MEMORY AND CONSCIOUSNESS

A REPRESENTATIONAL ACCOUNT OF MEMORY

MEMORY involves an explicit or implicit representation of past experience, where 'experience' is a representation of events (objects, etc.).

EXPLICIT representation: a state has the explicit content 'x' when its consumers depend for the performance of their proper function on the iconic or varietic variation of 'x' with an object (property/feature) x.

IMPLICIT representation: presumed or implied by an explicit representation, but not part of its content.

PROCEDURAL MEMORY:

Though I haven't ridden a skateboard in years, I remember how to ride one. Despite a somewhat wobbly start and a few minor missteps, I am able to push off, glide, turn and stop – this last rather less than gracefully.

EPISODIC MEMORY:

And once I had recognized the taste of saddlesteam in her description of lime-flowers which my aunt used to give me – immediately the old gray house upon the street where her room was, rose up like the scenery of a theatre to attach itself to the window, opening on to the garden, which was then visible to me through the window where I was sent before luncheon, the streets along which I used to run errands, the country roads we took when it was fine. (Proust 1928, 65-66)

AGAINST DIRECT AcQUAINTANCE

Despite a somewhat wobbly start and a far poorer sense of balance, I am able to push off, glide, turn and stop – this last rather less than gracefully.

The words convey their meanings in a way that makes it difficult to articulate what exactly was said in either English or German.

HIGHER-ORDER THOUGHT THEORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

A state is conscious when there is a higher-order thought about it. [3]

Proust's tea induces the higher-order thought that he saw his aunt's house and garden.

Thus, episodic memory is a case of 1.3 order HOT.

Therefore, the HOT theory gives a clear account of why episodic memory is conscious.

PROBLEM 1

HOT theory cannot explain why procedural, semantic, and declarative memory differ from episodic memory.

We may not be directly acquainted with the past in episodic memory. That is, it may not be as if one's relation with past events is immediate rather than representational. Here are 3 reasons against such an account.

1. Episodic memory is reconstructive and fallible. [2]
2. There are false episodic memories. [2]
3. Past experience seems to be re-presented; that is, past experiences are embedded within representations of the present.

REFERENCES


THE IMPORTANT BIT

The higher-order theory can accommodate episodic memory, but provides no account of the reason that episodic memory differs from the three non-conscious forms of memory.

There are 2 reasons why the higher-order theory cannot be extended to the other non-conscious forms of memory:

1. Episodic memory is conscious because the past event is explicitly represented as a component of present experience. A perceptual event is not an explicit representation of past experience.

2. Episodic memory is conscious because the past experience is imputed to the present experience. A perceptual event is not an imputed representation of past experience.

THEORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

A state is conscious when it is included in a representation of the present moment. [4]

An episodic memory is conscious because the past event is explicitly represented as a component of present experience. Proust's past experiences of the house and garden in Combray are part of his current representational state.

A state has the explicit content 'past event' when its consumers depend for the performance of their proper function on the representation of the past event.

A temporal representation of past events is necessary for effective decision-making.

The higher-order structure is conscious because the representation of past event includes the representation of the present moment (viz. an explicit episodic memory).

WHAT-WHERE-WHEN

Western scrub jays adjust their foraging behavior based on the side of decay of food.

Because time must be explicitly represented in order for effective food retrieval to occur, this behavior indicates episodic memory. [2]

CONSCIOUS HOT STRUCTURE

Episodic memory is an explicit representation of past experience.

Experience is a representation of events. So, a representation of past experience is a representation of a past representation of events; that is, it is higher-order.

The higher-order structure is conscious because the representation of the present moment includes the representation of a past representation (viz. an episodic memory).