. At what stage, then, can we say we have forgotten something? I often enough do say this, but all that I mean is that at this moment I am unable to recall it. If the matter is important I may be urged to try harder to remember, and I may be successful. Or I may adopt the technique of thinking about something else in the hope that the recollection will 'come to me of its own accord'.

Clearly the only meaning of 'forgotten' which permits verification is 'not recalled or recognised now'. Asking which memories are 'quite forgotten' is like asking which of the young men at the university will live to be octogenarians. The only possible answer is 'Wait and see'.

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1 Or the 'drilling' of the physical faculties in some set way. This is discussed more fully in chapter V.
Wittgenstein asks the question 1 - If I knew something yesterday but do not know it today, at what time did I stop knowing it? - There just does not seem to be any answer.

Thus if I say 'I have not forgotten what I once learned' it is not entirely clear what I am claiming. If I simply mean 'I am now doing something which I once learnt how to do' then this is certainly good evidence that I remember something - something which, as we have seen, is itself a complex of earlier rememberings. But this only instantiates the concept of remembering, it cannot serve to define it. In the same way 'I see the meadow as a green expanse' shows that I have colour vision but does not provide a definition of the concept of colour.

d) 'Neo-ostensive definition' - how the term is used

i. 'Open-texture', closed, and vague concepts

Friedrich Waismann attributed much of the misunderstanding in philosophy to - 'something of great significance, the fact, namely, that language is never complete for the expression of all ideas, on the contrary, that it has an essential openness'. 2 And he introduces the term 'open texture concept' in his article 'Verifiability' for those of our empirical concepts which are elastic in their coverage. 'Open texture is a very fundamental characteristic of most, though not of all,

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1 'Philosophical Investigations', pt.1, para. 182ff, p.73eff.
empirical concepts, and it is this texture which prevents us from verifying conclusively most of our empirical statements. The distinction between 'closed' and 'open texture' is fairly straightforward. Whereas there are exact rules for determining whether or not a given poem is a sonnet, there are no such exact rules for determining on every occasion whether a given animal is a cat. If the poem has one line too many or one rhyme out of place it is not a sonnet. But the cat may have no tail, or have three legs, or bark like a dog; the point at which we stop calling it a cat is a matter of decision. A term may be introduced into the language to refer to a closed concept - closed in the sense that all possibilities are already catered for; but when a term is evolved to refer to a group of similar instances even though no exact rules are laid down for its use, we have an open-texture concept. In the first case we have a set of absolute rules, in the second a set of descriptions which must be met with to a substantial degree.

We can safely assert that memory is a 'natural' rather than a 'formal' concept. We have applied the name to certain known experiences, not created it as a technical term to assist us in discussing those experiences. By the criteria given above, therefore, it is an open-texture concept. It does not follow, however, that it is also a vague concept. To use Waismann's examples, 'heap' and 'pink'

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Reprinted in Logic and Language, 1951 (A.G.N. Flew), p.120.
are vague terms whereas 'gold' is a quite precise term, notwithstanding that if some novel material were to be found which met almost, though not quite, all the tests for gold, we should be obliged to decide whether to call it gold or to invent some new name for it. It is just a fortunate fact that such novel experiences occur comparatively rarely. In the case of most 'natural kinds' ostensive and formal definitions do in fact coincide in practice. Therefore when 'novel experiences' do occur we are in a position to deal with them.

Now, if it were the case that some definition could be formed to embrace every instance that we in fact accept as memory, and exclude every instance that we do not, then the inadequacy of such a definition to deal with a totally novel experience which might occur need cause us no more distress than does the inadequacy of the definition of 'horse' to meet such an eventuality. 'Memory' would be an open-texture, but not a vague, concept. But the various attempts at definition we have considered seem to demonstrate that this is not the case. Our problem, then, is not simply that our definition may have to be revised at some future date, but that no single definition can meet our present needs, can provide us with an effective criterion for all occasions.

ii. Is there a common factor in all uses of the term?

We may still hope, however, to find some essential characteristic which 'binds together' all our uses of the term. 'Game' is decidedly
an open texture concept, and may fairly be regarded as a vague one, yet we may well feel that our application of the term to some new instance that we encounter occurs because we attribute to this new instance some feature that we have found common to all instances of games — even if we are not quite clear what it is. Similarly, there is a family resemblance between all the instances we call 'remembering'. Perhaps it is possible that we can be aware of similarities without being able to tell exactly in what respect things are similar, and that when we think of some performance as one of remembering this is because we recognise in it some such 'unspecified common feature'.

But a family resemblance is quite compatible with one member of the family bearing no obvious resemblance to some other member. It is only when we meet the rest of the family that we see the 'connecting links'; as the appearance of a child will often 'connect' the appearance of his two brothers. So that the fact that it is reasonable and intelligible to apply a single term to all instances of the concept does not entail the existence of any single 'essential characteristic', identified or otherwise.

iii. The three criteria

Perhaps the ideal memory, the perfect exemplar, to use H.H. Price's term, is that which both feels like a memory to ourselves and 'behaves' like a memory to other people. I remember that Aston

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1 Cf. Thinking and Experience, p.20.
Villa won the football match: I have a visual image of the winning goal being scored and I remember being delighted by the victory. I am able to tell everyone quite confidently who won and how they won, and to check my pools coupon. The people I speak to saw me go into the stadium and come away from it after the game was over. They also saw others coming away with Villa rosettes and happy smiles. Here is a memory which nobody but a professional sceptic would ever query.

Three distinct characteristics are involved:

a. The experience has the initial authority of memory — the feeling of belief about a past event.

b. There is strong independent evidence that: (i) what is claimed did in fact happen and (ii) I was in a position to perceive its happening and subsequently remember it.

c. I am able, as the result of my memory, to proceed with certain activities dependent for their execution upon a knowledge of the past event.

Where any of these conditions holds we are inclined to speak of remembering. To my mind, however, by far the most persistent factor is the 'initial authority'. Since this is often referred to as a feeling of familiarity it may be well, at this juncture, to consider briefly what might be meant by this expression.

iv. Familiarity

Hume held memories to be subjectively distinguishable from mere imaginings because they are more vivid. But Hume himself was forced
to admit that on occasions mere imaginings may be more vivid, in any ordinary sense of that term, than memory-images. To preserve the notion of an intrinsic memory-indicator — the truth-symbol as Harrod calls it — empiricists have cast about for some other description which is not open to this objection. William James was perhaps the first to speak of a feeling of familiarity which accompanies, or arises out of, the memory, and obliges us to accept it as an account of our own past experience. Unfortunately however, although the term 'familiar', largely through the writings of Bertrand Russell, has become almost a standard expression, it is, like the term 'vivid', something of a makeshift. As R.F. Holland has pointed out,¹ a thing normally becomes familiar through long usage, and there is therefore no reason why our imaginings, since they may be repeatedly entertained by us, should not become more familiar than actual experiences we have had only once.

I hope that as we proceed we shall discover what it is that makes a memory 'feel familiar'. But for the present all that I mean by 'initial authority', whatever the explanation of it may be, is the feeling of belief manifested in our readiness to base our expectations, reasonings and testimony on the memory in question.

v. Truth-status an open question

Any attempt at rigid definition forces us to decide between a psychological, and private, criterion and a factual, and public,

Our alternatives are to treat remembering as we treat knowing, making our criterion what was the case, and basing it upon the way we generally use the word 'remember' in discourse, or to treat it as we treat believing, making our criterion a particular state of mind, and basing it upon the experience we refer to when we speak of remembering. If we were to take past fact as our sole criterion, then we would have to include many instances where there is no 'memory-feeling' at all, and which we, therefore, may not wish to call memories. Nor would we be able to distinguish between memory-knowledge and knowledge about the past from other sources. If we were to take the present belief about the past as our sole criterion, then we would have to include beliefs which are in fact unjustified, and which, therefore, we would not wish to call memories. Furthermore, we would be obliged to maintain that no independent evidence about the past, however well established, could overthrow a memory-claim provided the belief were strongly held. We would be obliged to admit 'mnemic hallucinations' as memories.

Of course, what we want to say is that remembering is holding a true belief about the past as a result of having experienced the past in question. But we must recognise that we know it to be 'as a result of past experience' only by virtue of the present memory-experience, and that in most cases we do in fact know the belief to

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1 Cf. 'Remembering' chapter IV - Von Leyden distinguishes what he calls the 'present approach' and the 'past approach' to memory.
be true by virtue of that 'memory-experience' alone. We must, therefore, consider, not the thing, but the things, we mean by 'remember', must recognise that the term is quite properly used in different ways, and concentrate on discovering the relationship between these. First, however, we must decide what these different ways are.

2. Remembering: distinctions and classifications

a) Memories and remembering

The first distinction which springs to my mind within the field of memory is the one I have made some use of already – between the memories we have and the remembering we perform. We may well feel that a totally different classificatory system must apply to what we remember from that which applies to how we remember. It may seem comparable with the way in which different classificatory systems would apply if we were asked 'What did you run? The hundred yards, the egg and spoon race, or the all-Australia championship?' and if we were asked 'How did you run? Fast, bowlegged, or with increasing pace? Certainly there are differences in the grammar which is applicable to memory and to remembering. I can remember quickly, or efficiently, or effortlessly, but I cannot have quick or efficient or effortless memories. On the other hand I can remember clearly, and this is having a clear memory of some event.

We must allow then, that there are things we can say about remembering that we cannot say about memories, but are they, from our
point of view, the important things? To preserve the analogy with running the subjects of memory would have to be such things as 'that farm', 'the man next door', 'yesterday's breakfast'; or perhaps, farms, people, breakfasts. But these are not the 'kinds' we are interested in. Rather we are interested in distinguishing between memories of: things, skills, states of mind, appearances, propositions. The more pertinent analogy would therefore be with running a race or running a lottery or running for Parliament — where what we do and how we do it are closely interwoven. Thus:

Remembering the appearance or the sound or the smell of something seems simply to be imaging. Perhaps it is not; perhaps I can remember exactly how something looked or felt without any image at all and perhaps I can have images without remembering at all. I shall dispute these possibilities in a later chapter but for the present we must allow it. Nevertheless, to say that my memory takes the form of images seems to say as much about what I am remembering as about how I am remembering. It is very hard to imagine, for instance, how I could have an image of a proposition.

Remembering a skill, i.e. how to do something, may simply be doing it. Whether this 'really is' remembering or not need not concern us here. All that is relevant is that, insofar as we do treat it as

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1 Chapter VII.
2 This question is taken up in Chapter V.
remembering, our reason for saying that what is remembered is a skill is that our manner of remembering is a skilled performance.

Again we must be careful not to prejudge the issue. It may prove that remembering is quite distinct from performing, but it is evident that there is a strong connection.

It could perhaps be held that the remembering of a factual relationship could only be the stating of a proposition. This is at least arguable. And it seems to be analytic to say that when the mode of remembering is the stating of a proposition (assuming that there be such a mode of remembering), the subject of the memory must be a certain relationship which held, or is claimed to have held, between certain events, or proceedings, or situations.

We cannot remember without remembering something. I am suggesting further that we cannot remember in this or that way without remembering something of this or that kind. If this is a mere tautology then it is one which has frequently been overlooked by those who have sought to treat what we remember and how we remember as two distinct categories. On the other hand it would be confusing and misleading to ignore completely, as some philosophers have done, the differences between what can appropriately be said of remembering (as an activity) and what can appropriately be said only of memories (as the 'products' of that activity). In the next chapter I propose to avoid both dangers by approaching the classification of memory from the viewpoints of memories and remembering alternately. But first I want to make an
initial distinction, a distinction we might say, between distinctions.

b) Primary and secondary distinctions

i. Descriptions and sub-divisions

    We have, on the one hand, the different sorts of things we can say about remembering because it is one kind of activity, and on the other hand, the different kinds of things that count as memories. An analogy may help to make the distinction clear. Discussing a colour we can say that it is bright or dull, clear or opaque, cheerful or gloomy, and we can argue as to whether it 'belongs' to the surface of an object or is 'dependent' upon a mind. Or quite differently, we can classify it as green or red or blue or orangey-red or bluey-green. Whilst the first list is of real enough distinctions, and these clearly are applicable to colours, they are also equally applicable to other things as well. The weather can be bright or dull, the fireside can be cheerful or gloomy, and the arguments about ontological status can be carried on about sounds or flavours. But the second list of alternatives lies within colour itself; it is the possible classes into which colours, and only colours, can fall. For convenience I shall call these primary and secondary distinctions respectively, and the two important points to note are:

The 'primary distinctions' are applicable irrespective of the 'kind' (the 'secondary' classification) in question.
'Secondary distinctions' apply only within the class under consideration. Primary distinctions apply to members of that and other classes.

An example of a primary distinction is that given in Section 1 of this chapter, between memories which are specifically believed and memories which are merely accepted in passing. This distinction, though applicable to memory, is by no means peculiar to memory; it applies equally to perception and prediction as well.

ii. Retention and recall

In the case of memory one primary distinction is of the utmost importance, that between dispositional memory and memory occurrence. As we shall need to be conscious of this distinction at every stage of our enquiry I propose to make a preliminary investigation of it before going on to consider the 'kinds of memory' — the secondary distinctions.

Whilst we can talk of remembering something either in the dispositional sense of being able to remember, or in the occurrent sense of actually remembering now, our being entitled to talk of remembering a given event in either sense entails that, on some occasions, we must be entitled to talk of remembering that event in the other sense. The fact that an event occurred yesterday and I recall it today is all the proof needed that I have retained that event in my memory. Furthermore it is the only proof possible that I have done so. A memory disposition can be known to exist only because memory occurrences actualise it. ¹

¹ This does not mean that it can be known not to exist if no memory occurrence is actualising it. Cf. p.42 above.
Thus, whilst 'Do you remember...?' is a different kind of question from 'Are you remembering...?', it does not need a different kind of experience to enable us to answer it. Asking a man on his Golden Wedding day 'Do you remember your wedding day?' is quite different in intention from asking him 'Are you remembering your wedding day?'. But though he may answer 'Yes' to the first question and 'No' to the second, there is an obvious sense in which he must, to be entitled to answer 'Yes' to the first question, be fulfilling at least some of the conditions required for answering 'Yes' to the second question also. A memory disposition or capacity can be claimed only on the evidence of some memory occurrence, and justly claimed only on the evidence of a memory-occurrence directly related to the event claimed as remembered. This is the fact which people overlook when they claim to remember some event they have in fact long since forgotten. What they remember is simply the fact that they did once remember it, as when an old man starts to relate some incident from his youth and finds, to his astonishment, that he is unable to do so. Memory dispositions or capacities are not personal characteristics like the colour of hair. Nor do we carry them about with us like the watch which must still be in my pocket because I put it there and have not taken it out.

'Does he remember this?', then, means 'Has he ever remembered this and can he be expected to remember it again?'. And 'Do you remember this?' generally means 'Can you remember this?' and is often used to
ask us to try to remember. Or, if the object be particularly complicated - like a proof in geometry for instance - the question may mean 'Can you remember ever remembering this and if so could you do so again if you tried?'.

There is, however, a problem here, one which gives some plausibility to our third definition, 'Learnt and not forgotten'. It is very hard to deny that quite often we seem to know things without thinking about them at all. We take the right action, give the right answer, select the right book, without experiencing anything that feels like an occurrent memory. Often these performances are quite complex; they are the kind of things we should say need to be remembered. It may be possible to explain such spontaneous right actions wholly in terms of physiological conditioning. There seems no doubt that a great deal of spontaneous action must be so explained. But there is also another possibility at least worthy of consideration.

What we discover by perception is retained by memory. Ten seconds after an event there seems no doubt that we are remembering not perceiving. The question of how and when this change occurs, if indeed there be any actual change, will exercise us in my final chapter.

But, even allowing that such a change has occurred, the memory we now have is not, properly speaking, a recollection. It has not been recalled into consciousness, for it has never left consciousness. Suppose I see a quite perfect rose and this makes such a strong impression upon me that when I turn away its beauty remains in my mind - in the
popular phrase 'it is still clearly before me'. I may have a continuous image of that rose for five minutes following my actually seeing it, during which time I may appear to be giving my full attention to a host of other matters. So there does not seem to be any logical reason why we could not continually remember something (without ever recollecting it in the ordinary sense of that word) for an indefinite period.

Thus, whilst the disposition/occurrence distinction is possible only where there are in fact periodical occurrences, and we might therefore say that a memory disposition is 'nothing more than' its occurrences, there could be cases of remembering where the distinction simply does not apply. There may be some memories which are constantly, as people say, at the back of our minds. And in such cases we could equally well regard the memory as occurrent or as dispositional. It would be a mistake, I think, to draw too rigid a distinction between what is and what is not being specifically remembered at any given moment.

iii. Secondary distinctions

We now turn our attention to the secondary distinctions. Immediately a host of questions spring to mind. Must events be remembered either in words or in images? What is the connection between a remembered event, a remembered fact, and the proposition in which the memories are expressed? Can we simply remember a proposition? How is this different from remembering a sentence? How is remembering a person or place
connected with remembering the qualities of that person or place?
Can remembering how to do something be in imagery? What is the
relation between habit and memory? Is recognition a kind of recall?
Or is recall a kind of recognition?

These are the kind of questions we now have to consider. From
them emerge various candidates for consideration as 'kinds of remem-
bering' or 'classes of memories'. Images, remembering sense experience,
remembering in words and propositions, remembered events, remembered
qualities, remembering how to, remembered facts, recognition — all
these have their places, their particular functions, in the general
scheme of what we call memory. Our task is to decide what these
particular functions are.

Something else emerges from our list of questions, the fact that
the 'kinds' are not simple alternatives. I can contrast remembering
how to swim with remembering that I had eggs for breakfast or remem-
bering what my home looks like; but in each case the remembering may
take the form of, or include, uttering words, framing propositions,
or having images. I can contrast remembering a man's behaviour with
remembering his appearance; but the remembering in either case may
take the form of either recall or recognition. A memory-image seems
to be a totally different sort of thing from a remembered proposition,
though both may be means of remembering the same event. And recog-
nising something in front of us seems quite different from recalling
something from another time and place. Yet it seems to make sense
to talk of recognising an image.
The upshot of all this is that before we can start to answer the question 'What kind of memory is this?' we have to ask 'What kind of question is this?'. Just as when I am asked 'What kind of soldier is he?' the question could mean 'Is he a Corporal or a Colonel?', or 'Is he an infantryman or a cavalryman?', or simply 'Is he a good soldier or a bad one?'. (The last is a primary distinction but the first two are secondary). Of course, in practice, I should avoid this difficulty by replying 'He's an infantry Corporal and a very good one'. It does no harm to throw in a little gratuitious information. But with memory this manoeuvre is not so easy. We know well enough that 'cavalryman' excludes 'infantryman', and 'Corporal' excludes 'Colonel'. But which 'kind of memory' excludes which other kind seems to vary with the point of view of the question, and it is quite vital therefore to know what the questioner is 'getting at'.

For instance I might ask a man who is describing his friend to me, 'Do you have a visual image of him, or do you simply remember a number of facts about what he looks like?'. The question seems reasonable enough but it could be that to him the 'alternatives' may seem to amount to exactly the same thing, for he may be thinking only in terms of what he can state, and not, like myself, in terms of the mode of remembering which enables him to state it. And I cannot point out an image to him as I could point out a Corporal.

Nevertheless, for most of us such questions as these do make sense: 'Do you actually remember how he looked or just that he looked
like Napoleon?' and 'When you say you remember how to drive are you saying that you remember what you did on some previous occasion, or that you can now think through the rules of driving, or simply that given a car you could drive it?' and 'Is the actual group of words the subject of your memory, or simply the way of expressing it'?

They make sense once we are in tune, as it were, with our questioner. It is only because this is so that we are able to talk intelligibly of kinds of memories at all. There are genuine alternatives within certain contexts of enquiry, and I hope that in the course of the next chapter it will become clearer what these contexts are, and what are the alternatives appropriate to them.
Chapter III
KINDS OF MEMORY

1. Classification by subjects of memory

a) Memories of events and memories of individuals

i. Broad's distinction and reduction

To claim 'I remember my grandfather' may be to claim more or less than to claim 'I remember my grandfather visiting us in Birmingham'. I could remember the man without remembering the visit. And I could remember the visit, in the sense of remembering things about it, without actually remembering the man at all. I could, for instance, recall certain outings at which someone, presumably my grandfather, was present. I might perhaps say 'I remember my grandfather' and mean nothing more than 'I could recognise a portrait of my grandfather if I saw one', but this would be a rather extended use of 'remember'; it is natural to feel that to remember someone must always be to be able to recall something about him, and to recall it from personal experience. My ability to recognise his portrait could hardly constitute remembering him if he had died before I was born. My claim to remember my grandfather would be very hollow indeed if I were unable from direct memory, to relate a single incident which involved him, or to give any description of him. In this case all that I would be entitled to say is that I remember certain events that occurred at a time when (so I am told) my grandfather was visiting.
Such considerations led C.D. Broad\(^1\) to reduce the memory of individuals to one way of talking about the memory of events. 'All perceptual situations' he says 'refer beyond themselves to physical things: if we confine ourselves to saying that we perceive a certain physical event we simply leave the further reference more vague than when we say that we perceive a certain physical thing. Now the same is true of perceptual memory. I say that I remember the Master of Trinity, and I say that I remember dining with him. But, on the one hand, I remember him only insofar as I remember the events in which he was concerned. And, on the other hand, when I remember any physical event I, ipso-facto, remember to some extent the thing in which I believe this to have occurred'.

ii. **Remembering classifications and descriptions**

But is it true that I can remember an individual only in remembering some event in which he was concerned? I have agreed that it would be hollow for me to claim to remember my grandfather if I were unable to relate anything about him; but surely I could describe him from memory without remembering any event in which he was concerned. Perhaps Broad includes in 'events' such things as 'having white whiskers'; it is noticeable that he says 'the thing in which I believe this to have occurred', not 'to which'. But once we allow the traditional distinction between internal and external properties — and the

\(^1\) 'The Mind and Its Place in Nature', p.224.
question of remembering individuals could hardly arise at all if we do not allow it - then 'having white whiskers' does not refer to an event in the way that 'coming to dinner on Christmas Day 1936' refers to an event. There seems no reason why I could not remember him by means of memories of the former kind without any assistance from memories of the latter kind. Nor need my memory of him be in the form of an image. I could remember that he had blue eyes and white whiskers and a Scottish accent without any image of him at all. But I can remember this kind of detail about people who I certainly do not remember - Oliver Cromwell for instance - and if this were all that constituted my memory of my grandfather, then, when I was asked 'Do you remember your grandfather?' I would be inclined to reply 'No, not really'. For I would have neither a mental picture of him (unless it were a purely imaginative one built up from verbal descriptions) nor any direct memory of his actions. The ability to describe and classify a person does not, of itself, constitute a memory of that person, though clearly, it does constitute a memory of something.

The claim 'I remember grandfather' is justified then if:

a. I remember events in which grandfather was personally involved in such a way that the memories of those events would have been quite different had he not been present; or

b. I have certain images (usually visual though not necessarily so) of him which I know to originate from my actual past perception of him; or
c. I remember certain facts about his personal appearance or his doings which are directly traceable to judgments made in his presence, i.e., I can remember the occasions of making the judgments in question. Since c. would be merely a case of remembering propositions about him (as in the Oliver Cromwell case) unless I in fact remembered some event in which he was involved, we can regard a. and b. as the only real alternatives. As a rule both these conditions hold, but either will suffice. I can have clear memories of people's participation in certain events, their doings and their sayings, and the way I felt about them at the time, without any imagery of those people. Thus even my failure to recognise a man does not entail that I do not remember him. Failing to recognise people we do in fact remember, in the other sense of the term, is quite a common experience. And, on the other hand, I can have a clear image which I know to be the image of a particular individual, and know to originate from my perception of that individual, without being aware that I am remembering any particular event. Nevertheless, the fact that I can be sure that the imagery derives from my own past perception shows that I am in fact remembering an event (or number of events) whether I am conscious of this or not. To this extent we must allow that Broad is right. The distinction between events and individuals is only within what I regard myself as remembering.

iii. Remembering qualities as qualities

It may be suggested that, when we remember an individual as distinct from remembering an event, what we are actually remembering
is the group of sensible characteristics which for us make up the appearance of the individual in question. And in a sense this is quite correct; we are attributing a continuity and an identity to a group of sensible characteristics. In the same sense as we see a group of such characteristics as an individual we remember a group of them as an individual. But this does not mean that what we 'really see' is not a man at all but just a pattern of colours; as the English language is used what we see, and what we remember, is a particular individual. I can see no objection, however, to saying that I see a man because a pattern of colours is presented to my sight. And, at a particular time when our attention is focussed on the colours themselves, as a painter's might be, it is quite possible to see the colours and shapes as such. I could, for instance, observe the white patch which is an old man's moustache without otherwise noticing the old man at all. And, if I can notice a sensible quality without noticing the individual whose quality it is, then I also remember it as so distinct.

To remember an individual by way of imagery, then, is to remember a group of sensible qualities; but it is to do more than this, it is to remember that group of sensible qualities as that individual. Nor is the memory-image of an individual necessarily derived from any single perceptual occasion; it may have been developed throughout a series of different perceptual experiences with a consequent vagueness of detail. If you think of someone you know well; and then, after you
are satisfied that you have a clear visual memory-image of his appearance, you ask yourself whether he is wearing a waistcoat or not, the chances are that you will be quite unable to say. Yet the image did not seem to be incomplete in the way that a picture which did not include such details would certainly be incomplete. If the man or his photograph were before you instead of just 'before your memory' such vagueness would hardly be possible.

iv. Remembering the unnoticed

This distinction between remembering individuals as such and remembering their sensible qualities, i.e., their sensed appearances, carries with it a corresponding distinction in the ways in which individuals and events can be remembered. In the strict sense we can remember only those events which occurred within our own experience — this seems to be unquestionable. But it is often assumed that experiencing an event means perceiving it to be an event of a particular description, the description we finally decide to give of it, and this assumption is not justified. Suppose, for example, that I ask my son 'Do you remember the coalman delivering today?' and he replies 'No', but later adds 'I do remember hearing a big truck and a lot of crashing downstairs, and shortly after that I saw a very dusty man go past the window, though I did not, at the time, connect the two things'. Are we to say that he does, or does not, remember the event describable as the coal's being delivered? He cannot remember thinking 'That is the coal being delivered' because he never thought it, but
are we concerned with his past thoughts or with a past physical event? From his memories alone it is possible for him to reclassify the event, to think 'That was the coalman' where he earlier failed to think 'That is the coalman'. And since he could have made this reconstruction even if his attention had not been specifically drawn to the question, there seems to be every reason to allow that he is remembering the event itself.

Now, a similar reconstruction is possible at a quite different level: not from events into other events, but from 'remembered appearances' into events and things. I have claimed that we see events and things because we 'see' certain sensible qualities in certain relationships. Sometimes, however, we fail at the time to notice certain of the relationships, though these may subsequently prove to be very important ones. And sometimes we do notice the relationships without noticing what sensible qualities are related by them. For example, in a strange town I may look at the Town Hall clock, observe the time correctly, and yet be quite unable to say whether the hands of the clock were thick or thin, black or white. All I looked for, and all I saw, was the relative positions of the hands. And at other times I have been so foolish as to look up from my work to see the time, return to my work and then realise that I have not noticed the time. I have seen the clock, including the hands and numbers upon it, but I have seen them only as a certain pattern of coloured shapes, and have failed to take note of those particular relationships between
these coloured shapes which indicate the time to me. Yet when the circumstances are such that I cannot look again – perhaps I have just driven past the clock in the car – then sometimes I can read the time from my memory of the clock just as I should have read it from the clock itself. Notice how often an absent-minded clock-looker, when he is asked 'Well, what is it?', will pause a moment as if gathering his thoughts and then give the time quite correctly without looking again. What is happening is that he is remembering a group of sensible qualities which he recalls as related in a certain way – once it occurs to him to pay attention to that relationship.

Now, in most of our perceptions we observe both the 'clock' and the 'time', more or less exactly, and accordingly our memories of an event include both imagery and understanding of that event. But the memories of those events where only the 'time' is observed must necessarily be imageless (unless images are supplied subsequently by imagination). For we could not have a visual image of the clock-face and yet not know what it looked like. And the memories of those events where only the 'clock' is observed must remain a kind of uninterpreted imagery until such time as an interpretation is made from the imagery itself.

v. The augmentation and refinement of memories

These, however, would be extreme cases. Such performances as 'telling the time from a memory-image' are by no means frequent. It is in 'filling out' the memory of an event, supplying and correcting
details, that memories of appearances play their main part. Suppose, for instance, that I have been involved in a road accident. I remember the event - how could I forget it? - but I was too agitated at the time to take in much of what was going on. So that later, when I am questioned, in addition to my propositional memories - that this happened and that I saw so-and-so - I must rely on my memories of the appearances presented to me by the event. I find that things which did not mean anything to me at the time begin to make sense. I realise that the visual image I have is 'of' the tray of a lorry projecting through the front window column of my car, and that the auditory image I have is 'of' the squeal of skidding tyres. Thus I am able to conclude that I must have braked hard and run into the tail of a lorry.

I do not wish to give the impression that I think of images as 'inspectables' which we produce to look at or listen to, like photographs and gramophone records. In a later chapter\(^1\) I hope to show why the function of memory-images I have described here does not entail the existence of any such 'inspectables'.

vi. Placing in time

It is apparent that the relationships between remembered events, remembered individuals and remembered qualities are extremely complicated, and some light may be shed upon these relationships by our considering certain temporal features of events, individuals and qualities.

\(^1\) See chapter VII.
a. **Events.** Although we speak of the 'same thing' occurring on successive occasions, any event is necessarily located at some specific time; anything occurring at a different time is a different event. Nevertheless I can remember an event very clearly and wonder when it happened. Remembering when an event occurred seems to be a quite separate achievement from remembering that event. But the important point here is that it always does make sense to wonder when it occurred.

b. **Individuals.** I have claimed that we can remember an individual either as a participant in some remembered event, or by imagery, which could be either precise imagery arising from one particular perception, or vague imagery arising from a series of perceptions.

The event in which the individual participated occurred at some specific time, and may be remembered as doing so. But, when what we regard ourselves as remembering is the individual and not the event, no specific temporal location seems applicable. And frequently individuals are remembered as participants in, not one event, but a series of events, the whole series giving rise to the memory of the one individual. The essential feature of any memory of an individual is the assumption that there is a single continuous identity. Even in remembering an axeman I saw from a passing car, I make the implicit assumption that he may have gone on to chop other trees after I passed by.

It is possible, however, for an individual to be bounded, as it were, by one single event. The particularly striking pattern once made
for me by a kaleidoscope is, as a particular pattern of coloured chips, an individual entity to which a proper name could be attached, just as military operations and tornadoes are frequently known by proper names nowadays, but it has neither a past nor a future. In this case the individual has no being outside of one single event, and to remember that individual is, therefore, always to remember a particular event which occurred at a particular time.

We now consider the image-memories. The subject of a vague image based upon a series of perceptions can have no fixed temporal location except insofar as the series itself has 'outer limits'. Even with this kind of image we can say 'This is as he appeared between the wars, as distinct from the way he has appeared since the last war'. But in such cases our right to say this may well depend upon the comparison of the image with another image of the same individual on a known occasion, or upon remembered propositions about him which have specific time-reference. It is difficult to see how else we could make such judgments.¹

When an image derives from one particular occurrence in an individual's life, the subject of that image is, ipso-facto, locatable in time. The question 'When was this?' would always be appropriate. It might be argued that a series of visual presentations which were very closely similar could give rise to an image which, so far as its

¹ This question is taken up at length in chapter VIII. See p. 303ff.
intrinsic properties were concerned, could equally well be of any one of those visual presentations or all of them. I might, for instance, always park my car in the same place and have an image of it so parked. But whether I can ascribe a particular date to the subject imaged must then depend upon such minor details as whether the windows are up or down or whether there is a bicycle propped alongside. If such details form an essential part of the image, then what is being remembered is a particular instance which occurred at a particular time; if they do not then what is being remembered is simply the continuous existent, my car.

c. Qualities. I have claimed\(^1\) that we can remember qualities as distinct from remembering the things they are the qualities of. This may suggest that to remember a quality is always to abstract, that the subject of the memory is always a universal. But this would be quite wrong. I could remember the particular blue shade of a certain evening sky simply as a shade of blue, and yet, in fact, my image would have arisen from the particular occasion when I noticed that particular evening sky. If we agree with Hume (and here I cannot disagree with him) that every image must have its origin in an impression or a number of impressions, then it seems possible, in principle at least, to locate in time the particular impression or impressions from which each image derives. If we avoid the term

\(^1\) See p. 65.
'quality', a term suggestive of abstractions and universals, and talk instead of appearance, then it is plainly not only possible but necessary that the subject of the memory should be locatable in time. We can remember an appearance simply as an appearance, and this is, in effect, to remember a group of related sensible qualities. The possibility of our becoming aware, when we remember, of the relationship between these qualities, i.e., seeing them for the first time as some thing, rests upon their being the particular group that they are with the particular relationship that they have. There is an obvious sense, then, in which the appearance in question is an event, the occurrence of a particular group of coloured shapes and/or particular sounds, smells, and so on, in a particular relationship to each other from a given stand-point, and as such it is locatable in time like any other event.¹

b) Memories of events and memories of propositions

i. Do we remember facts?

Such claims as 'The world is the totality of facts' suggest to us that a fact is in some way substantial, the same sort of thing as an event. We use expressions like 'physical fact' when what we really mean is a fact about physical entities. We cannot point to facts, we can only assert them.² The fact itself is neither physical nor mental. Neither can it be true or false; though the assertion

¹ The 'remembered appearance' is in effect what Russell calls a 'perspective'. See 'Our Knowledge of the External World', p.94 ff.
² I can assert that a man is running and draw attention to this fact by pointing at the man. But I am not thereby pointing at the fact that he is running any more than I am now sitting on a fact because it is a fact that there is a chair under me.
of it is ipso-facto true. A fact is simply whatever is asserted by a true proposition. If yesterday it rained and tomorrow it will be fine, then it is now a fact that yesterday, 6th December, it rained and tomorrow, 8th December, it will be fine. And six months hence I shall still be correct in saying 'It is a fact that on 6th December it rained and on 8th December it was fine. Particular facts are timeless, notwithstanding that a specific temporal location may be built into the relationship which constitutes the fact. 'It is a fact that the sun is shining now' means 'It is a fact that the sun is shining at 11 a.m. on 7th December 1961', and this must remain a fact for all time.

Since a fact is timeless it cannot be past, and cannot, therefore, be remembered. We do not need to go into the difficult question of whether all facts are necessarily particular or whether there are universal facts. For if, for example, 'Lying is immoral' is a fact and not simply a directive for the use of English words, then no variation of the occasion of uttering 'Lying is immoral' can effect the truth of the assertion. I feel, therefore, that it would be better not to speak of remembering facts. We may remember the events which gave rise to our knowing these facts, and we may also remember that we knew certain facts at some past time, but this is to remember events, not facts. Our previous knowledge of the facts was itself an event, though it was a separate mental event, not the physical event which gave rise to our knowledge of the fact in
question. And, lest it be objected here that we may not recall any occasion of such awareness, I hasten to point out that, as I have argued above, the temporal location of an event is not an essential part of remembering that event.

ii. Facts and Propositions

But though facts are not the kind of things we can remember, we can and do know them because we remember; and usually what we remember are propositions. By remembering propositions we can remember a great deal about events without actually recalling the events themselves. I may be asked 'Do you recall your first day at school?' and reply 'No, but I remember that it was raining'. It is here beside the point how I came to know that it was raining. We shall assume that it is a fact that it was raining. The point we are concerned with here is that my present knowledge of the fact may simply be my present memory of the proposition 'On my first day at school it rained'. In this case I might have known the fact by other means, I might have remembered the event itself, but our knowledge of facts concerning events we did not experience must depend upon remembered propositions. When I remember that Brutus stabbed Caesar I am not remembering Brutus or Caesar or the event; I am remembering the proposition 'Brutus stabbed Caesar', and possibly, though not necessarily, the occasion on which I learned this fact.

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1 See p. 70 of this chapter.
iii. **Inference from events**

Frequently, when we assert facts, or alleged facts, i.e., when we frame propositions to ourselves or to other people, we are making inferences from what we perceive. I assert 'The Professor is leaving' because I see what I take to be the event, the Professor driving away, though in fact all that I see is his car disappearing. And many different inferences can be made from the same perceptual experience, some forming part of that experience itself, some occurring later from the memory of that experience.

When we perceive we always, to some extent, go beyond 'presented appearances'. I visually sense a patch of reddish colour, but I see a chimney pot, with three dimensions, a hard surface, and a definite function. So that when I remember this experience I can remember both the appearance presented to me and the perceptual judgments I made when that appearance was presented to me. In this way a memory is frequently a mixture of images and propositions, though, as pointed out earlier (the 'clock' and the 'time'), it need not be so.

We not uncommonly change our minds about what we saw, even though the 'presented appearance' remains the same. What we took to be a menacing figure we later see as merely a bush at the road side. And to change our minds in this way it is not essential that we have another look at the object. The change may be made 'from memory'. Suppose, for example, that I remember a police patrolman waiting at the side of the road to pounce on speeding motorists. But, even in my
memory of him, there is something stiff about this policeman. And when, a little further on, I see another exactly similar police patrolman and, looking closer, I see that it is only a plywood dummy put out by the authorities to frighten motorists into obeying the law, I realise that my earlier perceptual judgment was wrong - the first 'policeman' was also only a dummy. And since I was able to make this correction on the strength of the memory I had of my earlier perceptual experience, I might have made it even if I had never encountered the second dummy. The point I am making is that the remembered propositions are separable from the remembered event. I can still remember the proposition 'There is a policeman' but I now realise that it was a conclusion to which I 'jumped', and, as it turned out, a wrong conclusion. But it is possible for me to realise this only because something else, the appearance actually presented to me, is separately and correctly remembered. The fact that the second 'policeman' was a dummy does not, of itself, show that the first was a dummy also.

iv. The relationship of proposition to event

If my memory of an event were wholly dependent upon the memories of propositions I formed at the time of witnessing that event, then nothing in my own memory of that event could prompt me to correct or modify those propositions. Therefore we must be careful to distinguish between propositions which are themselves remembered and propositions made subsequently about what is remembered, bearing in mind that the latter may themselves be remembered as propositions on a subsequent
occasion. If yesterday afternoon I saw Jones shake his fist menacingly at Jenkins, then the event I remember is simply Jones shaking his fist at Jenkins — whether I saw it as a threat or as a piece of playacting. I may remember the proposition (and report the event accordingly) either that Jones threatened Jenkins or that Jones joked with Jenkins. At least one of these propositions would be false, but, as we have just seen, remembering a false proposition which reports, or claims to report, an event is not necessarily mis—remembering that event. The 'lesser claim' — 'Jones shook his fist at Jenkins' — is still, as it were, included in the remembered proposition, and is still correct.

But here we strike a real difficulty. If we say that remembering an event just is having an image — remembering an uninterpreted sensory intake — and all other, propositional, memory is in some way incidental, not memory of the event itself, then we must explain how anything wholly uninterpreted could constitute the memory of an event for us. The only alternative is to allow that some proposition, some inference, is an essential part of the memory of the event. And then the problem is: where can we draw the line? For it might well be objected at this point: why stop at whether or not the fist-shaking was a threat? That what Jones shook was his fist is itself an assumption I made from my observation of certain coloured shapes in a certain relationship. Does it not follow that no error, however gross, in the reporting of an event can ever prove that the event itself is not correctly remembered?

Once we separate the remembering of propositions from the remembering
of events which they purport to be about, we can *always* attribute the error to the proposition. Logically no amount of error in reporting a past event can prove that the actual memory of that event is inaccurate.¹

In practice, however, there are perfectly adequate ways of deciding in any given case the point at which we must stand firm. For, though I may have the clearest possible memory of Jones shaking his fist at Jenkins, unless this is augmented by some additional knowledge of, say, a long standing dispute between them, it is still reasonable for me to say 'Perhaps he was not really angry, only pretending'. Whereas, only if my memory were very vague indeed – perhaps a memory of something witnessed in the half-light – would it be reasonable to say 'Perhaps it was not his fist at all, it only looked like it'.

If it is allowed, as surely it must be, that a physical event always involves physical things, not qualities or appearances, then those who insist on regarding the naming and classifying of all appearances as inferences are driven to also allow that no event can be witnessed in the full sense of that word until *some* inference has been made. I do not wish to suggest that there are two different kinds of inference, nor yet two rigid 'levels of inference'; clearly there are not. We could come to recognise anger behaviour before being able to recognise fists. What I do suggest is that we are all aware

¹ Compare the 'sceptic's argument' in the first paragraph of chapter I.
of a difference, on any given occasion, between the things and events we 'see straight off', even though we realise that logically we could be mistaken in these, and the things and events we infer from those we 'see straight off'. Both may be framed in propositions which, when later remembered, may be regarded by us as belonging to our memory of the event. But, whilst we are at liberty to abandon the inferences without also abandoning our claims to remember the event, we cannot so abandon the initial assumptions from which those inferences were made. For instance, in one case I could say 'Yes, I do remember him shaking his fist, but I realise now that it was only in fun'. But in the other case I would have to say 'I thought I remembered him shaking his fist, but apparently he did not do so, and so I must have imagined it'.

v. Propositions and sentences

It is important, at this point, to make it clear that remembering a proposition is not the same thing as remembering a sentence. A sentence which could be used to express a proposition might in fact be used to express nothing at all. Children often learn and remember poems without having the remotest idea what they are about; my daughter would recite poems in French (which she certainly did not understand) when she was five years old. And it may well be that even in later life, in the case of much of the remembering that is manifested only in the ability to make appropriate verbal responses, what is being remembered is neither the event itself, nor a proposition made about it, but simply a sentence, a group of words.
On the other hand the same proposition can be remembered in a variety of sentences. 'My father's brother gave me the price of a bicycle on my tenth birthday' and 'My Uncle Jim gave me five pounds the day I turned ten years old' may well express exactly the same proposition, that is, they may well refer to the same remembered event and report that event quite correctly - though, clearly, they could refer to two quite separate events. We shall consider later the question whether propositions are necessarily in language, but whether they are or not, they are certainly not necessarily in any particular phrasing of language. Those European-born Australians who have forgotten how to use their native tongues have not thereby forgotten the propositions they formulated in those tongues - but now they remember them in English.

vi. What is being remembered?

It is not easy to decide, however, on every occasion, what it is we are remembering: the events themselves, propositions about those events, or sentences previously used to express those propositions. I now remember, together with appropriate images, an event I once witnessed, a lion-taming act. Suppose I utter the proposition 'One lion jumped over the trainer's back whilst the other remained on the stool'. How is it possible for me to know whether this is a judgment I am making now based upon my memory-image, or a memory

1 See p.88 of this chapter.
I am having now of a judgment I made at the time of the event? We might be tempted to say that if the details described are actually being imaged the former is the case, and if they are not the latter is the case. But this will not do. There is no reason why I should not remember correctly both the propositions I formed and the appearance presented to me. Furthermore, if my imagination is fertile and I am a 'good visualizer', then the memory of the proposition may well prompt me to form an image of the lion jumping over the trainer even though I do not have an actual memory-image of the event.

And when we recite to ourselves 'Thirty days hath September...' are we remembering a sentence or a proposition or both? It is such problems as these which make introspection so suspect as a means of investigating memory. Yet, if we are not satisfied with a purely behaviourist account, it is the only means we have, or ever can have. Even though introspection may not show us on every occasion whether what we are remembering is an event or a proposition or a sentence, or all of these, it can and does show us that these are all things we can remember, and that the remembering of each of them is in principle distinguishable.

2. **Classification by modes of remembering**

a) **Images, thoughts and words**

We have considered what it is that we remember; we must now consider how it is that we remember it. If I say that I am remembering the prizegiving and I am asked what form my memory of it takes, I may reply that I am having images of it, or that I am 'telling myself
about it', or simply that I am thinking about it. These seem to be the three possible ways of remembering an event: in imagery, in words, or in concepts. But this is altogether too tidy. Apart from the fact that remembering an event will most probably involve a combination of all three 'modes', the term 'words', as we have seen, can refer either to propositions or to sentences; and it may be felt that the term 'concepts' refers to either words or images, rather than that it is an alternative 'mode' to them. We must, therefore, examine the relationships between these 'alternative modes' more closely.

i. Words as images

We have decided that when we remember in words we may be remembering propositions or we may simply be remembering particular expressions.

If what we remember is the proposition — as when I remember the proposition that my grandfather had white whiskers — it seems that we are remembering a certain factual relationship perceived in the past, but now free, as it were, of the particular perceptual experience in which our knowledge of it originated. The memory that my grandfather had white whiskers, though quite correct, does not of itself enable me to draw a picture of those whiskers. What we are remembering is simply a judgment we once made; and we are remembering it in words, though not necessarily the same words as we employed to make the original judgment.
But if we are not remembering propositions as such, but forming propositions about what we remember, then although the remembering is conducted in words, there must be some kind of occurrent memory for those words to refer to (or be stimulated by); and since this occurrent memory is not of propositions, the only remaining candidates seem to be images or imageless, wordless concepts. Anyone who argues that the words refer to, or are stimulated by, simply the remembered physical event itself, must explain how it is that sometimes what I saw as A I subsequently remember as B,¹ how it is possible for me to revise or modify assertions made from memory without the intervention of any 'additional evidence'.

When what we remember is simply the words themselves, at least one of two things must be happening. Either we are simply having images of words, or we are making appropriate physical responses to a given stimulus. The second possibility I shall consider shortly.² Here I shall try only to substantiate the claim that remembering a sentence as such, if it is anything more than a physiological response to a stimulus, must be in imagery.

Any symbol must have some sensible characteristics of its own. To function as a symbol it has to be something visible or audible or otherwise experiencable through the senses. Thus to remember symbols,

¹ This question is taken up at length in chapter IV.
² See p. 91ff.
as distinct from remembering their significance, is to remember sights, sounds, bodily feelings and so forth. So to remember words is either to have visual or auditory or kinaesthetic images, or else to remember propositions about the words themselves. This last is possible. We could, for instance, remember that the word 'place' begins with the same sound as the word 'please' and ends with the same sound as the word 'race'. There is little doubt that linguists often do remember words in this way, but such memories can be of use to them only if they do have some memory-images of words, the words they are using for comparison. Unless, of course, they always spoke these words out loud to themselves. But we could not reasonably suggest that a child reciting a poem or a man giving an immediate verbal response to a question is remembering words in this way. It is true that often, having once uttered words, we are immediately aware of their usual meanings, as when a child 'parrots' the answer to a question asked him, and then realises what the words he has used actually mean. But in this case the words, as such, have already been remembered. We understand them in the same way as we would have done if they had been uttered by somebody else.

ii. Images and concepts

There is a danger that such words as 'concept', 'thought' and 'idea' came to mean whatever we want them to mean. Hume used the word 'idea' as though it were synonymous with 'image', but he allowed it to 'spread' so as to take in relational properties which are clearly not
imageable in the ordinary sense. In this way he was able to sidestep the problem of 'something in the mind which was not previously in the senses'. Others have maintained that to have a concept is simply to be able to use the concept word properly. Abstract ideas have been a constant source of embarrassment to philosophers who, whilst paying lip-service to Berkeley's dictum that any idea must be the idea of something specific, have been uncomfortably aware that we just do know what 'above' and 'after' and 'greater than' mean in a way that is something more than just being able to put them in the right places in sentences, when there is no instance of them before us, and without the necessity of specifically remembering any such instance.

Once it is allowed that it is possible to have a concept without also having an occurrent image, the question arises: Are images just one kind of concept; or is remembering and imagin ing in images an alternative to remembering and imagining in concepts?

Let us take the ability to recognise instances as coming under a particular concept, not as a definition, but simply as a test, of the possession of the concept. Then, since by virtue of having an image of a wombat I can recognise a wombat when I visit the zoo, the possession of an image does seem to meet the test for the possession of a concept. But the image itself is not the concept — for I can recognise a wombat by virtue of the image I have only if I can also frame the proposition about it 'This is an image of a wombat'. We might say then that to have an image and identify it as the image of something is to have a concept of that thing.
But it would not follow that the possession of a concept must always involve the identification of an image. For we also have concepts of relationships - above, below, greater and so on - but we cannot have images which could be identified as of these, only images which exemplify them, provided we already have the concepts. I can have an image of a red patch above a blue patch, but not an image of aboveness. Aboveness is not even an ingredient of the image in the way that the red and blue patches may be said to be.

Further, to possess a concept is at least to be able to recognise instances of it. Even if we speak of the concept of a particular individual we can do so only because we treat the individual as a continuous existent and assert that various manifestations at different times are instances of a single concept. Thus a concept must always extend beyond any particular instance, involving thereby at least one relationship, similarity or continuity, which is itself not even exemplified by the image. That is why the judgment 'This is an image of a wombat' is required to provide a concept (or establish the existence of the concept) where there is already an image. Thus, whereas an image may exemplify a concept, and the existence of an image may be a prerequisite for a certain kind of concept, 1 an image, as such is neither an alternative to, nor a kind of, concept. Simply having an image is not a cognitive act.

1 E.g. particular shades of colour. This question is taken up in chapter VII.
iii. Remembering without words or images

We must now consider the possibility of remembering without either imagery or language, a possibility which has often been denied by members of both Behaviourist and Empiricist schools. I suggest that we might in fact be doing this in any of three cases: when we are remembering 'by doing', as when my remembering the way home is manifested simply in my going home; when we recognise a presented instance without naming it to ourselves, as when I return a greeting though I am deep in conversation; and when we classify instances in memory, i.e., remember similarities, without the help of either names of images.

To my mind the three cases are so strongly connected that to accept one of them is to be committed to accepting them at all. Behaviourists must accept the first, and most Empiricists would, I think, accept the second. This being so, I shall try to show that they have no justification for rejecting the third.

a. Remembering by doing. When I simply 'go straight home' this is prima-facie evidence that I remember the way, but it is most unlikely that I have any images of the route, re-presenting to me previous journeys home, or that I formulate propositions to myself about what I am doing. Nevertheless going straight home is not a wholly automatic performance; I could not do it blindfolded without the aid of images and/or remembered propositions. It is essential at least that I recognise the route I am following. 'Remembering by doing' thus seems to reduce to recognising, that is, to one special case of our second possibility, recognising presented instances.
b. Recognition of particulars and recognition of kinds. Firstly I
would make the point that it is immaterial to our present argument
whether the recognition is of kinds or of individuals. Recognition
always is, or involves, the noting of a similarity. When the similarity
is sufficiently great and we are also prepared to assume spatio-temporal
continuity then we speak of 'identity'; but this spatio-temporal
continuity is always assumed, not observed, or there could be no ques-
tion of recognition. The streets I walk through on my way home are
the same streets, but they are the same streets at different times,
and the appearances they present are unlikely to be exactly the same
on each occasion. Thus the recognition of individuals is simply the
recognition of kinds with the additional assumption of continuity, and
it is in no essential way different from that employed by a craftsman,
a book-binder say, in plying his craft. He also remembers what to do
without the aid of words or images, though the materials he works with
are certainly not numerically the same on different occasions, nor
are they always qualitatively the same. Unless we are prepared to say
that his skill is only the exercise of a physiologically conditioned
reflex, we seem obliged to say either that he must be having images or
forming propositions or else that he does recognise kinds, register
the similarities of past and present instances, without the aid of
words or images. 1

1 This is not to discount the possibility that his action could be purely automatic. See also chapter V, p.176, and chapter VIII, p.235.
c. Remembering concepts. If it is possible to recognise instances of a concept without the aid of language, and without images for comparison, then, insofar as any classification presupposes the comparison of present and absent instances, we must have the concept in order to recognise the instance. The onus is upon those who deny the existence of unnamed concepts to show how classification is possible without comparison. I find it difficult to take seriously the current view that thinking just is using language. The sponsors of this view have never really faced up to the question 'How could we ever come to relate concept words to experienced instances unless we already had the concepts which these words signify?'. Talk about words and concepts evolving 'hand in hand' is more poetic than informative. Nor yet have they explained how it is that dumb animals (and deaf and dumb people) appear to think and remember in the normal sense of those terms.

If it is possible to have concepts without names for them, then there is no reason why we should not remember having such nameless concepts, and also remember in nameless concepts. The refusal to admit, and take account of, wordless thinking and remembering is, I believe, one of the greatest sources of confusion in the consideration of memory. All of us are sometimes unable to express ourselves; we fumble for words when we 'know very well what it is we want to say'. How could we know this unless we were already in possession of the concept we seek to name? Even the most fluent language users occasionally find
that their thoughts have got ahead of their command of language. We would not need the aid of a vocabulary to feel surprise at the sight of a man walking on the ceiling — but we would need a concept of human behaviour.

b) Public and private remembering

i. Overt performances

There are occasions when I have memories which I can, if I wish, 'keep to myself', and there seem also to be occasions when other people could point out to me that I am remembering something though I might not myself have realised this fact. In the first case I may avow 'I remember —' because I feel myself competent to relate some event, describe some past situation or thing, or perform some task; in the second case I may be told that I am remembering because I am in fact relating some event, describing some past situation or thing, or performing some task, in a way that indicates that I must be remembering.

But to say that I must be remembering is to suggest that my overt performance is really a clue to something else, to the presence of some kind of mental act, and that it is the occurrence of this act which entitles me to say 'I remember'. But I do not always say, or even think, 'I remember'; this mental act may be inferred, but it is by no means always experienced. Why then should an onlooker say 'You must be remembering because you are performing learned tasks or relating past experiences'? If it is assumed that what is going on
is an exercise of memory, then, since all that is going on is there for him to see, is he not entitled to say 'This (your present performance or speech) is your remembering'? Now it should be clear from my earlier arguments that I do not hold the extreme view that all remembering either is public or could be public, in the sense that its privacy is the result only of our talking to ourselves instead of out loud. But though remembering can be private, it does not follow that all remembering must be private. If my only reason for saying 'I remember Jones' were the fact that I found myself describing him, or my only reason for saying that I remember how to navigate were the fact that I found myself using a sextant efficiently, then there would be at least a prima-facie case for holding that remembering need not be private, that the onlooker is sometimes entitled to attest to my memory at the same time, and by the same authority, as I am myself.

ii. Habit and memory

There is a tendency to write off a great deal of what I have called 'public remembering' as mere habit, or habit-memory. We come in time to give certain overt performances seemingly quite automatically. In general, we do not want to say that we remember how to walk, and we do want to say that we remember how to cycle. Yet the child who 'lives on a bicycle' is probably no more conscious of his actions when he is cycling than when he is walking. The rationale for the

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In chapter V, I give reasons for denying this possibility.
distinction seems to rest only in the fact that to the question 'Can you cycle?', but not to the question 'Can you walk?', it seems reasonable to reply 'I used to be able to once - but now I may not remember how to'. But a man who has been laid up in hospital for a year could make this reply to the question about walking. It may be dangerous, therefore, to attribute any performance which might be called 'skilled' to 'pure habit'.

At the same time, what we are here calling habit may well be a factor in nearly all our performances. Even in a more complicated case like navigation, gripping the sextant correctly and opening the Nautical Almanac at exactly the right page are 'habitual' actions. And the vocal cords, no less than the hands, are susceptible to 'habit'. The child reciting a nursery rhyme may be going through the same kind of performance in this sense as the habitual cyclist. In the case of these vocal performances the distinction I have made between remembering propositions and remembering sentences is plainly important. But we cannot simply equate the former with memory-knowledge and the latter with habit. As we have seen, remembering sentences is, in many cases, simply having images. Whereas when we remember propositions it could be held that we are remembering past mental events, the fact that our reporting of an event is always in propositions does not prove that there is any additional mental process going on. The ability to use words meaningfully may be itself 'habitual'.
iii. Is habit ever a cause?

The fundamental objection to the whole notion of 'habit-memory' is the extreme slipperiness of the term 'habit'. There is a constant temptation to equate 'habit' with 'automatic response' whilst still using such phrases as 'he was in the habit of choosing his clothes very carefully' which suggest that habit is simply characteristic behaviour, the often repeated.

If I were to part my hair on opposite sides on alternate days, then in the course of a year I should have parted it one hundred and eighty-two times on the left side. But that I am in the habit of parting my hair on the left side is exactly what we would not say under these circumstances. We would say that I am in the habit of alternating my parting. The assertion that an act is habitual is more often taken to report the way it is performed than the number of times it is performed. Yet we must be careful not to allow 'habitual' to become identified with 'automatic' or 'easy'. There is something very unsatisfactory about the way that Broad simply identifies habit-memory with ease of remembering. He says: 'Repetition is not essential, though it is helpful, for the establishment of a habit-memory-power. A man, like Lord Macaulay, with a very quick and retentive verbal memory, may be able to repeat sentences or sets of nonsense syllables which he has met with only once'.

Surely if this man's memory of

\[1 \text{ 'The Mind and Its Place in Nature', p.225.}\]
these sentences is not, in the first place, dependent upon repetition, then there is no reason why it should be classed as a 'habit-memory-power' however often it may be repeated.

The same problems apply to performances which are not overt, imaging for example. The fact that I now have an image of my father as I saw him eighteen months ago does not entail that I have had a similar image at any time during the intervening period; nor need we suppose that the image in question would be any different if I had. Yet if I had the same image regularly we might well say that I am in the habit of having it. Now, when I have a certain image habitually, is the latest occurrence of it causally dependent in some way upon the original perceptual experience, or upon the previous occurrence of it, or upon the whole series of occurrences of it to date? I do not see what grounds we could possibly have for answering this question one way or another. I am an habitual smoker in that I smoke cigarettes at very short intervals, and it seems reasonable to suppose that the fact that I have done so for many years will increase the likelihood of my continuing to do so. Similarly I may assume that my having a series of images of a particular appearance of my father may make it more likely that I shall have that image again. But surely this only means that I have reason to believe that whatever it is that prompts me to have that image is a persistent factor, just as whatever it is that prompts me to smoke is presumably a persistent factor. To the question 'Why do you smoke?' the answer 'Because it is a habit' is just one way of saying
'I don't know'; an habitual smoker is simply one who smokes often and regularly. Thus 'I smoke because it is a habit' reduces to 'I smoke because I smoke'.

To say that something is done from habit is not wholly uninformative in certain contexts. We may be saying in effect 'There is no special or peculiar reason in this case - it is just what I always do'. But any attempt to give a causal explanation in terms of habit is bound to be circular. I could say that it is my habit to have a certain image on receiving a stimulus of a certain kind. But the cause of the image is the stimulus, not the habit.

What I have said of imaging seems to be equally true of remembering in general. I may remember the same event in the same way any number of times, so that I can fairly be said to be in the habit of remembering that event. But this seems to have no effect upon the way I remember it. We are particularly prone to think of many of our overt skilled performances as 'habit-memories' simply because we assume them to be the kind of automatic responses which only arise out of long repetition. But if the assumption is correct here, then the proper way to explain them is in terms, not of habits, but of motor-responses to physiological stimuli. And this raises the question whether they should be regarded as memories. It is much safer, therefore, to avoid the term 'habit-memory' altogether, and concentrate on the question whether, and to what extent, overt skilled performances are mere motor-responses, physiological rather than intelligent performances.
We are then faced with such questions as whether, when we 'remember how to swim' by actually swimming, as opposed, say, to rehearsing the movements on land, we are in fact remembering at all. We may be simply allowing our bodies to react to a physical stimulus. But this question we must defer to a later chapter.¹

c) Recall and recognition

1. Remembering in presence and remembering in absence

We shall now consider the distinction between recognition and recall, a distinction which H.H. Price has treated as fundamental to the whole analysis of memory.² When I recall an individual or an event, that individual or event was experienced by me at some earlier time, and its only representative, as it were, in the present experience is my memory of it. When I recognise something, that something is actually present to me; so that I cannot truly be said to be remembering it, for I am actually experiencing it. Therefore what I remember must be something about it. Thus there is a sense in which to recognise is always to classify.

When I recognise a No.18 bus I am classifying what is before me as one of those buses which take such and such a route, and when I recognise my dog I am classifying what is before me as an episode, if I may so put it, in the life of a particular creature. But I do not generally

¹ Chapter V.
² See 'Thinking and Experience' chapters II and III.
seem to be remembering specifically any other members of the class of No.18 buses or other episodes in my dog's life. At most I seem to be remembering that there were such other buses and episodes.

ii. Recognition as 'public remembering'

I might think to myself 'Here is the No.18 bus', but on the other hand I might simply board the bus 'without thinking at all'. And when I reach out to take a book from the shelf I do not always seem to be consciously selecting the one I want; sometimes my hand just 'goes out to it'. Yet, in some sense, I must have associated the bus with other similarly routed buses, the book with other uses of it - otherwise why do I not constantly board wrong buses and select wrong books? 'The right bus', we might say, simply means 'the one that goes the same way as that one went', 'the right book' simply means 'the one that I used last time'. I grant that I do not go through life saying to myself such things as 'There is my wife; these are my feet; those are the stairs; here is the bannister', each utterance being accompanied by a set of memories of former experiences. I simply grasp the bannister and run downstairs to where my wife is waiting. Yet I can do this only because I do, in some way, recognise all these things for what they are - and know, therefore, what to expect of them. So that although my behaviour may be the only indication, even to myself, that I am recognising things, there would be something misleading about saying that the recognition is identical with the behaviour. There is still a difference between doing things intentionally and simply doing them by chance.
iii. Kinds of recognition

There are, of course, different kinds of recognition, but it is important to remember that the differences are only of what I have called the 'primary' kind. The main distinction is that between what is 'consciously known' and what is merely 'accepted in passing'. Recognition is recognition always by virtue of the same feature: the acceptance of a presented instance as a member of some particular class (which may be the class of appearances of a particular individual). We cannot, therefore make 'secondary distinctions' in how we recognise, only in what we recognise on different occasions.

To recognise a particular person, place or thing is to accept what is presented as a manifestation of, or phase in, a particular continuous identity. Usually it is to identify the present experience with a series of past experiences. For me to recognise my desk is for me to accept it as the same desk I have used on a number of previous occasions, though these previous occasions need not be separately specified in my recognition. It is sometimes claimed that we can recognise individuals we have never seen before. For example, I might say 'I recognised you immediately from your father's description' or 'I recognised the boat from the picture in the brochure'. But what may actually be recognised in such cases is a particular shape or a particular 'look' which has been seen, or imagined, before. Where I simply accept something is the thing which has been described to me, this is not recognition of that thing in any ordinary sense.
Sometimes what we recognise is simply a particular quality in a thing. When I look at a passing car and see that it is blue I am recognising the colour of that car. Probably I do not recognise the car itself - I may have never seen it before - but later I can describe the car only because I did recognise certain of its qualities. We do not generally speak of recognising qualities, only of noticing them. Yet we must do more than notice them - we must notice what they are, i.e., classify them (and generally, though not necessarily, name them); and this is recognition. In ordinary speech we are inclined to say such things as 'I noticed that the car was blue - and recognised the shade as arctic blue'. But this is only because being arctic blue seems to be the sort of thing we need to recognise (recognition having somehow a suggestion of deliberation about it), whilst being blue does not; it is too familiar to us.

Clearly there is no fixed 'line of distinction' between qualities we recognise and qualities we simply notice. The principle difference in our use of the two terms is that 'notice' does not necessarily imply that the object has been seen before. Nevertheless, as soon as we name the object noticed, there is an implied assumption that at least some of its characteristics are being recognised.

Recognition need not be of particular objects or qualities. I can recognise the approaching creature as my dog or simply as a dog, and in both cases I am noting similarities; in the one case between what I regard as episodes in the history of a single individual, in the other
case between what I regard as a series of different individuals. It might be felt that recognising my dog is always a more specific recognition – that it must already be recognised as a dog before it can be specified as my dog. But this is really not so. An infant can often recognise his own dog before he even knows of the existence of other dogs.

We also can, and often do, recognise the rules which govern our behaviour, though simply to obey such rules it not, of itself, to recognise them; there seems no reason to believe that brutes ever reflect upon the rules according to which they behave. It is when we wish to give a causal explanation of any event that we must recognise, not only the cause and the effect, but also the cause/effect sequence. My claim that the china cup smashed because it fell on the stone floor rests upon my recognition of the china cup, the stone floor, and also the usual effect upon china cups of being dropped on stone floors.

As I claimed earlier,1 'remembering by doing' involves recognition. But, in this case, not only do we have to recognise individuals, rules, qualities and kinds, we need also to recognise our performances as those leading to certain desired ends. Here also, we are recognising a rule, but it is a rule which involves our own intentional behaviour. We must, in the popular phrase, know what we are doing.

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1 See p. 88 of this chapter.
iv. Can there be recognition in absence?

I said earlier that the essential difference between recall and recognition is that the subject recalled belongs to some former time, whilst the subject recognised is actually present to us. But, although the thing we recognise is present to us, the recognition must refer always beyond the present experience. As I put it in reference to the recognition of qualities, we must notice what it is. To recognise is to note a similarity, so that, although what I recognise is the thing now before me, my recognising it is my noting of its similarity to other things not now before me. The question arises, therefore, 'How does seeing an object and judging "That is my dog" differ from remembering an object and judging "That was my dog"?'. Do I recognise what is 'before my mind' in the same way as I recognise what is before my eyes?

We can, if we wish, simply decide that the term 'recognition' shall stand for only one type of classification: the classification of present events, things, qualities and relations, and that any other use of the term is metaphorical. Such a decision is in any case wise in that it avoids possible misunderstandings. But this does not answer the questions, it simply avoids them. The real point at issue is whether it makes sense at all to talk of recognising objects 'before the mind'.

Certainly my present state of mind is something I am now experiencing and can, therefore, recognise in the ordinary sense – assuming
that it is classifiable and that I have experienced similar states of mind before. I can, for instance, usually recognise misery when I experience it. And it might be argued that my state of mind when I am remembering an event includes the event remembered. But the belief which I hold about some thing does not include that thing in any ordinary sense. Clem Atlee is not included in my belief that he is a great statesman in the way that he was included in the British War Cabinet, nor yet in the way that he is included in the denotation of 'British Prime Ministers'. And if I remember Clem Atlee my memory does not include him. It is of him or about him, and this is quite different.

The sense in which, and the extent to which, we may be recognising events and individuals when we are remembering them seem to depend upon two questions: whether the event actually remembered is the physical event which occurred or the mental event which was our perception of it, a question we shall take up in the next chapter, and whether memory-images are in some sense 'before us' in a way that permits us to scrutinise, and recognise or fail to recognise, them. This question we shall deal with in chapter VII.
Chapter IV

MEMORIES AND MEMORY-CLAIMS

1. The distinction between remembering and claiming to remember

a) The public use of 'memory'

We have seen that it is quite possible to have and to express knowledge of a past event which is not dependent upon any actual memory of the event in question. I now want to make the point that, even when the knowledge is dependent upon an actual memory of the event, the claim to that knowledge, the proposition purporting to relate that event, is distinguishable from the memory by virtue of which I make that claim. My memory-claim 'I had fish for lunch' may be made because of certain images I now have of my lunch and/or my remembering certain propositions such as 'This is good fish', and clearly it would be quite possible for us to have those images and to remember those propositions without, so to speak, advancing from them to this particular memory-claim, 'I had fish for lunch'. Nevertheless, as Wittgenstein has pointed out, a word in a public language must have a public meaning, and the established usage of the words 'memory' and 'remember' arises therefore from our memory-claims rather than from any private states or happenings in our minds.

1 'Investigations', Pt.1, para.242ff, p.88e. See also para.257ff, p.92e. But note that I am not committed to, nor do I in fact support, Wittgenstein's general view that all languages are necessarily public.
Thus, the public use of the words 'memory' and 'remembering' must rest upon the memory-claims we make rather than upon what we might call private remembering. By 'private' here I mean essentially private in the sense of being below the level of communication, not simply in fact not communicated; my assertion about a past occurrence is as much a memory-claim if it is made to myself as if it is made out loud to an audience. It is by memory-claims that we often plan our conduct and explain our conduct to ourselves. Suppose that I enter a bar and, recognising a man I dislike, I avoid meeting him. My action may be no more considered than my avoiding walking into the gatepost as I leave my house. But if I say to myself 'That chap cornered me last week and bored me stiff' then I am making a definite memory-claim. It could have been made to anybody and would have conveyed the same information.

b) What does a memory-claim refer to?

Does my memory-claim refer to a present mental state, a past mental state, a past public event, or a combination of all of these - my present mental state as related to past events? Before we answer 'all of these' it as well to consider that, unless I am deliberately introspecting for the purpose of examining my own 'remembering procedure', there seems to be no reason whatever why I should make a claim about anything but the past physical event itself. This is what interests either myself or my listener if there be one. Neither my listener nor myself need be concerned about my mental states in order to understand the claim.
Certainly if I were to say to a friend 'There was a riot here last week' he might be interested to know whether I in fact remembered this event or had simply been told about it. To this extent 'I remember the riot here last week' gives him more information than does 'There was a riot here last week'. But it is information not directly connected with the actual event — the first statement does not usually give me (the speaker) any information that the second does not. It may be protested here that neither assertion can give me any information since I am the one who is making it. But in making the claim I may be, so to speak, drawing together a group of otherwise disconnected recollections, not in order to draw a conclusion — I most probably drew the conclusion when I witnessed the event — but to provide premises from which to draw further conclusions. And for this purpose the addition of 'I remember' is quite superfluous. We can fairly conclude, then, that memory-claims refer, in normal cases, to the event remembered, not to the particular mental state which is the remembering of it. And since it is our memory-claims that are of public interest, the reliability of our memories must be judged by the accuracy with which our memory-claims report past events.

2. The accuracy of memories and memory-claims

a) The relationship between memory and claim

I have maintained that a memory-claim is a report about a past event, dependent upon a present mental event, or mental state. But
what is this relationship of dependence? It clearly cannot be logical dependence since there is no reason why a true memory-claim should not occur without any 'act of remembering' at all, so long as we regard the memory-claims simply as a proposition. It must, therefore, be causal dependence. But even here we can say only that the memory is a causally necessary condition of the memory-claim; it is not both necessary and sufficient since the memory-claim may not be made at all, or it may be made wrongly. Nevertheless, when a true memory-claim is made there are causal (though not logical) grounds for supposing that there exists a memory or a group of memories which is itself in some sense 'correct'. We must, therefore, consider what sense of 'correct' is applicable to the actual memories.

It would be a gross mistake to assume that, because my memory-claim refers directly to a past event, my present mental state is not relevant to it. It is according to historical facts that a memory-claim is finally accepted or rejected, but it is by virtue of a present mental state that it is made at all. My present memory-claim that the film I saw was about Don Quixote refers to that film, not to the images and propositions now forming in my mind. Yet I do in fact make that claim only because those images and propositions are now in my mind. A remembered proposition is something quite distinct from any particular form of words which might express it. And an image cannot be expressed in words, only at best described by
them. Thus a memory-claim must always be, in a sense, an interpretation of a memory.

It would therefore be misleading, if not improper, to speak of the memories themselves as true or false. It can only be 'after interpretation' that truth or falsity applies. Of the memories themselves all we can say is that they do or do not 'recapture' or 'represent to us' the past event in a way that should lead to our making true memory-claims. Thus the accuracy of a memory-claim is causally dependent upon the extent to which it is in fact justified by the actual memory, the extent to which this particular memory or group of memories is adequate grounds for the making of this particular memory-claim.

ii. 'Adequate' and 'complete'

No memory (nor anything else) can be adequate in itself. It must be adequate for some purpose. Yet it may be felt that a memory can be complete in itself; we may feel that no detail can possibly be missing. My memory image of some man may seem to me to be every bit as detailed as the actual vision of that man; and the memory of some brief experience may seem to recapture every moment and every aspect of that experience. It is beside the point that the memory-image is without background and the experience as remembered is totally out of context; within very small limits a memory may seem to be complete in this sense. Yet its seeming to be complete is a matter of our not being conscious of any deficiencies. Whether any memory,
however small its scope, is in fact complete is very difficult, if not impossible, to decide. Furlong draws an analogy with the exact focussing of a telescope and says¹ 'But do we ever reach a term in the series [of increasingly detailed memories] that will correspond to the clearly focussed object...? I do not think we do. Will anyone claim that he has ever had a memory which he could not con-
ceive of being more vivid and realistic? I do not think we do. Will anyone claim that he has ever had a memory which he could not con-
ceive of being more vivid and realistic? I do not think we do. Will anyone claim that he has ever had a memory which he could not con-
ceive of being more vivid and realistic? I do not think we do. Will anyone claim that he has ever had a memory which he could not con-

¹ 'A Study in Memory', p.25.
the postman is complaining about a most detailed memory of my dog may prove inadequate. The adequacy of memory is something quite distinct from its completeness, its degree of detail.

This does not mean, however, that it is indifferent to the degree of detail. The memory, however vague it may be as compared with some other memory of the same event, must at least be detailed and precise enough to support the memory-claim made.

iv. Vague memories and faint memories

We must be careful not to confuse what I am calling a vague memory with what might be called a faint memory. A memory, like a picture or a description, is more or less precise, less or more vague, according to the extent that it includes or lacks detail. An outline sketch of a building is more vague than a detailed sketch or a photograph of the same building—though it may serve as well, or even better, to identify the building. An outline sketch of the Tower of Pisa, for instance, may direct our attention immediately to those features by which we have come to recognise it, whilst the detail included in a photograph may draw our attention away from them. In the same way a wealth of detail in the memory of an event may distract our attention from the very feature of the event with which we are most concerned. In his book 'Defeat Into Victory' Field Marshall Sir William Slim relates how, by having in his mind the sketchiest possible map of the area under his command, he was able to conduct his campaign in Burma unfettered by trifling
detail and to keep his appraisal of the situation constantly in perspective.

It is important to note that vagueness (which is in any case a matter of degree) is not essentially correlated with faintness. The figure in a brightly lit room is more vague seen through frosted glass than seen through clear glass, but it is not necessarily more faint. In the case of clear and faint memories the analogy which naturally springs to mind is with things seen in good and bad lights, but we must be careful not to take this too literally. We do not see memories in general though we do sometimes talk of seeing memory-images. It may be better, to describe faint memories as those which are elusive in the sense that we cannot fix them. They seem to flicker through our minds and remain just 'beyond our grasp', as when I have a name 'on the tip of my tongue'. But the elusiveness of such memories does not prevent their being detailed and precise. The image I now have of a childhood friend and which I have such difficulty in 'holding' seems to be, in itself, a most comprehensive image.

v. Vagueness and inaccuracy

I want now to consider the relevance of vagueness of memories and of memory-claims respectively to the accuracy of memory-claims. On this question Bertrand Russell has some most interesting things to say. He points out that a memory is no less precise because it is in fact wrong - 'provided some very definite occurrence would have
been required to make it true'. And allowing the distinction I have made, what he says is equally true of both actual memories and memory-claims. He continues 'It follows from what has been said that a vague thought has more likelihood of being true than a precise one. To try to hit an object with a vague thought is like trying to hit a bullseye with a lump of putty: when the putty reaches the target it flattens out all over it, and probably covers the bullseye along with the rest. To try to hit an object with a precise thought is like trying to hit a bullseye with a bullet.' This is a good analogy; it brings out very well the inverse relationship between precision, or wealth of detail, and probable accuracy. But it is important to note that for the purposes of our first question - the effect of vagueness or precision in the actual memory itself upon the memory-claim - we are (to adhere to his analogy) throwing the target at the putty, not the putty at the target. At this level we are not concerned with whether the memory-claim is in fact true or false, only with whether or not it truly reports the 'remembering state of mind'. There is a greater danger of error in reporting a complex and highly detailed 'remembering state of mind' than in reporting a vague and sketchy one. The danger is that some of the details, possibly important and relevant refinements, will be left out of the memory claim or misreported as a result of its complexity.

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1 'The Analysis of Mind', p.182.
On the other hand, whilst a vague memory properly reported is comparatively immune from the risk of error, it may well be that such a memory is inadequate for the claim I want to make i.e. for the premiss I need for my current train of thinking. And when this happens there is an obvious tendency to supply the missing detail from imagination. This gives rise to the quite different point – the point which Russell is in fact making in the passage quoted above (though he does not use the expression 'memory-claim') – that the degree of precision of a memory-claim is inversely proportionate to the likelihood of its own factual accuracy.

Thus we have two quite distinct 'risks' here: (1) that the memory-claim will fail to report properly the remembering state of mind because of the detailed complexity of that state of mind, and (2) that the memory-claim will misreport the actual event due to the poverty of detail in the memory itself. However, although we can separate these two 'risks' in principle we must consider them together. For the 'actual memory' is not inspectable, only at best introspectable; the only discrepancy we can demonstrate is that between the actual event and the memory-claim about it. Let us regard this as the 'total area of possible error' and try to find and eliminate the specific points of possible breakdown within it. As this enquiry must hinge very largely on the question of vagueness and precision, our first task is to consider in greater detail just what it is for a memory to be vague.
b) **Determinateness of memories**

Any memory-claim, whether publicly or privately made, tends to give rise to further questions. I claim to remember entering a public bar and talking to a man there. I am then asked, or 'ask myself' 'Which public house? What kind of man?', and so on. Now, it may be that I am unable to supply answers to these questions at all. In this case my memory is comparatively indeterminate and my memory-claim cannot (legitimately) be augmented. But if I am able to reply - 'He was a tall chap with a foreign accent in the King's Arms' further questions will arise: 'What kind of foreign accent? What did you talk about? What did he actually say?'. It is always possible to ask for more precise details which a more detailed memory of the actual experience could furnish, and sooner or later we must find ourselves unable to reply. Whatever may be the position at a 'retention' or 'dispositional' level - this is a question for psychologists and physiologists to decide - it seems certain that, as far as occurrent memory goes, we never can remember every detail of every experience. As Stout has said, ¹ 'How is it that I can recall in a few minutes experiences which occupied twelve hours? Only by omission. We simply make an outline sketch, in which the salient characteristics of things and events and actions appear, without their individualising

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¹ I am using the term 'determinate' throughout in the manner exemplified by H.H. Price in 'Thinking and Experience,' chapter 1.

details. Mere forgetfulness in part helps to make this possible...

And it is important to note that the omissions are not generally of 'whole incidents' so much as of precise detail from all the incidents.

It must be borne in mind, of course, that something at least analogous occurs in direct perception. We cannot notice every detail and we are obliged, even with what is actually before us, to schematise and classify comparatively indeterminately. What I see as simply a group of people is in fact ten men, four women and eight children. But the point here is that the omissions of memory are further imposed, as it were, upon the perceptual experience; we cannot remember what we did not in some sense notice, but also do not remember a great deal that we did notice. So that, although the memory of some small specific event, some particular action or a person's appearance, may be highly determinate; every memory will tend to fall short to some extent of what in the physical circumstances it could have been.

Now, any memory-claim which is more determinate than the claim on which it is based is in obvious danger of being false. Suppose for example that a man claims to remember meeting three Norwegians in the pub when in fact he had met three Danes. There are several possible explanations: (1) he actually remembers meeting three Scandinavians and says 'three Norwegians' simply from carelessness or for the sake of simplicity, (2) he actually has a memory of meeting three Scandinavians but at the time of making his memory-claim he took his memory to be one of meeting three Norwegians, or (3) at the
time of the encounter he judged them (wrongly) to be Norwegians, and correctly remembered this false judgment.

Whichever of these explanations applies these facts are the same: he actually had a meeting with three big blond men with foreign accents, whom he rightly took to be Scandinavians, and at some stage he has increased the determinateness of his claim by moving from 'Scandinavian' to 'Norwegian' — as it happens, wrongly.

There is an obvious similarity here to my earlier example of the boy who remembered an event without realising that he remembered it. This I held to be possible because every physical event can be described, correctly, in an almost limitless number of different ways. In that case the noises the boy heard were in fact made by an event which could have been described as the delivery of the coal, though, as it happened, he gave a description which was less determinate within the frame of reference in question. Remembering loud noises is less determinate than remembering coal-delivery noises — the latter is a sub-species of the former. I say 'within the frame of reference' because for a different purpose or from a different viewpoint quite different considerations could apply. Remembering the exact number of bumps, for instance, is more determinate than simply remembering a bumping noise, but for the question in hand it happens to be irrelevant. In the case we considered the memory-claim

1 See p. 36.
'I heard the coal being delivered' would have been justified if it had been made because the noises would have been correctly identified as members of the more determinate class, coal delivery noises. Yet the only difference between this and the 'Norwegians' case is that in the latter the determination of the 'tall blond men with Scandinavian accents' as 'Norwegians' is not justified by the facts.

It is true that we could ask ourselves 'What else could they have been?' But, by the same token we could ask ourselves what else the coal-noises could have been — and could find alternative answers. The difference between the two cases seems to be simply in the facts, and if we always had independent evidence of the facts we should not need to trouble ourselves about justifying memory-claims at all. As it is the determination of our memory-claims must be justified, on most occasions, by the nature of the memories themselves. The question is 'What degree of probability can ever justify a greater determination in our memory-claims than in our actual memories or our original perceptual judgments, and in what sense justify it? Now, this would be an idle question if such over-determination were in any case both illicit and unnecessary. But if it is found to be necessary the question of its being illicit simply cannot arise — and consideration shows that it is necessary. We are constantly obliged by mere pressure of time and the conduct of our affairs to 'take a chance' to some extent, in the choice of classification words in both our perception and our memory claims. I pass in the street a man wearing
a grey airforce-ish uniform with what looks like a Polish insignia, and later, when I am trying to recall what sort of people were about, I claim to remember passing a Polish Airman. I wake in the morning and I hear twittering noises outside my window. Later, when I am trying to remember what sort of morning it was, I claim to remember that there were birds twittering outside my window. And my memory-claims would be the same whether or not I had said to myself at the time 'This is a Polish Airman' or 'There are birds about'. When we 'take a chance' in determining any experience we usually do so in the light of what we might reasonably expect to be the case. My identification of the twitterings as bird noises arises very largely from my awareness of the likelihood of there being birds about. Probably our man's assumption that the Scandinavians were Norwegians arose from his knowledge that there were Norwegians in that town. And just as the Scandinavians were in fact Danes, the twitterings could have come from a squeaky mangle and the uniformed man could have been an elaborately dressed taxi-driver. Yet how hard it would be to protect ourselves against these possibilities of error in our memory-claims. If, at every stage, we confined our reports to what we actually were remembering - the sounds, the sights, the judgments made on the spot - the effect would be quite stultifying; we could never make any effective pronouncement without a full-blown enquiry beforehand.
But the saving factor – and this is terribly important – is that it is always open to us on any given occasion to say 'Wait – what am I actually remembering?' We can then exercise the care necessary to avoid over-determining the memory-claim, by focussing our attention upon the points at which it is likely to be over-determined and, therefore, in need of further supporting evidence.

3. Public and private objects of memory
   a) States of mind and states of affairs

   The question asked in the preceding section, 'What am I actually remembering?', would include in its answer, as we saw, 'judgments made on the spot' – but what if these judgments were in any case wrong? Is there no way of getting past them, as it were, to the event itself? And so we come to the question, foreshadowed in the previous chapter, whether the event we remember is the actual physical event itself or the mental event which was our perception of that physical event – whether we recall the state of affairs or the state of mind engendered by that state of affairs. We have already decided that the memory-claim normally refers to a past event, not to the present remembering of it. And, except in those cases where the subject of memory is specifically a state of mind, e.g. 'I remember feeling depressed yesterday', it refers to a past physical event – a state of affairs. But this decision arose out of the distinction between memory and memory-claim. It does not follow, therefore, that the memory itself is of the state of affairs. It may well be that when
I claim 'There was a riot here last week' what I am actually remembering is my own past perceptions of certain people, my judgments about those perceptions, and my feelings of apprehension.

This question is raised by Von Leyden who seems to be in no doubt that the 'real object' of a memory of an event is what we could broadly call our state of mind on perceiving that event. He says 'In the case of memory we can never even attempt to recall anything but the way in which we happened to perceive an event in the past; and by the time we remember our past perception of the event it has become something incorrigible, final and irrevocable'. Now, I have argued at length in chapter III that such judgments are neither final nor irrevocable, the fact is that we frequently do amend in memory the errors made in perception. But this does not alter the fact that nothing can recur to our minds that has not previously entered our minds. I have heard it argued that there is an equally good case for claiming that what we perceive is always a state of our own minds, but this argument overlooks the 'second event' nature of memory.

Our perceiving it is a state of our own minds, that is, a mental event, but what we perceive is there before us. To put it rather crudely:

1 'Remembering', p.61 - Von Leyden is not, however, wholly consistent in his position. He says, e.g. (p.36) 'For instance we can remember one event resembling another event without having been previously aware of their resemblance'.

2 E.g. This argument is put forward by M. Deutscher in his review of 'Remembering' in MIND Vol. LXXI, 1962, p.278.
if we allow that there are minds and there is a physical reality known to them, then perception is a relationship between the mind and that physical reality. But, that relationship having once been established at a present level, remembering can then occur as a relationship between past and present mental events. The present mental event (the remembering) is connected to the past physical event through the agency of the directly remembered past mental event which was the perception of it. Certainly it is difficult to see what remembering an event could be other than remembering our perceiving that event. And, since the memory-claim refers always to the public event, there is a relationship between claim and physical event parallel to that between memory and mental event. We could set this out in a simple diagram (figure 1).

![Figure 1](image)

![Figure 2](image)

It may well be objected here that, despite Von Leyden's assertion to the contrary, we can and do revise our perceptual judgments, as shown in Chapter III, and that there must therefore be at least some direct connection between the physical events themselves and our memories, there must be some part of those memories untainted by attitudes or judgments. How else, it may be asked, can we justify
such revisions, even to ourselves? Surely the diagram ought to be modified as shown in figure 2.

But, whilst I shall in fact argue for such a modification, this objection, as it stands, is not conclusive. We can make any number of judgments about the same event, some of which may be found at the memory level to be incompatible with each other in the light of facts we know otherwise (i.e. of other remembered propositions). Suppose, for example, that on passing a football ground I make, inter-alia, the following observations: This is Old St. School football ground; two teams are playing each other; one side is wearing black and yellow jerseys; the other side is wearing red and blue jerseys; black and yellow are the New St. School colours. Old St. School is playing New St. School at football. And subsequently I make the memory-claim 'I saw Old St. playing New St. at football on Old St. ground'. But it only then occurs to me that Old St. School wear green football jerseys. I must therefore amend my claim to the less determinate one 'I saw New St. School playing another team on Old St. School ground'. My reason here for amending a remembered judgment is simply my remembering a set of other judgments.

Von Leyden's view would commit us, nevertheless, to a conclusion, which is very hard to accept. For if he is right, then even apart from the possibility of misremembering, we could never be sure that a memory-claim is a true report of an actual past event. The certainty we feel about our perceptions arises very largely from the fact that,
though we can and do make mistakes, we can always look again. The very similar certainty I feel about my considered memories suggests very strongly that in memory also I can 'look again' at least at some element or feature of the remembered event; that within the memory, or as part of the remembering, there can be re-manifested some element of this physical event itself, something below the level of interpretation, to provide a basis of actual contact with the past 'state of affairs'. I shall argue later that this 'physical element' is our 'brute sensory intake' as retained and reproduced in imagery. But I think we must allow that, insofar as what is remembered is a perceptual judgment, however indeterminate it may be, the direct object of a memory is a mental, not a physical, event.

b) Mental and Physical referents of memory

i. Propositions about facts and propositions about attitudes

It should, of course, be kept in mind that the events which are the proper subjects of memory-claims - let us call them the referents of memories - though usually physical, public events, may in many cases include - and quite properly so - much that was mental and private. If what is being recalled is actually a past state of mind then clearly not only the perception of past physical events, but also attitudes towards them and conjectures about them must enter into the memory. I could, for instance, make the memory-claim 'When I realised what had happened I was just horrified'.
Consider these passages from Furlong: 'When I compare these two events, the original event and the remembering of it, what strikes me is not the difference but rather the resemblance. My state of mind when remembering is extraordinarily like the state of mind I am recalling'. 1 And a little later, 'On the occasion of recall, there is the sensory, or quasi-sensory, element, but there is also, and this is the important point, the propositional element. I am aware of imaged watchface, and I respond to this datum by thinking, That was my watch. The proposition is there, though its tense has changed. Similarly as I recall the ticking, I also recall that I wondered whether cleaning was needed. In other words, when we remember a past occasion we do not merely reproduce the sensory data in imaged form, we reproduce or image, more or less completely, our whole state of mind on the remembered occasion'. 2

These passages draw attention to what we might call the subjective element within the remembered state of mind, but they do not make clear the quite important difference between propositions about states of affairs in the world, such as 'This is my watch', and propositions about mental states, such as 'I wonder if it needs cleaning'. Both propositions may belong, as it were, to the state of mind, but, as propositions, they are concerned with quite different sorts of things.

1 'A Study in Memory', p.74.
2 'A Study in Memory', p.75 (his italics).
ii. **Memory-images and imagination images**

A simple way of differentiating remembered propositions which purport to refer to physical events from remembered propositions which do not so purport is to consider whether what is claimed is imageable in the ordinary sense; whether or not it is in fact imaged does not matter. I could have an image of a watch held in my hand, but I do not know what it would be like to have an image of wondering whether it needs cleaning — nor yet of thinking it a handsome watch. Furlong's rather odd phrase 'Image the whole state of mind' obscures this distinction.

But this 'imageability test' will not serve to distinguish a proposition which correctly reports the physical event from one which reports a mere assumption made about it. Suppose I see a group of men enter a public meeting, perceive (quite correctly) that they look like ruffians, and conjecture that their intention is to break up the meeting. This conjecture may in fact be quite wrong; these men may be supporters of the speaker; but, assuming that I leave the meeting without learning this fact, I may well subsequently claim to remember that a group of ruffians came in to heckle and break up the meeting. And the proposition 'There were hecklers present' lends itself just as well to imagery as the proposition 'There were rough-looking men present'. The fact that in the latter case the images would (or could) be memory-images whereas in the former they must be imagination images can help us only if we have some way of distinguishing between
these. Even assuming that we have such a means, quite apart from
the fact that we have now shifted from 'imageability' to 'memory-
imageability', the test could never be conclusive. For there could
well be propositions which were in fact formed according to the
event as actually presented to us, but which, when remembered, were
accompanied by imagination images - or were not accompanied by images
at all.

At this stage, then, we must be content to distinguish those
remembered propositions which purport to refer to physical events
from those concerned with other matters, such as how we felt and what
we wondered. By subjecting the former group to a careful scrutiny
in the light of what we take to be our memory-images and the coherence
of the remembered propositions themselves, we can achieve at least
some measure of security against confusing remembered conjectures with
remembered perceptions.

iii. Applicability to non-event memories

Before leaving this question it should be pointed out that
what I have said applies equally to memories of individuals and of
qualities. I may 'remember' the presence of Jones at a particular
gathering because in fact I supposed at the time that he was there.
And the decision I made that a car standing under a greenish street
lamp would look pale blue in normal daylight can all too easily be
remembered subsequently as my seeing the car to look pale blue.
Those parts of the remembered state of mind concerned with what
things were like, can as easily give rise to this type of error in the memory-claim as those parts of the remembered state of mind concerned with now things were behaving. If I had to give a name to the error of remembering conjectures as perceptual judgments, I would call it 'subjective half-truth/objective falsity'. Whilst the memory-claim is false, the memory itself is at least partially true; what is remembered was part of the earlier state of mind, but it was conjecture, not conclusion, about the perceived event. And it is necessary to distinguish this case from those cases where a genuine perceptual error is perpetuated in memory, and which we might call 'subjective truth/objective falsity' of memory. Both 'subjective truth', and 'subjective half-truth' kinds of error seem to be always possible in the memory-claim relating to an event. In section 5 I shall consider how, and to what extent, they can be guarded against. But it is as well to note at this point that these errors are simply not applicable to memory-imagery as such. Only when a judgment or classification has been made can there be a mistaken judgment or misclassification.

4. Negative remembering or remembering by default

a) The difficulty of separating memory from claim

I now want to consider a class of memories in which, on the face of it at least, the memory seems to be identical with the memory-claim. A memory-claim is not simply a claim to be remembering something; it is a claim to know something through the agency of memory
alone. The memory-claim refers to a past state of affairs, not a present state of mind. I am therefore making a memory-claim when I attend an identification parade and claim 'The man I saw yesterday is not here'. Perhaps I am remembering the man I saw yesterday, but this does not seem to be necessary. All I need know to make the claim is that he is not any of these people before me. Thus my memory seems to just be my claim 'He is not here'.

Again, if someone asserts 'Fred's house had a green roof' I may deny this either because I in fact remember that it had a red roof or because I simply remember that whatever colour roof it may have had, it did not have a green one. My memory-claim may be the same in both cases - 'It was not green' - but in one case it is supported by an actual memory, the memory of a red roof on Fred's house, in the other case it does not seem to be supported at all; the remembering seems to consist wholly in the framing of the proposition which is the memory-claim.

b) Remembering what is not the case

i. As recognition

The 'identification parade' situation is perhaps the commonest case of negative remembering, and it might be felt that this is simply a case of recognising what is present as other than what we are seeking. Yet, to recognise that something is not the one we want, either we must actually recognise the presented article, as when I identify and reject my wife's comb in searching for my own, or we
remember the sought article, and fail to find it amongst those offered, as when I reject a number of nondescript and unfamiliar combs in searching for my own. There does not seem to be anything we could properly call 'negative recognition'. On the one hand there is positive recognition, on the other hand failure to recognise. If I wanted to return to a house I had once seen but about which I could recollect little or nothing, I may well walk along the street hoping that when I did come to the right house I could recognise it. But if I were successful this would surely mean only that on seeing the house I then recollected things I had earlier failed to recollect. So long as something is actually presented for our perception either it is, or it is not, recognised as what it is.

ii. As recollection

In recollection of the past, however, the question is much more difficult. Nothing is being 'presented to us' independently of our own minds. What I am remembering is in some way an idea in my own mind; but where does it arise from and what kind of idea can it be? How can I remember that Fred's roof is not green or that I did not go to the theatre last Saturday unless I remember what colour Fred's roof is and what I did do last Saturday? In some way I must be entertaining the idea and rejecting it, but it is by no means easy to see how I entertain it nor why I reject it. Perhaps I am able to 'picture' Fred's house and 'try out' a green roof in my 'picture'. But I may be quite competent to make the memory-claim,
'Fred's roof is not green', without being able to 'picture' Fred's house at all. And even if I can 'picture' it, there are lots of different greens; how can I be sure that I have 'tried out' all of them? In the 'theatre' case this difficulty is even more obvious. I might be able to 'picture' a visit to the theatre, though I do not quite know what this would be like. But it would be quite hopeless to try to run through 'pictures' of all the possible variations of such a visit.

In some cases, of course, we may simply be remembering a negative judgment made in the past. I might for instance observe that the Regal cinema is not showing 'Hell's Angels' without observing what it is showing, and subsequently make the memory-claim 'The Regal was not showing "Hell's Angels" last night'. But I do not think we can account for all our negative memories this way. I do not go around making such judgments as 'That roof is not green' except in very rare circumstances.

We seem, then, to have two problems with negative recollection:

(1) Except in an 'identification parade' situation, where we are deliberately trying to render an indeterminate memory more determinate, where do memories of 'what is not the case' arise from? (2) How can we assert 'This was not the case' except on the authority of a memory of what was the case?
c) The positive element in negative memories

i. The presentation of the hypothesis

To the first question the only answer I can give is that negative memories do not arise except in some kind of 'identification parade' situation. I am satisfied that when we make a negative memory-claim this is always in the course of attempting to answer some positive question, even though we may not consciously have posed that question to ourselves. Always something has reminded us of a past situation and sent our memories in search of details of it.

It may be unwise, however, to be too precise about just how this occurs. Bertrand Russell considers the well-known case of entering a familiar room where a new picture has been hung on the wall and being conscious of a sense of unfamiliarity. He says: 'In this case it is fairly clear what happens. The other objects in the room are associated, through the former occasion, with a blank space on the wall where now there is a picture. They call up an image of a blank wall which clashes with the perception of the picture'. Whilst this account is no doubt feasible, I am afraid I find it far from convincing. There is something rather odd in the suggestion that the objects in the room 'call up an image of a blank wall' and I personally have never been conscious of such an image on such an occasion. The simpler explanation is that the picture itself is unfamiliar to us.

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'The Analysis of Mind', p. 178.
whereas the rest of the room is not, and we are therefore surprised by our failure to recognise it.

I think Russell's explanation would be more plausible if the room had simply been rearranged and the picture moved. For then the separate items of furniture would all be equally familiar and the sense of unfamiliarity could attach only to the room as a whole, and we might well feel that some image or memory of the room as it had been must exist to account for the sense of unfamiliarity. But, even here, it could be maintained that no separate memory of the past situation is needed. The recognition of the individual items is not accompanied by the recognition of the room as a whole, and once more there is a clash of the familiar and the unfamiliar. Our recognition of what was and still is the case, the appearance of the individual items of furniture, forces our attention to what was not the case, the present appearance of the whole room. We then speculate in a vague sort of way about how the furniture used to be arranged, and in doing so set up a series of hypotheses which we can accept or reject.

Or to take a quite different case: suppose I am reminded by an overheard conversation both of the way people talk in South Wales and of the way a former colleague of mine talked. What could be more natural under these circumstances than to remember that my former colleague was not a Welshman, whether I do remember where he came from or not? Our thoughts of things and events experienced in
the past are usually stimulated by present perceptions or by present trains of thought. It is quite natural, therefore, that these thoughts should include some hypotheses which are disconfirmed, as well as those that are confirmed, by memory. I think it is safe to say that on those occasions (if there be any) when a memory comes to us completely out of the blue, it must be a positive memory.

ii. The right of rejection

The second question - How we are able to reject these hypotheses? - is already partially answered. In remembering that my colleague was not a Welshman I am not necessarily remembering what nationality he was, but I am certainly remembering him in some way. And similarly within the memory-claim 'Fred's house did not have a green roof' is the covert memory-claim that Fred did have a house, and the implication that, in some way, I am remembering Fred's house.

It is apparent, therefore, that negative memory situations can be explained very largely in terms of levels of determinations. The negative memory-claim arises because we are seeking to further determine our memories. The relatively undetermined memory provides the basis for the 'identification parade'; the 'probabilities' arising from our current perceptions and their associations provide the 'candidates'. Thus, even when no successful candidate is forthcoming, there is some positive remembering, however, indeterminate, which enables us to say 'No, it was not like that'.
Thus whenever I am remembering how or what a thing was not, I am also remembering, at a lower level of determinateness, how or what it was. And so, even in the case of negative remembering, the memory-claim is not wholly unsupported by an existent 'remembering state of mind'. My memory-claims about what was not the case, refer, like any other memory-claims, to the actual event, what was the case.

5. Testing memory-claims

a) The possibility of testing by introspection

In this chapter I have claimed that: (1) Whether what is being remembered is an event, an individual or a characteristic of an individual, a distinction can be made between the memory-claim and the memory occurrence on which it is based, and (2) It is the memory-claim which establishes the knowledge of past occurrences which enables us to pursue our remembering and reasoning; these develop, as it were, according to the statements we make to ourselves, not according to our evidence for making those statements. Our chief concern, therefore, is how the truth of memory-claims can be established - what is to count for and against them.

It must be emphasised here that I am speaking of claims arising from current remembering. Dispositional claims, e.g., that I can remember a poem, or remember how to tie a clove hitch, do not entail that I am remembering anything except the propositions, 'I can recite...' or 'I can tie a clove hitch'. In these cases I am simply claiming to have a certain dispositional ability; that my having it
is rendered possible by memory is an additional, and for our present purposes irrelevant, assumption.

Let us consider a memory-claim — 'There was a rose growing beside the door'. Clearly the simplest and most obvious test of this is to actually perceive the door and the rose. But if there has been a lapse of time the rose may have withered away or been pulled up; so its absence from the doorway will not falsify the claim. And if there has not been a lapse of time the question hardly arises. We do not trouble about remembering what is still there to be perceived unless we are playing some sort of memory game.¹

It does not follow from this, however, that memory-claims can be tested, confirmed, or disconfirmed, only in very rare cases. A memory-claim refers to a past public event, and even though the subject of the claim may have perished we can find evidence for its having existed both in what we can reasonably assume to be its physical effects — a bomb crater is pretty fair confirmation of the memory-claim that a bomb fell — and in the testimony of other people who also experienced it.

But this is not enough. In many cases our memory-claims simply do not admit of any such external confirmation yet it is still vital to us to be quite sure that they are true. My memory-claim 'I arranged to meet the professor at ten o'clock' may be extremely

¹Like 'Kim's Game', which used to be popular in the Boy Scouts.
important to me, but, since I do not keep a diary it is doubtful whether I can check it by anything but a careful reconsideration of the memories which support it. The fact that memory-claims refer directly to public events does not mean that they can be checked only by public events. We can and do satisfy ourselves that our memory-claims are correct simply by reference to our memories. We saw that one way of confirming memory-claims is by discovering the present events which we believe to be probable effects of the remembered events. And physical events may have non-physical effects. There is an obvious sense in which my judgments about an event are effects of that event - the judgments could not have occurred without the event - and in which my memories are effects of those judgments. This being so, my claim to remember any event is at least prima-facie evidence that it did occur. And it is evidence which I can accept confidently once I have satisfied myself of three things: (1) that my original judgments were well made, i.e. accorded with what any careful observer could have perceived. (2) That my present remembering represents faithfully my judgments and perceptions at the time of the event. (3) That the present memory is adequate to support the claim made.

We must now consider how we might go about satisfying ourselves of these conditions.

b) Checking our memory-claims

i. Memory-claims about events

Let us take a concrete case. I make the following memory-claims:
On my way to work today I was attacked by a magpie. Now, suppose that this claim is challenged by a bird-lover who is opposing a scheme to get rid of these creatures. It becomes necessary for me, if not to substantiate my claim (this may not be possible), at least to be very sure in my own mind that it is a true account of a past event. We shall assume that there were no witnesses, that I was not in fact injured, and that my only means of checking my claim is by introspection. I therefore ask myself:

a. What am I actually remembering? Is my 'remembering state of mind' in full accord with, i.e. ample warrant for, the claim made, according to the normal usage of the words and sentences employed in that claim? Perhaps I can satisfy myself that I am actually remembering the following judgments made at the time of the occurrence: 'Something whizzed past my head from behind; there was a snapping noise close to my ear; there it is, it's a magpie; the snapping noise must have been its beak; it deliberately attacked me. I may also be actually remembering the fright I got and the apprehension I felt at the time.

In this case, notwithstanding the comparative weakness of the 'must have been', I can reasonably assure myself that no error has occurred between the 'remembering state of mind' and the memory-claim. But I would not have felt so sure had I discovered that my actual remembering included only being frightened by something flying past me with a snapping noise as it passed, and that I had worked out later that it must have been a magpie attacking me.
However, so far so good; I am satisfied that my memory-claim is in accordance with my remembered judgments. I must now consider those judgments themselves.

b. On what evidence did I make the judgments I remember? Consider these questions: (1) How did I know it was a magpie? (2) How did I know it was the same bird that had flown past my head? (3) Why did I assume it was attacking me? To answer these questions I must dig further into my memory to find supporting judgments, or memory-images of the event itself.

If I am able quite sincerely to answer thus: (1) It was a large black and white bird of the kind I call 'magpie', and I am (and was at the time) good at identifying such birds (2) Its direction and speed when I saw it correlated well with the direction and speed of whatever passed my head (3) It is notorious that magpies are vicious at this time of year and I have been attacked before and recognised the snap of a beak as it passed, then I believe that the more I consider the memory the more certain I shall become that the memory-claim was in fact true. If, on the other hand, my actual memory is found to consist solely in propositions, the original evidence for which is quite lost, then the more I think about it the greater will my doubts become - even though the memory-claim may in fact be quite true.

In practice, of course, we do not hold long courts of enquiry on our memory-claims. We become very adept at singling out the
vital features of our recollections which justify those claims, and we merely say 'Yes, I am quite certain that I was attacked by a magpie - go ahead and shoot them'. But 'I am certain' is significant only if I know what it is like to be uncertain. My confidence is justified only by my realisation that a careful reconsideration of my memory-claim could have shown me that I had assumed more in my perceptual judgments than the evidence of my senses could reasonably justify.

ii. Non-event memory-claims

The case we have considered is a straightforward 'memory of an event'. Now, I have claimed that the memory/claim distinction can be made whether the memory is of an event, an individual, a quality or even a skill. But in the case of 'remembering qualities as such' and 'remembering skills as such' it does not seem possible to differentiate between error in making the original judgment and error in making the memory-claim. When I make the claim 'I remember his face was flushed', it is important that what I am actually remembering justifies the normal usage of the word 'flushed'. The claim may well be misleading, for instance, if it were made about someone who simply happens always to have a red face. But, as the memory of a quality, the redness of the face - not of an event, the reddening of the face, there does not seem to be anything which could constitute the actual memory except a memory-image. And with images either we have them or we do not. The only explanations we can give of them are causal.
The question 'What was the evidence which gave rise to the memory-image?' cannot be asked. The imagery is the evidence.

When we consider remembering a skill as such the case may be further complicated by a doubt as to whether what is claimed is that we are remembering something or simply that we possess a dispositional ability to perform something. Let us assume that my claim 'I remember how to make paper boats' is actually based upon some specific occurrent memory. Simply taking up a piece of paper and making a boat of it certainly confirms the dispositional claim. But does it prove anything about occurrent memories? Now, clearly there is a sense in which we can be remembering how to do something without actually doing it, but it is hard to see how we could confirm this kind of memory except by actually imaging every stage of the proceedings. The mere ability to remember a series of propositions - rules for the successful performance of a task - does not of itself provide any very great assurance that we can in fact perform that task, as those of us who have waited outside examination rooms know. Of course, even my having a complete set of images of the stages involved in making a paper boat does not guarantee that I shall succeed in making one when I try. My fingers may be too stiff and awkward. But this fact accounts for the perfectly intelligible difference between remembering how to do something and being able to do it.¹

¹ This distinction is dealt with at length in chapter V.
c) The intention of memory-claims

Considerable doubt may be felt, not without justification, about my use of the expression 'normal usage of the terms employed in memory-claims'. What constitutes 'normal usage' is itself always somewhat arbitrary and indecisive. I must therefore make it clear that by 'normal usage' I mean only non-misleading usage within a particular context and for a particular purpose. We must also bear in mind that what I am calling a memory-claim is not simply, or even primarily, a claim for the edification of other people. It is primarily a claim about the past made to myself in words - because I do in fact think in words - and used as the basis of further remembering and reasoning. Part of my reason, then, for checking my memory-claim against my actual occurrent memory is to prevent myself from making a tacit assumption that I actually remember more than I do in fact remember as a result of ambiguities in the words I am using. I am not concerned, therefore, with normal usage in any formal or 'dictionary' sense, but with the appropriateness of the terms in the memory-claim to report my memory within my current train of thought and reasoning. To take a very simple example: I may remember a play I once saw and 'sum up' my memory of it in the claim 'It was thrilling'. This claim may, henceforward, 'stand in for' my memory. If my sole purpose in remembering is to decide whether or

1 I frankly admit here that I am committed to the view that words do not mean things; people mean things when they use words.
not to go to see another play by the same writer for an evening's entertainment, then the memory-claim 'It was thrilling' is a good enough guide for me. If, on the other hand, I am making a study of melodrama as a dramatic form, the claim 'It was thrilling' could well be misleading without some augmentation by actual memories to show wherein and how it was thrilling. It is always possible for the dispositional memory of a proposition to be replaced, in the course of time, by a dispositional memory of mere words, and for those mere words, when remembered, to be 'taken for' the original proposition.

d) The actual remembering

I have specified three potential 'breakdown points' between the event and the memory-claim. And I have shown how introspective checking, by securing us against the first and the last of these, can narrow the field of possible error. But to eliminate the field of possible error we must have some means of guarding against the second 'breakdown point', the fallibility of memory itself. We are back once more with the basic problem with which I commenced this essay. And, as we discovered then, introspections cannot help at this point. If we are to give an adequate explanation of the certainty we in fact feel about our memory beliefs, an explanation which fully justifies that certainty, then we must show that, in some way, there is within the memory an actual recurrence of some element of the remembered event itself. Since this would not admit of error, it could serve as a basis for checking all our remembered judgments. It is
noticeable that in all our attempts to find greater security in our memories of events, of individuals and their characteristics, and even of skills, we have come back sooner or later to memory-images. These have always represented the terminal point of checking. There is a strong suggestion, therefore, that the 'physical element in memory' will be found, if at all, in our imagery, and it is my intention now to consider in detail the nature of imagery and the role which it plays in our memories of events.

First, however, because so much recent writing has centered upon them, I shall consider that class of memories which I have been referring to as 'remembering skills' and have found to be a somewhat confusing mixture of remembering in images and propositions, recognition, and mere dispositional capacities. I hope to show that when, and insofar as, public performances are remembering at all, they are simply one variety of memory of events and, hence, subject to the same analysis.