Episodic Recollection and Past Perception

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Abstract: This paper articulates a role for past perception in the intentional structure of episodic recollection. My claim is that episodic recollection involves past perception as part of its intentional structure. The arguments of this paper therefore demonstrate how we can hold in tandem two important claims about episodic recollection and so is conciliatory in spirit: When we are 'living in the memory' intentional awareness is singularly directed at past events; Nonetheless, there is a plausible role for past perception in episodic recollection as a structural feature, such that 'living in the memory' is *obliquely* 'living in the past perception'.

Keywords: Episodic Recollection; Perception; Phenomenology; Structural Features

Introduction

Say that one is remembering the opening of the Adagietto in Mahler's 5th symphony as one heard it at the concert hall, on the evening of one's 30th birthday. What is one aware of when one remembers in this way? One natural answer is that one is aware of *something in the past*. However, matters might not be quite so simple. Is one aware of something, the musical performance, as a past event that is not perceptually present, or is one somehow also, or alternatively, aware of one's past auditory experience, *one's past perception*, of the musical performance? Could it be right to say that I don't just remember the musical performance, but remember my *hearing of the music*, such that memory experience involves not merely awareness of past events but rather awareness of my *past perceptual experiences of* those very events.[1]

Now, there is *prima facie* plausibility to the following line of counterfactual thinking: if I had not enjoyed that past auditory experience of that particular musical performance I could hardly be remembering that musical performance now, such that one might think that a condition of possibility on my remembering a particular past event is my having perceived the past event.[2] Nonetheless, we might baulk at the suggestion that when we remember intentional awareness is directed at our past perception of an event, rather than at the *past event itself*. If this were true it would make the intentionality of memory experience fundamentally *experience-directed* rather than

[1] See Peacocke 1985; Martin 2001 for this suggestion (for further discussion see section 2).

[2] See section 1 for further discussion of the *previous experience condition*.

object or 'world' directed. Relevant here is an issue to which we will return, namely the transparency of memory, as a more general instance of the so-called transparency of experience.[3]

This issue gives rise to a range of difficult problems concerning the relation between memory experience and past perception. My goal in this paper is to work through these issues with a view to articulating a role for past perception in the intentional structure of episodic recollection. My view will be that we should ultimately reject the claim that in such experiences we are intentionally aware of our past perceptions of, say, an event, rather than the past event itself – strictly speaking, we remember yesterday's sunset, not our past perception of yesterday's sunset (that is all we are *intentionally aware of*). Nonetheless, memory experience of the kind I will be interested in has a link to past perception which goes beyond a mere enabling condition (or counterfactual dependency). My claim will be that episodic recollection involves the re-production of past perception without 'thematising' it (i.e., without making it into an 'object'), as part of its intentional structure (more on this idea later). The arguments of this paper will therefore demonstrate how we can hold in tandem two claims about episodic recollection and so is conciliatory in spirit: when we are 'living in the memory' intentional awareness is singularly directed at the past event; nonetheless, there is a role for past perception in episodic recollection as a structural feature, such that 'living in the memory' is *obliquely* 'living in the past perception'.

The structure of the paper is as follows. Section 1 will specify the form of memory I am interested in by discussing some conditions on episodic recollection. Section 2 will then introduce the Recalling Past Perception condition, discussing some motivation for thinking it true of episodic recollection, and then arguing against a specific development of it in terms of the Past Perceptual Appearance claim. Section 3 then offers a positive proposal for how past perception figures in episodic recollection as a structural feature. A note on methodology: the questions and problems we will be grappling with fall on the side of intentional analysis at the level of experience, and so squarely concern the phenomenology and manifest intentionality of episodic recollection, as a conscious experience enjoyed from the first-person perspective. I save detailed discussion of how the claims and conclusions articulated here intersect with the psychology and broader science of memory for a separate occasion, although I will engage with some of these claims at various points.

1. Episodic Recollection (as 'recollective experience')

Let's start by delimiting our focus. It is important to distinguish memory or 'recollective experience' as I will be understanding it from other forms of memory. First, there is semantic memory: I might remember *that* Napoleon lost at the Battle of Waterloo. Such instances of

[3] For the classic discussion see Harman 1990; Martin 2002.

memory may well be occurrent, in the sense that I am currently engaged in remembering *that* such and such is the case. There is also procedural memory which takes the form of know-how: having not played guitar for a couple of years, I pick one up and *remember how to play*, as a skill I once acquired and have not lost. Finally, there is working memory. Consider listening to a melody unfold: There is a critical respect in which I must retain the phase just sounded to hear the progression of notes as a melody unfolding, rather than just as a disconnected sequence.

The form of memory I will be interested in is distinct from the three forms surveyed above. I will be homing in on a specifically *experiential* form of memory, as what is sometimes called episodic memory. Now it is worth noting that on standard accounts episodic memory is treated as intrinsically experiential. This is true of Tulving, who coined the term, and is reflected in his talk of 'autonoetic consciousness' and 'chronesthesia'.[4] There are however others who sometimes speak of merely *episodic-like* memory, such as to avoid any implication about its experiential nature.[5] I will be discussing episodic memory or episodic recollection as akin to Tulving's sense, to which conscious memory experience, or what one might also call 'recollective experience', and so questions of phenomenology and manifest intentionality, are crucial.

Here, I'll continue to use the term episodic recollection, understood in the above sense. In what follows I outline some necessary features, and some connected conditions, of episodic recollection as I understand it.

> *Experiential content condition:* Episodic recollection necessarily has experiential content, as a kind of quasi-perceptual content.[6]

To say that episodic recollection has experiential content is, at a minimum, to highlight that in recollective experiences of the kind we are going to be focusing on, the relevant intentional objects of those experiences are given as *being a particular way* (as manifest content). In remembering the sound of the waves crashing against the rocks last Sunday at the beach, I remember the sound in a *particular way* (the manifest auditory phenomenal properties). There is therefore a kind of sensory content in play in memory experience, or perhaps a kind of simulated sensory content – hence talk of quasi-perceptual content – which is in relevant respects similar to sensory-perceptual content proper. Of course, the level of quasi-sensory determinacy with which the relevant intentional object is given will vary from episode to episode; the level of detail involved in my episodic

[4] See Tulving 1985.

[5] See, for example, Clayton and Dickinson 1998: 272-274

[6] See McCarrol and Sant'Anna 2024.

recollection of being sat at the breakfast table this morning compared to my first day at school thirty years ago is likely to be significantly different. In this context is also worth noting that the invocation of 'experiential content' for episodic recollection, is motivated by the need to recognise the presence of a kind of manifest content in these recollective experiences (a way things seem to the remembering subject) that is different from, but in some sense to be clarified importantly related to, perceptual content *proper*.[7] I will return to pertinent issues concerning the 'as if' character of the experiential content of episodic recollection in the following sections.[8] Suffice it to say for now that there is a quasi-sensory phenomenological richness to episodic recollection, as recollective experience, and so an awareness of some of the phenomenal properties of what is 'before the mind', that is notably absent in semantic memory, procedural memory, and working memory.

Now, one might question whether we do best to theorize the structure of the contents of episodic recollection as propositional or non-propositional, where presumably talk of 'experiential content' signals a commitment to some form of non-propositionalism for episodic recollection.[9] However, it is worth noting an important distinction between the structure of the *manifest content* of an intentional, in our case recollective, experience itself (the object represented, as it is represented to the subject) and the structure of a (typically linguistic) specification of that content as given in attitude reports, what one might call the *displayed content*.[10] What is important for our purposes, and is connected to our phenomenological methodology of focusing on the *first-person* character of the relevant experiential states as they are given to their subjects, is that it is implausible the manifest contents of the kinds of 'quasi-sensory' recollective experiences under discussion are *propositional*, such that what is recollectively experienced itself has a propositional structure (singular, or otherwise), where that importantly leaves it open whether in 'displaying' the content of those recollective experiences (or indeed providing something akin to a semantics for them) we can do so via propositional constructions.

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[7] See Teroni 2017 for a detailed account of the differences between perceptual and experiential content. See also Peacocke 1985; Martin 2001; 2002; Nanay 2015; Bynre 2010.

[8] Memory contents are sometimes framed in terms of 'memory images' – although the 'image' terminology is controversial (see Gregory 2018 for general discussion).

[9] See Liefke 2024, 2025 for some recent work which puts pressure on a non-propositional construal of the contents of episodic recollection (see Sant'Anna 2018 for a non-propositional view). In particular in her 2025, she defends a limited pictorial view of memory and mnemic imagery. See [Redacted] for some further thoughts on the character of the experiential contents of recollective experience.

[10] See Sainsbury 2018: 23 and Iacona 2003: 325-51 for a similar distinction. Also see start of section 3 for some more detail on experiential attitude reports and episodic recollection.

Next, consider the following condition:

> *Past event intentional condition*: Episodic recollection is about (is intentionally directed toward) a temporally extended past event.[11]

Given this condition, episodic recollection would be exemplified by the following examples: remembering the day at the beach last Sunday, the birth of my first child, and the argument I had with my boss last week. There is manifest or phenomenological particularity here: what any given instance of episodic recollection is given to its subject as directed towards is a particular past event. This focus on particular temporally extended past events serves to distinguish episodic recollection from cases where semantic or propositional memory are accompanied by 'memory images', where a kind of experiential content is in play. For example, when I remember that <I owned a red Gibson SG when I was 16>, an 'image' of the guitar might appear before my mind, but I'm not remembering any particular temporally extended past event. This condition also serves to distinguish episodic recollection from phenomenologically rich memory experiences, which are directed at *objects* rather than *events*. There is debate in this context about whether one can directly remember *objects* – say, directly remembering the appearance of my primary school Headteacher – or if one can only do so on the basis of remembering the relevant event(s) in which the objects figured (e.g., a particular instance in which I was reprimanded by him).[12] Settling this issue will not be important for our purposes, since our focus will be on episodic recollection, and episodic recollection is fundamentally *event memory*.[13]

However, there is a problem. Consider the following case described by Proust:

> And suddenly the memory revealed itself. The taste was that of the little piece of madeleine which on Sunday mornings at Combray…my aunt Léonie used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup of tea or tisane. (Proust, *Swann's Way*: 63)

[11] This is somewhat contested in Martin & Deutscher 1966 vs. McCarroll & Sant'Anna, 2024.

[12] See Openshaw 2022 for persuasive arguments against the latter claim which he calls 'Eventism'.

[13] For the view that temporally extended events are the basic unit at which perceptual experience is directed see Soteriou 2013. See Gregory 2018 on 'sensory memories' for a somewhat similar notion to episodic recollection (see also Debus 2007 on 'recollective memories' and discussion in Hoerl 2014; 2018). In the psychological literature see Rubin and Umanath (2015) for a detailed account of the relevant requirements on 'event memory'.

What is distinctive of the kind of memory episode adverted to here is that what is being remembered is a *general* event, which of course in some sense involves relevant particular objects, but which took place several times (no doubt with certain variations). In this sense, *token event particularity*, which is reflected in the past event intentional condition, is not met. Indeed, in this context it is worth noting that there has been recent philosophical work which challenges so-called 'singularism' about episodic recollection, that is the claim that episodic recollections are *necessarily* directed at particular past events, and indeed more generally the sharpness of the distinction between episodic recollection, as particular event memory and general event memory (the form of memory manifest in Proust's description).[14]

Interestingly though at the phenomenological level (at which our discussion it pitched) arguably what is required in response to such cases is the following parsimonious point: while the more or less typical (or paradigmatic) case of episodic recollection, as recollective experience, may be that of being in a mnemic state intentionally directed towards a temporally extended past event with token particularity (e.g., *that particular* afternoon at Combray), general event memories in their quasi-sensory phenomenologically rich form – the form in play in Proust's evocative first-personal description – will also have to, at some point during the memory episode, make some kind of use of *particular past events*, maybe many and various such ones, as indicative 'samples' (standing in relations of similarity), and so as 'vehicles' for the kinds of more general memories and general (rather than singular) mnemic thoughts that may be in play in such cases.[15] Indeed, counterfactually, if the subject had never tasted the tea-soaked madeleine on those various Sunday mornings at Combray, if those *particular events* had never been experienced, then they could hardly engage in this general form of event recollection. Arguably, what is going on in such cases is some kind of synthesis of common sensory object-features that were enjoyed across a series of particular perceptual experiences of the recurrent event of tasting the tea-soaked madeleine. While there is significantly more to be said on this issue, and for ease my focus from here on in will be on those episodic recollections of temporally extended past events with token particularity, I don't intend to define episodic recollection in a 'singularist' way that would stipulatively rule out general event memories from counting as episodic recollections. Given this one might prefer the following

[14] See early discussion in Brewer 1986. More recently discussion in Andonovski 2020; Crone 2025; Entwistle 2025.

[15] See Manning 2019 on the idea of simultaneously visiting many of our prior experiences. Openshaw *forthcoming* presents a compelling framework, albeit not pitched at the phenomenological but the semantic level, for seeing a significant number of generalised memories as continuous with the paradigmatic case of event-specific memories. In further work I hope to explore this potential continuity at the phenomenological level in more detail.

qualified *Past event intentional condition*: Episodic recollection is about (is intentionally directed toward) a temporally extended past event (either a particular event or a general event).

Next consider the following condition:

> *Previous Experience Condition* (PEC): Episodic recollection of a temporally extended past event requires that the subject *perpetually witnessed* (i.e., perceptually experienced) the relevant past event.

First, it is important to note that the PEC is a more restricted perceptual version of what is usually called the *previous awareness condition* (PAC), where according to the PAC to genuinely remember something one must have been aware of it in the past, where the scope of awareness here is broader than perceptual awareness.[16] For example, remembering the foul mood I was in yesterday plausibly requires that I meet the PAC – to remember the foul mood I must have been at least to some extent aware of it, but moods (or indeed mental states or events more generally) are not things we *perceptually witness*. One advantage of adopting the PEC is that we restrict the scope of our intentional analysis to what we might call memory experiences of 'worldly (i.e., perceptually available) events'. Indeed, it is only for such cases that there is even any *prima facie* plausibility to the thought that 'past perception' specifically would have some significant role to play.[17]

However, the PEC, and several claims in its vicinity, throw up a host of controversial issues so let me explain my motivation for adopting it. First, having this condition in play serves, at least *prima facie*, to distinguish episodic recollection from sensory imaginations of past events and so supports the autobiographical indexing of episodic recollection in a way that supports more or less common-sense memory attributions. For example, having read various first-person historical testimonies, I might sensorily imagine Napoleon losing at the Battle of Waterloo; I visualise him on his horse, with his distinctive hat, turning and retreating across the battlefield. What we have here is a form of experience – sensory imagining with experiential content – which is about a temporally extended past event, but which would not count as an instance of episodic recollection

[16] See Shoemaker's (1970: 269) articulation of the *previous awareness condition*. See also discussion in Shoemaker 1979: 266; Debus 2007: 176; 2017: 64; Martin 2001; Hopkins (2018: 49), on the 'Origin Constraint'. Debus (2018: 125-128) also discusses some interesting respects in which the *knowledge* condition in Shoemaker's (1970) articulation of the previous awareness condition might be too strong

[17] Openshaw 2023 provides a perspicuous discussion of the PAC, articulating at what level of inquiry we should pitch conditions like this. Openshaw distinguishes between the *psychofunctional, reference* and *accuracy* questions, corresponding to different levels of inquiry concerning remembering. I would argue that there is also a phenomenological level of inquiry, which overlaps in interesting ways, due to its focus on the (manifest) *intentionality* of remembering, with issues of *referentiality* (aboutness), although I save detailed discussion of this for a separate occasion.

memory. *I wasn't there*; I didn't perceptually witness that event, and so it isn't episodic recollection (although see below on 'vicarious memories'). In a similar vein, accepting the PEC also allows one to avoid certain otherwise puzzling memory attributions that are autobiographically indexed in some sense, but aren't obviously instances of remembering. For example, consider the following vignette. Say I am an oddly repetitive and unadventurous somnambulist. Every night around midnight I sit up, walk around the bed once, and then get back into bed. I never have the dimmest recollection of my little routine – I am entirely unconscious during the whole episode. Nonetheless, my partner informs me – as reliable testimony – about these occurrences. Finding them somewhat amusing, I sensorily imagine, in this case visualise, the route I must take and 'what it would look like'. But it arguably strains common sense to think that in such a case I would take myself to be episodically remembering (and indeed self-ascribe as such). By accepting the PEC we have a ready-made explanation of why.[18]

However, let me note a worry. According to the PEC episodic recollection is necessarily indexed to one's experiential past, where this implies that strictly speaking one cannot engage in episodic recollection of events witnessed by others. The psychological reality of so-called 'vicarious memories' poses a challenge to this; briefly, 'vicarious memories' are claimed to be recollections of more or less specific past events, recalled by *someone else*.[19] The key issue here is that the PEC cannot be met since in 'vicarious memories' it is *not* the case that the subject 'vicariously remembering' perceptually witnessed the relevant past event themselves, but are nonetheless claimed to be 'recalling' it on the basis of some form of testimony. The most natural response here for the defender of the PEC is to deny that 'vicarious memories' should count as instances of remembering, at least with respect to how we categorize and make differential self-ascriptions of remembering at the experiential level. To support this it is plausible to argue that 'vicarious memories' are more intelligibly categorised as a specific form of *constrained imagining*, where the relevant constraint in play is something like fidelity to the (more or less imagistically based) testimony of others. So, when I engage in so-called 'vicarious remembering' on the basis of

[18] McCarroll 2020: 6 makes a similar point in his discussion of the puzzling memory-attributions that arise for a simulationalist theory of memory (see Michaelian 2016: 118). McCarroll discusses the interesting case infantile amnesia and the claim of at least some people that they can 'remember' very early events in their childhood (e.g., being born or even Salvador Dali's bizzarre claim to have 'intra-uterine' memories). McCarroll (2020: 6) expresses the broad thought when asking 'How many of these imagined non-experienced events can we call memory? All of them, or only some of them?' In our context the motivating claim is that in absence of accepting something in the vicinity of PEC we lack a principled way of answering questions like this.

[19] See Pillemer et al. 2024; Keven 2024; Werning 2020.

testimony concerning some past event in *your* personal past, I precisely do *not* remember it, but imagine it under relevant constraints.[20]

Now, a final issue in the context of the PEC, and especially given our focus on 'recollective experiences', are cases of misremembering or mere 'seeming to remember'. Surely it can seem to the subject 'from the inside' that they perceptually witnessed the relevant past event, even though they are mistaken. For example, a subject, having read several first-person accounts of the battle of Waterloo, might, in a delusional episode, take themselves to be remembering what seems to them like a temporally extended past event that they witnessed. Or take the case of the character of Rachael in the science-fiction film *Bladerunner*: Rachael is a replicant (a bioengineered humanoid), who has been given implanted memories, memories which belong to her creator's niece. Before realising she is a replicant, and not a human, she takes the relevant memories to *be her memories*, and would experience them as such. Yet in such cases the PEC would not be satisfied, although it may very well *seem to the subject* as if it is.

Given our phenomenological project – of a purported 'intentional analysis' of the relevant recollective experiences – we might therefore adopt a broader notion of memory experience that is *non-factive*, where that leaves open the possibility of an experience which 'from the inside' might be subjectively indistinguishable from its veridical counterpart *qua* being 'based on' a previously perceptually witnessed, but which *ex hypothesi* isn't. This would, therefore, require a revision of the PEC, since that condition embeds a commitment to successful mnemic reference.[21] Perhaps the following would be more appropriate for our project:

> *Revised Previous Experience Condition* (RPEC): Recollective experience of a temporally extended past event, requires either that the subject *perpetually witnessed* the relevant past event or that it *at least seems* to the subject 'from the inside' that they did.

This RPEC leaves it open to how to further theorise the relation between the 'good' and the 'bad' case. We could adopt a 'common-kind' view of episodic recollection as recollective experience, which as a class would include both successful remembering and *mere seemings to remember*, much like 'perceptual experience' is sometimes used in contemporary philosophy of mind to cover both veridical perceptual experiences and their hallucinatory counterparts. Alternatively one might

[20] This response is by no means uncontroversial, and raises a further question about the (dis)continuity between memory and imagination. See the (dis)continuism debate as discussed in Michaelian et al 2020; Goldwasser 2024a; Sant'Anna 2023; Hopkins 2024.

[21] See Openshaw 2023 for discussion of this point (see also earlier discussion in Shoemaker 1979; cf. Hazlett 2010).

prefer a disjunctivist view, holding on to a factive reading of episodic recollection, while recognising that there is an experiential state of 'mere seeming to remember', which while phenomenologically indistinguishable from episodic recollection qua seeming to 'based on' a past perception of an event one witnessed, should nonetheless be thought of as *different in kind*, albeit in a way that won't be phenomenologically accessible to the subject themselves. It won't be possible to settle this issue here, but for my purposes I'll assume the *weaker* RPAC (without any additional commitment to the factivity of episodic recollection *per se*),[22] such that respect to phenomenology and intentional structure – which will be our focus in sections 2 and 3 – veridical and subjectively indistinguishable non-veridical 'recollective experiences' are given the same analysis (leaving it open whether or not they are intrinsically or essentially the same kind of experience at the metaphysical level).

A final thought on these issues: it doesn't necessarily follow that in virtue of the fact that because I perceptually witnessed event E – so in the 'good case' – I can now remember it, in the sense of conscious episodic recall. There might be any number of events that I witnessed, but for whatever reason can't recollect due to various forms of memory failure (e.g., forgetfulness, dementia, amnesia). Connected to this, I can *remember that* – in the sense of semantic memory – I was at the beach in Devon last summer, and given some reliable testimony take it to be the case that I must have seen and heard the waves crashing against the rocks, but have no recollection of it. In this sense, I can *remember that* I witnessed a past event without being able to episodically recollect that past event, in our sense.[23]

2. The Recalling Past Perception Condition

I now introduce a further condition on episodic recollection that brings us back to the issues we opened our discussion with:

> Recalling Past Perception condition: In *episodically recollecting* a particular past event, I don't just recollect the relevant event, but also recollect my *past perception* of that event.[24]

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[22] See discussion in Kahn (2025) for critical arguments against the facticity of memory, and De Brigard (2023) for scepticism concerning whether linguistic evidence for the facticity of memory is convincing. See Werning and Liefke 2025 for a recent 'non-disjunctivist' account of reference in episodic memory (although based on supposed similarity in underlying causal mechanisms rather than questions of phenomenology and epistemology).

[23] This kind of possibility has long been recognised in the psychological literature (see Schacter and Tulving 1982; Tulving 1985: 6). In the philosophical literature see Dokic 2001.

[24] Doubtless we could explore more or less complex modifications of this condition for 'generic memories'. In separate work I explore whether the proposal offered in section 3 could be extended to 'general event memories'.

Getting clear on this condition and its implications will occupy us for the rest of our discussion. This condition claims something substantive about the intentional structure of the relevant experiences; past perceptions of the relevant events, in some sense, *figure in* those experiences. So, in attempting to explicate the Recalling Past Perception condition, we are trying to get a clear account of the intentional structure of episodic recollection, as recollective experience.

With the above in mind, notice that what we have in this condition is something that goes beyond the enabling condition reflected in the PAC (or RPAC). Episodic recollection, if it meets this condition requires that, in so episodically recollecting, in the occurrent act itself, that past perception of that event is somehow 'brought back to life'. Turning to a concrete example, the claim would be as follows: in an instance of episodic recollection of the waves crashing against the rocks last Sunday, I don't just recollect that event taking place, but also, in some sense, recall my *perceptual experience* of that event. In this sense, episodic recollection would have a kind of double intentionality.[25]

Note though we should not be led by this talk of 'double intentionality' into construing the intentional structure of episodic recollection in the following way: there is no claim that it is somehow the 'fusion' of two separate intentional experiences – (i) an experience of a past event and (ii) an experience of a perception of a past event – that at least in principle could be enjoyed independently of each other. Rather, the claim of double intentionality should be taken as identifying two intentional aspects or dimensions of a *single* experience, with it then being left open how best to construe these two intentional aspects and their relation. Working through the details of how the Recalling Past Perception condition, or something in its vicinity, could be true of episodic recollection will occupy me for the rest of this section and the following one.

First, what motivation could there be for accepting something in the vicinity of the Recalling Past Perception condition? Here is one line of thought. Memory consciousness is plausibly described as some form of re-production or re-presentation, such that, as Fabrice Teroni puts it, the phenomenology of memory experience is such that it is for the subject as if she perceived

[25] Nb: 'Observer memories' can't meet this condition, as those which involve the representation of the subject from a third-personal point of view (a 'detached perspective'), an experiential content that strictly could not have been the content of a past perception I enjoyed (or even seemingly enjoyed). The relevant distinction here is memory experience with a content that presents the relevant past event 'from the inside' and one which presents the relevant past event 'from the outside', where one perceives oneself in the remembered scene (see McCarroll 2018 for extended discussion; on perspective in remembering see also Rubin and Umanath 2015 and Soteriou 2018).

particular events again.[26] Focusing on the idea of 'againness' (I discuss 'as-if-ness' below), and its reflection in the phenomenology, the thought is that episodic recollection is a way of *re-living* the past, such that what is now given to me, in recollective experience, is something that I appreciate as having once had the temporal index *now* for me, and in remembering I experience the same particular event *again*, albeit under the modified temporal index of 'not now, but then'. As such, there is what is a phenomenology of familiarity, or a feeling of familiarity, in memory experience.[27]

Notice here the contrast with sensory imagination, even that directed at a past event, say my earlier example of visualising Napoleon retreating at the battle of Waterloo on horseback. For me – never having perceptually witnessed the relevant past event – my visualisation is not, and cannot be, a re-production (a *having again of*); contrastingly for the French soldier who witnessed the event and episodically recalls it later, their state is plausibly described as fundamentally re-productive – the event is in some sense given to them as "seen again", it is as if they perceive the event again, and so has the phenomenology of familiarity.[28]

To see how this feature might support the Recalling Past Perception condition, consider the following modification of our example. Say, for the sake of argument, that we can imagine a case in which the experiential content of episodic recollection and the experiential content of visualisation were identical – I am currently *imagining* what you are *remembering*; I am imagining past event E, and you are remembering past event E. Now let's take seriously the idea that (i) the familiarity or 'againness' which characterises memory experience is not a doxastic feature, that is not fundamentally a conscious belief that what I am given in the experience I have experienced before,[29] and (ii) is also not as aspect of *what is represented* (i.e., the experiential content – 'pastness' is certainly not something we 'see' or which 'appears to us' in memorial experience), indeed we can imagine identical experiential contents between episodic recall and sensory imagination where this aspect is absent in the latter case. What we have then is a phenomenal feature that somehow

[26] Teroni 2017: 16; see also Husserl 2005 [1898-1925]: 365). This aspect of the phenomenology of memorial experience is what supports the familiar metaphors of memory being a form of 'mental time travel' and 'temporal decentring' (see, e.g., Michaelian 2016 for extended discussion).

[27] See Teroni 2024, section 5 for a recent detailed account of the feeling of familiarity and its role in memory identification; see also Rubin and Umanath 2015 on what they call a 'sense of reliving'; they argue that 'scene construction' (i.e., the construction of a organised, perspectivally-orientated representation of 'external space' via visual imagery) is necessary for the phenomenal feature of a 'sense of reliving' to be present in memorial experience.

[28] NB: it should also be noted that there is the possibility of remembering *past episodes of imagining*. Insofar as these past episodes of imagining were construed as events, they could be the intentional objects of episodes of episodic recall.

[29] Cf. See Locke 1975 [1690]: 150; Russell 1921: 125; Fernandez 2008.

qualifies the content of episodic recollection, something that strictly concerns not *what is represented* per se, but *how it is represented* (its 'mode' of representation or intentional mode).

And at this point, the Recalling Past Perception condition comes in: the feeling of familiarity or 'againness' turns on a distinctive aspect of the 'how' of episodic recollection, such that it is because I also in some sense *reproduce my past perception* of the relevant event, that my experience is suffused with the feeling of familiarity.[30] As such, the feeling of familiarity depends on, and at the experiential level is to be explained in terms of, the *re-production* of the representational means through which the past event was originally given, so allowing it to be qualified with temporal index 'not now, but *then*, and so 'again' (a qualifying of the experiential content which is lacking in sensory imagination of a past event insofar as it doesn't involve the re-production of a past perception I once enjoyed).[31] This line of thought raises several further issues to which I return in section 3, when providing a more detailed account of how past perception structures episodic recollection. For now, we have hit upon a reason for accepting something in the vicinity of the Recalling Past Perception condition.

Next, the Recalling Past Perception condition also provides us with an experiential level explanation of why episodic recollection has the kind of quasi-perceptual content that it does, where I don't really perceive the relevant event again, since to do so would be to again be presented with the relevant event *here and now*, and so be again enjoying a perceptual experience of it – so enjoying an experience with genuine sensory perceptual contents (as a repetition of the perceptual experience).[32] Rather, it is *as if* or *as it were* I perceive the particular event again.[33] Now, if in some sense episodic recollection involves the re-production of the perceptual experience I had of the event, then this is going to affect the character of the experiential content in play, such that the 'as if-ness' of the content qua the perceptible properties of event remembered – it is *as if* I see the warm orange colour of the sunset again – turns on the fact that they are in some sense being given through *re-produced* perception, rather than perception itself, which would also explain why the

[30] More would need to be said to see if this form of explanation could be extended to the cover the fact that objects and experiences can also feel familiar. I pursue a more detailed examination of the 'sense of familiarity' in separate work.

[31] See also Martin 2001: 269; 'acquaintance with a past episode [is] explanatory of a sense of pastness'. See discussion below for worries about Martin's (2001; 2002; 2019) Dependency View.

[32] See Fernandez 2020: 287 for a similar point. On content omissions between past perception and current memorial experience see end of section 3.

[33] See Perrin & Barkasi 2024 for more discussion of this feature.

experiential content of episodic recall exhibits the manifestly spatial and perspectival aspects of properly perceptual content.[34]

Finally, in this context, we can ask the following question. How can the identity of what I'm remembering be fixed in such a way that *if successful* my episodic recollection refers to *that particular past event and no other*?[35] How, in such cases, can we get reference fixing, and so the relevant singular or *de re* content, that picks out a *particular past event*? Drawing on the Recalling Past Perception condition, one plausible answer – albeit not the only one – is that it is because episodic recollection in some sense involves the *re-production* of the past perception that we get this kind of referential particularly. Such that if my perceptual experience had a singular content, picking out a particular event *as such*, say, then my episodic recollection counts as having that singular content insofar as it in some sense *reproduces* that perceptual experience (albeit in a relevantly modified way; see the above discussion of the 'as-if-ness' of memory content). As such, the way in which the particularly and identity of memory content is determined would be a distinguishing feature from the content of imagining, the particularly and identity of which – that I'm visualising a suitcase and not a suitcase with a cat behind it that is entirely occluded – is usually thought to involve some form of conscious stipulation (in a way that rules out 'mis-imagining', or at least being mistaken about what it is that I am imagining).[36]

There is doubtless significantly more to be said about the Recalling Past Perception condition and the motivations for it discussed (as noted, I return these claims about 'intentional modes of representation' and 'structure' in significantly more detail in section 3).[37] I now explore a problematic development of that condition, which we can formulate as follows:

> Past Perception Appearance claim: In episodic recollection, as recollective experience, the earlier perceptual experience appears to me or is an 'object' for me.

This claim provides us with a specific proposal concerning how past perception figures in episodic recall, namely as part of its manifest content, as a way the subject is appeared to. If correct, this would mean that there are two objects that 'appear' to the subject: (1) the past event remembered, and (2) the past perceptual experience, through which that past event is in some sense given. As

[34] For more on the spatial and perspectival aspects of memorial experience see Debus 2007 and Soteriou 2018.

[35] See Martin 2001. For more on memory and reference see the papers in Openshaw et al. 2025.

[36] See Peacocke 1985; Nordhoof 2002; Sartre 2004.

[37] For more on memory content in general see Bynre 2001; Teroni 2017.

Mike Martin articulates what has come to be known as the Dependency Thesis, 'an episode of recall has as its *object* the initial experience which was the apprehending of the event'.[38]

The problems with this kind of view are significant and have been discussed at length by others.[39] The most pressing, however, in our specific context of experiential-level intentional analysis, is phenomenological adequacy. Take a stock example of episodic recollection as we are understanding it, say my memory experience of the glorious sunset I witnessed last Sunday. While memory experience of this kind involves some kind of 'seeing again' of the sunset, such that, however precisely we cash this out, the sunset in some sense *appears* to me, or 'appears again' (it is *as if* I 'see' it again) there is no pressure based on a phenomenological description to say that it is as if the past perception *itself* appears (and so is an object for me). We might put this point by saying that the experiential content of episodic recollection is characterised by transparency in the specific sense that *past perceptions* themselves don't figure in the manifest content. It just doesn't seem faithful to a description of an ordinary instance of episodic recollection that our phenomenal field is populated by *past experiences*, as (past) objects or events of a similar experientially manifest standing to the concrete event in the past that is being remembered. Connected to this line of thought, insofar as the past perception itself was, at the time of having it, transparent in this way – such that in that very past perception the perceptual experience *itself* as opposed to what is presented didn't appear to the subject – then its supposed 'appearance' in episodic recollection violates a plausible modal principle that the kinds of objects and properties that can figure in the experiential content of episodic recollection should be constrained by the kinds of object and properties that *at least can* figure in perceptual experience (i.e., episodic recollection would involve the manifest appearance of a kind of object, a *perceptual experience itself*, which, given perceptual transparency, doesn't figure in the relevant perceptual experiences which those very memories are supposedly re-producing).[40]

There is also something of a complexity problem for the proposal that would have it that episodic recollection involves the 'appearance' of past perceptual experience. In general, we should distinguish between the mode and content of intentional states, that is between what it is that the

[38] Martin 2001: 278, my emphasis (see also Martin 2002; 2019: 120; Peacocke 1985). Husserl 2005 [1898-1925], in his earlier reflections on memory subscribes to a version of view (see his 2005 [1898-1925]). However, in his more mature reflections arguably comes closer to the kind of view I articulate in Section 3.

[39] For broader criticism of this Dependency View (as it applies to both memorial experience and imaginative experience) see, for example, Hopkins 1998: 187-193; Teroni 2017; Noordhof 2002; Openshaw 2022: section 5. The Past Perceptual Appearance claim is a more specific version of the Dependency View for episodic recollection.

[40] See Matthen 2010; Teroni 2017. See also discussion in Langland-Hassan 2024.

experience represents and the specific mode of representation (e.g., vision, audition, judgment, memory, etc).[41] But in the case where episodic recollection involves the appearance, within the experience so to speak, not just of the past object in a specific way (past event content), but also the appearance of the past perception of the past object (past perception content) we seem to be forced to say that in the original perceptual experience – which episodic recollection putatively brings 'back to live' – there was an *appearance of a perception* of an event (or a perception of a perception). If this weren't the case, episodic recall would involve the 'as if' appearance of something, a past perception, that itself didn't appear in the original experience (and so would involve a significant amplification and perhaps even misrepresentation of the relevant content). But then we seem to have to say that episodic recall, by involving the 'as if' appearance of my past perception, is the conscious memory experience of my perception of the perception (of the event), which is a particularly complex and unattractive landing spot for a specification of the experiential content of ordinary instances of episodic recollection.

The moral of the story is that we should resist any framing of the Recalling Past Perception condition which is developed into the Past Perceptual Appearance claim. In episodic recollection, past perceptions of the relevant past event are strictly *not* part of the manifest experiential content; they are not objects, nor indeed something that the experience strictly presents to us (not a way we are 'appeared' to).[42] In fact there is an additional consequence: concerning the kinds of memory experiences that are our focus we should resist any suggestion that the sense in which I remember, and so 'bring back to life' or 'relive', a *past event* can be strictly the same sense in which I remember, and so 'bring back to life' or 'relive' the *past perception* of the event. This consequence reveals an ambiguity with the way the Recalling Past Perception condition itself was originally framed, that is, in terms of episodic recall requiring a 'recollection' of the *past perception*. Let me explain. The Recalling Past Perception condition tells us that in experientially recollecting a particular past event, I don't just recollect the relevant event, but also recollect my past perception of that event. A fair assumption here is that the two instances of the term 'recollect' as figuring in this condition are

[41] On this distinction see Crane 2001; Searle 1983; As applied specifically to memory see Urmson 1967; Recanati 2007; Matthen 2010; Teroni 2017.

[42] For a different view of the content of episodic memory, which appeals to complex contents of a self-referential and causal flavour, see Fernandez 2006; 2020. It strikes me that the notion of content Fernandez is operating with is not manifest content *per se* (the intentional object of the experience, as it is given to the subject), but something non-phenomenal, namely a propositional content which is intended to then serve as an explanation of certain phenomenal features of episodic memory. Whether past perceptual experiences are in some sense part of the content or represented as the sub-personal non-experiential level is strictly irrelevant to the question of the intentional structure of episodic recollection (and note this is not the claim of the Dependency View in any case).

equivalent (i.e., have the same sense). But our discussion has revealed that this cannot be quite right: if an episodic recollection of a particular past event either is or involves the *as if appearance* of the relevant past event, then a recollection of the *past perception of that event* cannot be similarly theorized in terms of the *as if appearance* of the past perception *itself* on pain of committing to the Past Perceptual Appearance claim (in the following section I offer further thoughts on how we should overcome this ambiguity).

The issue we are now faced with is as follows: given we accept these critical reflections, it seems like a short step from rejecting the Past Perceptual Appearance claim to rejecting the Recalling Past Perception condition. We might take the broader moral of the story to be that we should reject wholesale that episodic recollection involves the recollection or reproduction of my past perception of the relevant event, at least if we think of recollection here as akin to experiential representation, and so requiring representation *in the content* of memorial experience. Without a more plausible account of the way that past perception figures in episodic recollection, the Recalling Past Perception condition is in danger of looking philosophically spurious and as having muddled what is right about the PAC (or RPAC), with a problematic claim about the intentional structure of the relevant memory experiences.

However, in what follows, I show how we can hold on to the Recalling Past Perception condition, but do so without committing to the Past Perceptual appearance claim. To see how, I offer a different precisification of the Recalling Past Perception condition than was offered by way of the Past Perceptual appearance claim. This will allow us, by the end of section 3, to see how the following two propositions, which we have been grappling with in this section, can be held in tandem: (a) Past perception plays a substantive role in the phenomenology of episodic recollection (b) Episodic recollection is phenomenologically direct in the sense that it only has one intentional object, namely the relevant past event we are remembering.

3. The Structure of Episodic Recollection

We can see our way through to the correct experiential level role for past perception in memory experience by, in the first instance, getting clearer about the way intentional awareness works with respect to episodic recollection.

First and foremost, it will be important to make a three-fold distinction between what I will call (i) *living in the memory,* (ii) reflecting *within memory*, and (iii) *reflecting* on memory, and the way intentional awareness is deployed across these three different states. Living in the memory is what we have been discussing up to this point; it is a pre-reflective experience in which the object of awareness is the past event; I remain fixated on the past event, so to speak. This is the usual fare

and indeed the *primary mode* for memory experience – let's call this primary memory. Indeed, it is because of the way object-awareness works in primary memory that it is natural to answer questions of the form "what are you (currently) remembering" by referring to the past event and its properties, rather than by adverting to past perception and its properties. For example, if I were asked, "what do you remember about how things were at breakfast this morning", I will answer in terms of the phenomenal properties of the relevant events and the objects that figure in those events – "you seemed annoyed, the lights were too bright, the milk tasted off" – critically I won't advert to properties of my perceptual experiences of this event (whatever precisely they might be or form they might take).[43]

Now, importantly we can agree that the kind of experiential attitude reports of 'primary memory' mentioned above needn't (and for reasons we will come to below concerning transparency and 'object-focus' won't) involve any reference to properties of perceptual experience, while at the same time recognising that in such cases we have reports of what are *second-order* rather than *first-order* experiential attitudes. Let me explain: In contrast to first-order experiential attitudes – the paradigm of which is perception – second-order experiential attitudes are not *self-standing intentional states*, insofar as they depend for their contents and objects on *another (usually first-order) experience*. Recently Kristana Liefke has highlighted this by labelling second-order experiential attitude 'parasitic (experiential) attitudes', referring to their dependence on some other, first-order experience, as 'experiential parasitism'.[44] Now, one can, if one chooses, display and so *make explicit*, the relevant implicit parasitism of episodic recollection linguistically by modifying the report in the following way: <Jonathan remembers that Charlie [whom he *saw* across the table] was annoyed at breakfast>. In this case the 'parasitism' of the second-order experiential attitude is made explicit insofar as we have a past-tensed predicate 'saw' in the parentheses. Indeed, we have been grappling so far with the best way of making sense of this dependence specifically at the phenomenological level for episodic recollection, and below I'll show how the 'experiential parasitism' of episodic recollection on past perception is reflected at this level as a *structural feature*.

[43] NB: one might think the same doesn't go for remembering how disgusted you were when tasting the milk; or your own feeling amused instead of annoyed. There doesn't seem to be a block on remembering mental states in that sense. However, the critical question here concerns whether the relevant states identified here – emotions and moods – are themselves phenomenologically transparent. In any case the claims here concern episodic recollection (as defined in section 1) which is a narrower class than 'experiential memories' more broadly (see Teroni 2017 for the later designation).

[44] See Liefke 2024. Also earlier work in Vendler 1979, Maier 2015 and Blumberg 2018

Let's return to our intentional-phenomenological analysis. We said above that there are two possible reflective modifications of episodic recollection's 'pre-reflective' primary mode. First, we can reflect *within memory*. When we do this, we switch object-awareness from the *past event* to the mode, namely perception, in which the past event was originally given. Let's call this modification *secondary memory* (I say significantly more about it below). There is also *reflecting on memory*. When we do this, we take the entire intentional experience itself – memory and its intentional object – as our theme. This is doubtless the kind of reflective focus paradigmatic of usual philosophical and scientific reflection.[45]

Before proceeding it will be important to clarify some connected questions. First, what more precisely distinguishes *pre-reflective* experience, of which I am suggesting 'primary memory' is an instance, from *reflective* experience, of which I am suggesting both 'reflection within' and 'reflection on memory' are instances. Pre-reflective intentional experiences, as the name suggests, are precisely those experiences we 'live through' or otherwise undergo or enjoy *prior to* any form of reflection which 'disengages' from the kind of 'fixation' or 'absorption' on the relevant intentional objects which is characteristic of precisely pre-reflective experience. Consider, for illustration, the difference between (i) *living through* a conscious episode of joy whose 'focus' is precisely *not the joy itself* but that joy's intentional object – say a wonderful event that is unfolding before one – and (ii) a temporally distinct conscious *reflection* which takes as its intentional object precisely *that very episode of joy* (including its object). In this sense, *pre-reflective experiences* themselves, or aspects thereof, are the objects or 'themes' of reflective experiences.[46]

Now, while here is not the place to get into all the details of phenomenological methodology, let me note one further important point in this context which will be relevant for our purposes. Husserl takes the kind of reflection in play in our above example, and indeed in the case of what I above called 'reflection on memory' – that is where we take 'memory and its intentional object' as our object – to be an instance of what he calls *natural reflection*. What is supposedly characteristic of 'natural reflection' is that it is conducted within what he calls the 'natural attitude'. The key features of the natural attitude are as follows: (a) a pervasive interest in the truth-status of our presentations

[45] Failure to make these distinctions, or indeed a blurring of them, can give the false impression that memory experience, in its primary mode of 'living in the memory', is partly introspective in character, motivating the idea that *past perceptual experience* is part of its manifest content.

[46] This is not necessarily to deny the experiential possibility of, say, *experiencing joy* and simultaneously *reflecting on one's experience of joy* (although this would be atypical), but the 'reflective modification' given our characterisation of pre-reflective and reflective experience would necessitate a disruption of the focus characteristic of the pre-reflective experience (i.e., for at least the duration that I'm also reflecting and so 'thematizing' the pre-reflective joy I couldn't be (at least not entirely) focused on the intentional object of that joy.

or representations of objects in the world, for example whether (in contemporary terminology) our intentional experiences are veridical – whether our intentional experiences represent things are as they are; (b) the acceptance of a range of background common-sense and scientific-metaphysical theories as explanatory of those experiences and their objects.[47]

Interestingly, Husserl thinks that as long as our reflections on intentional experiences remain in the 'natural attitude', we will be blind to 'structural features' (or what the classical phenomenologists also called 'noetic features'; see below) of intentional experiences, qua the relevant *modes or kinds of experience* that they are, given the pervasive forms of 'interest' characteristic of that attitude. As such, what is required to bring such structural features to light is a supposedly distinct form of reflection, and one which is not motivated by the central characteristics and interests (i.e., cognitive attitudes) of 'natural reflection', which Husserl calls 'phenomenological reflection'. Husserl writes that the 'proper task of reflection' (for a phenomenologist) on intentional experience 'is not to repeat the original process', which would presumably be to 'naively' describe an intentional experience and its objects (as in 'natural reflection'), say with a view to its veridicality or non-phenomenal causal underpinnings, 'but to consider it and explicate what can be found in it'.[48] This would be engaging in *phenomenological reflection*. In our case, 'secondary memory' is an instance of this more restricted and specific kind of phenomenological reflection, whose aim is to 'thematize' and so explicate a 'structural feature' of episodic recollection, qua the relevant mode of experience that is, and in so doing bring to light its *structural dependence* on past perception. In this respect the guiding motivations for the switch to 'secondary memory' is to better understand episodic recollection as recollective experience *qua* phenomena by explicating the 'noetic character' of the *intentional mode* 'remembering'. 'Secondary memory', as reflecting within memory, is therefore a rather more specific and restricted *phenomenologically-motivated* form of reflection, and therefore not one typical subjects in the usual run of things will engage in; typical subjects are much more likely, for example, to engage in 'natural attitude' style reflections on their episodic recollections, for example asking whether *things really were* as my episodic recollection *represents them as having been* (i.e., whether how I remember that event is in fact how it was).[49]

With these clarifications in place we can now see that our phenomenological-intentional analysis needs to focus on the following question. Given that we want to avoid the Past Perceptual

[47] see Husserl 1970 [1936] §40-1: 149-155.

[48] See Husserl 1977 [1931] §15: 34.

[49] In this respect the transition from 'primary' to 'second memory' is motivated on theoretical grounds by the desire for *phenomenological explication* of the relevant recollective experiences. Of course the phenomenologist can *cease* to be engaged in phenomenological reflection, and in doing so can at least in principle return to a state of 'primary memory'.

Appearance claim, but maintain some version of the Recalling Past Perception condition – or at least explore how something in the vicinity of the Recalling Past Perception condition could be true – how is it that past perception could figure in episodic recollection when I am pre-reflectively *living in the memory*? The transition from primary memory to secondary memory, and the redirection of object-awareness in this shift, gives us a clue. Critically, in the move to secondary memory, in that form of phenomenological reflection, what we don't have is the thematising of what was, in primary memory, a *background object*. The sense in which secondary memory thematises something that was merely in the background in primary memory shouldn't be construed on the model of the selection of some previously unattended 'item' or 'object' from a phenomenal background of appearing things or objects. Since to think in this way is to fall back into a version of the Past Perceptual Appearance claim, albeit one which would have it that in primary memory past perception *appears* (or 'as if' appears) but is not the 'primary object' (and so past perception would still be part of the *content* of memory experience).

Rather, what occurs in this shift to secondary memory, as a reflective act where I reflect *within memory* as a form of *phenomenological reflection* (or reflection in the 'phenomenological attitude'), is that we come to recognise the dependency of primary memory on past perception by making explicit (by 'explicating') a structural feature of primary memory that was in some way already phenomenally given before the shift. Indeed, this ties into a further plausible thought which is linked to a further methodological presupposition of Husserlian phenomenology. This is that, put simply, the kind of reflection engaged in by the phenomenologist should not, and if done correctly, cannot, generate or 'produce' phenomenal objects, items, or features with respect to which there was simply *no phenomenal awareness whatsoever* in the 'naïve' pre-reflective perceptual experience. So, by these lights, rememberers must enjoy *some kind* of conscious awareness of this structural feature – it must in some sense be 'there', ready to be explicated by the phenomenologist. Yet, when we are 'living in the memory' we don't have object-awareness of structural features of the recollective experience we are undergoing, and cannot do so, since to 'live in the memory' is precisely to have one's object-awareness singularly directed at and captured by the *past event* one is remembering.

If this proposal is along the right lines, we will want to know more about this structural feature, which is supposedly brought to light in the shift to secondary memory. As a start, here is a claim which reflects it:

> Perceptual Medium claim: episodic recollection involves the re-production of the *perceptual medium or mode* – the past perception – through which that event was originally given.

Given this claim, past perception acts as a structural mediator. Put otherwise, past perception serves as the 'vehicle' or 'mode' of memory intentionality such that the intentionality of episodic recall embeds, on the 'subject side' – so not the content-side – a reproduction of the [past perception] <of the event>. This structural feature on the 'mode' side has to remain 'unthematized' such that object-awareness can go *through it* to the past event. And this is why the phenomenology of memory intentionality still *seems direct* or transparent when I am 'living the memory' in the sense that it does not present itself to its subject as involving awareness of past perception as a meditating entity or object.[50] Now it might be further asked, what is the specific 'medium' or 'mode' as it figures in the Perceptual Medium claim. Two central dimensions need emphasising here. In the first instance, in the phenomenological reflection involved in 'secondary memory' we become thematically aware that my memory is indeed of some extra-mental event or episode that I earlier *perceptually experienced*, and not, say, merely of some earlier imagining.[51] We might also think that I become thematically aware that the episode I now remember I earlier experienced in *vision*, rather than (say) touch or audition – so there is *perceptual mode specificity*.

At this point, a contrast with a different form of mediation is helpful. Consider the more familiar case of depiction and mediation through physical images in perceiving paintings (i.e., pictorial representation). Say I am looking at a painting of Napoleon. For me to take this perceived object to be a painting of Napoleon, I have to interpret it as such, in the sense that I have to take the painting *to be a representation* of Napoleon. What is minimally necessary for pictorial representation of this kind is that I take some of the features of the painting as representing an object (in our case, a person), which is ontologically distinct from it, in virtue of there being a relation of resemblance between the two. Clearly, a condition of possibility on pictorial representation of this kind is that I have to be consciously aware of two objects, namely the painting itself and what I take the painting to represent (the mediating object and the intentional object). In this case we have a paradigmatic form of mediated intentionality: save the precise details, I get to be *aware of Napoleon* – the intentional object – by being aware of something that operates or functions as a 'stand in' for him given that he is absent, namely the painting of Napoleon, such that the painting acts as a mediating *object* of awareness.[52]

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[50] For discussion of some of these issues see Vendler 1984. There might be a different sense in which episodic recollection is given as 'mediated', namely by the relevant contents viz the representation of the past event (the 'memory images').

[51] See 'Concluding Remarks and Outstanding Issues' for some further thoughts on a connected issue concerning the epistemic significance of structural features of remembering.

[52] See Hopkins 1998; Lopes 1996; and more recently Jagnow 2019 for further discussion.

But when I am 'living in the memory' past perception does not and cannot operate like this – it is not mediation through awareness (even background awareness) of an ontologically distinct mediating object of which I am directly aware, which functions as a 'stand-in' for something that is not so directly given (where the former in some sense or other resembles the latter). Rather, what we have is structural mediation, or what we might call mediation through *experiences themselves*, rather than mediation through objects (see below for some further thoughts on this kind of structural meditation in episodic recollection, its effects on the content of memory experience, and why it evades entirely clear philosophical explication).

Importantly, with this discussion in place, we can formulate a revised version of our Recalling Past Perception Condition to reflect the points that have been made:

> (Revised) Recalling Past Perception Condition on Episodic Recollection: in *experientially recollecting* a particular past event, I *recollect* the relevant event through a re-production of the perceptual medium – the past perception – which structures my memory experience.[53]

With this revised condition, we can also provide more detail concerning the idea of 'living in the memory', that is, episodic recollection as a pre-reflective experience in which object-awareness is singularly focused on the past event. This kind of living in the memory – where the 'mode' side is understood as embedding a re-production of the past perception – is an oblique way of *living in the past perception*, such that the object of the past perception, the relevant past event, is what intentional awareness is directed towards. This is what allows intentional awareness to be displaced towards the past, and so singularly focused on the properties of the relevant events, and the objects they involve.

Now, at this point, I want to return to the themes of transparency since an issue looms. In section 2, I argued against the development of the Recalled Past Perception condition in terms of the Past Perceptual Appearance claim by leaning on considerations of transparency. I said that the experiential content of episodic recollection is characterised by transparency in the specific sense that *past perceptions* themselves don't figure in the phenomenal content. However, is it the case that

[53] Something similar to this claim is reflected in Soteriou's 2018 discussion of the way episodic recollection involves the 'representation' of a perceptually-based temporal perspective, as a distinctive 'here and now' that is *not* the 'here and now' of current perceptual experience, and whose precise temporal location is determined by the temporal location of the past event. It strikes me the way in which episodic recollection is able to 'temporally decentre' in this perceptual way turns on its being *structured* by past perception, rather than representing past perception, although there is lots more to be said on this complex issue of episodic recollections' temporal phenomenology.

with this Revised Recalling Past Perception condition in place, we now have to reject Transparency for episodic memory? The response is no, albeit with a caveat. There is nothing in the Revised Recalling Past Perception condition that should lead us to deny that the *experiential content* of episodic recollection is transparent in the aforementioned sense. However, consider the following formulation of the Transparency thesis: a state is transparent if when attempting to attend to the state itself one inevitably ends up attending only to its intentional objects. The possibility of exercising *secondary memory* – as a reflective act in the phenomenological attitude, and so coming to recognise the dependency of primary memory on past perception by making explicit a structural mode-based feature of primary memory – forces us to refine this transparency thesis for episodic memory. Since in *secondary memory*, elements of the intentional structure of episodic recollection are thematised, and specifically elements of that intentional structure that reveal a dependency relation between recollective experience and past perception. By *reflecting within* memory in this way, we do not merely come to recognise that the experience we are undergoing is in a specific mode, say a *memorial* one rather than a *perceptual one* (in the way that *reflection on* perceptual experience might reveal that the experience we are enjoying is a visual one, say), but come to recognise the structural complexity of the memorial mode in terms of its embedding a re-production of the past perception. No such structural complexity, viz. dependency on different and more 'fundamental' intentional modality, is revealed to be present in phenomenological reflection on perceptual states. Indeed we might plausibly think that what we have hit on here is an *experiential reflection* of what Gareth Evans and John Campbell call the 'recursive' or 'stepwise' character of memory,[54] or the specific 'experiential parasitism' (borrowing Liefke's term)[55] of episodic recollection, in terms of its dependence on information or evidence sources that we have gathered in some *non-memorial perceptual way*, whereby episodic memory is precisely *not* a self-standing source of information about the world in the way that perceptual experience clearly is.

Now, trying back to the motivations that were originally provided for the Recalling Past Perception Condition, we can say the following (where what follows will partly explain why intentional awareness of the events remembered in episodic recollection does not actually imply having the same experience again). Here, it will be helpful to mention, for instruction and context, a further claim that is found in the intentional analysis of experiences provided by the classical phenomenologists. A near dictum of classical phenomenology is that intentional experiences as *lived through* (rather than as reflected on, either 'natural' or 'phenomenological'), afford awareness

[54] Evans 1982: 127; Campbell 1993: 237-8.

[55] See Liefke 2024.

of what the phenomenologists call their 'act-characters' or 'noetic qualities' – what we have called structural features of intentional modes – but these are not 'objectified' or 'thematized' (i.e., intentional objects in those very experience).[56] A connected key claim of the classical phenomenologists is that these 'noetic qualities', these mode-side structural features, always have a content-based counterpart or 'correlate' in the relevant pre-reflective intentional experience. For example, according to Jean-Paul Sartre, the supposed 'noetic character' of perception as receptive is at least partly responsible for the fact that the perceptual object is given as a spatially and temporally present real denizen of the world, so having a sense of presence or reality.[57]

In the case of episodic recollection, a similar kind of phenomenological claim can be made. We can say that when I am living in the memory (as obliquely living in the past perception) the mode-side structural feature of memory experience, as embedding a re-production of the past perception, 'leaves its mark' or qualifies the experiential content – the particular *past event* – by imbuing it with the quality (the 'feeling) of *familiarity* ('againness') and qualifying it *'as if perceived'* (so being quasi-perceptual). These would be the so-called counterparts or correlates of what the phenomenologists would call the 'noetic quality' of memory as *re-productive* (rather than say *receptive* as in perception), that is, the mode-side structural feature of memorial experience as reflected in the (Revised) Recalling Past Perception condition.[58]

In this context, it is, however, worth noting that there may be good reasons why this structural feature of episodic recollection – its so-called 'noetic quality' of *reproductivity and dependency* – is somewhat resistant to entirely clear articulation by way of philosophical analysis. Again, to re-emphasise, a key claim which runs through classical phenomenology is that 'noetic act-characters' as lived through, that is, conscious experiences themselves and their structures, are not given as intentional objects of consciousness.[59] Yet given that phenomenological reflection 'objectifies' its theme, then such 'noetic features' cannot be described in terms which would capture them *exactly* how they are given or 'lived through' in experience. In this sense, there is a well-motivated philosophical explanation for why structural features, of the kind reflected in the Past Perception meditation claim, can only be brought to light somewhat imperfectly (e.g., with the use of

[56] See Husserl 1982: §38; §96; Sartre 2004b: 41-5.

[57] Husserl also, along with a range of contemporary philosophers of mind, emphasises this dimension of perceptual experience in his talk of the object of perception being *given in the flesh* (see Husserl 1997 [1907] §4: 12). For contemporary discussion see Matthen 2005; Dokic 2012; Dokic and Martin 2017.

[58] Teroni 2017: 21 likewise suggests that the 'feeling of familiarity' in memory experience is a 'mode' or 'attitude' side contribution to the phenomenology of memory.

[59] See Husserl 1982: §38; Sartre 2004: 41-5.

metaphors like 'obliquely living in the past perception' or by detailing how they qualify or affect the manifest content of episodic recall).

Let me close this discussion by making two final points about the connection between my positive proposal and some debates in contemporary philosophy of memory.

One outstanding worry with the positive phenomenological proposal is that it is arguably in tension with a significant empirical consensus that remembering is *constructive*. Firstly, empirical studies of memory have demonstrated that the information stored by the 'memory system', in the transformation from short to long term memory, is schematized, interpreted, and integrated during what is termed the 'memory consolidation processes', such that the 'consolidation' of memories is a 'generative process', resulting in what is described as a 'modification and reconstruction of experience-dependent internal representations', rather than say like-for-like 'copying' or laying down in memory of information.[60] Secondly, it has been suggested that when we empirically investigate the neural bases and cognitive mechanisms involved in retrieval processes themselves what we find is *not* a more or less simple reproduction of some 'stored information', but processes which are prone to various forms of error and distortion, as well as omissions given the computational limitations of the 'memory system' itself.[61]

Now, it might be asked how such empirical claims cohere with the (Revised) Recalling Past Perception Condition on Episodic Recollection. Importantly we need to emphasise that our claim concerns the reproduction, or 'preservation' if one likes, of the *perceptual medium* through which the relevant past event, in our case, was given, as a structural feature on the 'subject-side' and so not strictly the *content* of some past perception (although as we saw above this structural feature 'leaves its mark' on the experiential content in important ways). This way of understanding the role of past perception in memorial experience is to a significant extent compatible with empirical results concerning the 'constructive' dimensions of subpersonal memory processes, if the main upshot of that work is that it would be implausible to think, for the reasons given above, that it is even possible to have an identity of overall *content* between some past perception and a current memory experience.[62] In concert with empirical work though, this might seem phenomenologically self-evident as well: the phenomenology of episodic recollection is *not* like that of 'seeing' a film reel of one's past perception of an event, which seems to reproduces *everything* that was presented to one in one's past perception – memory phenomenology doesn't have the flavour of a strict *repetition* of

[60] See Dudai et al. 2015: 28.

[61] See Schacter 2012 for an overview

[62] What was 'thematic' in the original perceptual episode will nonetheless have to figure in episodic recollection, such that we have minimally a 'preservation' of what we were object or intentionally aware of in the relevant past perception.

a past experience of an event, and we are more or less able to recognise this at the phenomenal level, that the contents of our episodic recollections exhibit 'omissions' (e.g., diminished determinacy of certain features, failure to represent background objects or aspects of the background, 'cropping' of the visual field etc). But critically what should be insisted on is that the *perceptual medium*, as a structural feature of our episodic recollections, is not plausibly so 'constructed'.

Second, one of the central debates in the philosophy of memory has concerned their *accuracy conditions*, and more specifically the debate between 'alethism' and 'authenticism'. Alethism minimally requires that successful remembering accurately represent only the relevant past event, whereas authenticism requires both an accurate representation of the relevant past event *and* one's past experience of the relevant event.[63] My positive proposal has been that in the primary mode of episodic recollection our intentional awareness is fundamentally directed at the past event, although past perception plays an irreducible structural role in episodic recollection. So it might be questioned how my proposal connects with the alethism-authenticism debate, since it seems to straddle both positions (although my discussion here has not concerned the accuracy conditions of episodic recollection).

While I will not be able to provide any decisive considerations here let me note that the issue turns on the broader question of whether one thinks that structural features of experience have epistemic significance, and connectedly the complex issue of whether there are sufficient differences between the relevant sets of contents to mark out perceptual contents as figuring in recollective experience, say in contrast to *imaginary contents*, as figuring in recollective experience (i.e., whether its self-evident given generic content-based differences that I'm episodically recollecting a *past perception* vs. *imagination*). Let me explain by a way of case: If a recollective experience is implicitly given as structured by a past perception, but is in fact based, in a way that its subject is experientially blind to, on imagination, and in a way that the intentional *content* of the recollective experience is not sensitive to or does not make evident – if for all intents and purposes the 'quasi-sensory contents' involved are indistinguishable in terms of how they present the relevant state of affairs as being (a claim that is by no means uncontroversial) – then structural differences may be epistemically significant insofar as explication of them naturally draws our attention to questions concerning the 'experiential origins' of the relevant memory contents that are being assessed for accuracy. However, this needn't involve a shift to authenticism *per se*, in that it might not be that for my episodic recollection to be accurate also requires an accurate representation of a past experience; nevertheless it will be epistemically significance what the

[63] See Bernecker 2010 Ch.8; Sant'Anna 2024; Sant'Anna and Camillo 2025.

'experiential origins' of one's representations of relevant past events, the relevant contents, are (say past perception vs. imagination) in a way which reflecting on the structural features of one's recollective experience might bring into relief. However, this connection between the phenomenological project engaged in here and the epistemological project of determining, more precisely, the accuracy conditions of episodic recollection, is speculative and warrants further exploration, which I hope to pursue in further work.

Concluding Remarks and Outstanding Issues

On the basis of our discussion, we have seen how we can hold in tandem two important claims about episodic recollection. When we are 'living in the memory' object or intentional awareness is fundamentally and singularly directed at the past event – strictly speaking, *that* is what we remember in these episodes; nonetheless, we have found a plausible role for past perception, as a structural feature, such that, as we have put it, 'living in the memory' is *obliquely* 'living in the past perception'. In the course of the discussion, we have been able to clarify the relation between episodic recollection and past perception. While below I note two outstanding issues to be raised with the positive proposal articulated here, it is a plausible account of the intentional structure of episodic recollection, specifically in relation to the role of past perception therein.

First, one of the most interesting outstanding issues concerns the relation between the Revised Recalling Past Perception condition and the Dependency Thesis (see section 2). As I have framed the Dependency Thesis here, it would involve, to put it somewhat crudely, putting the *past experience* among the intentional objects of recollection. The account articulated here can, to some extent, be understood as a *retreat* from what are arguably problematic formulations of the Dependency Thesis, viz, past experiences being among the intentional objects of recollection, while preserving an *experiential level* role for past perception and indeed an experientially-reflected dependency of episodic memory on past perception, by way of the Revised Recalling Past Perception. Further work, however, would be required to clarify this relation between the views in more detail.

Second, there is an outstanding question concerning how the phenomenologically-inflected account of the relation between episodic memory and past perception articulated here, and its appeal to the intentional mode or attitude of episodic recollection, intersects with a current strand in contemporary philosophy of memory which holds that the *phenomenology of reliving* or 'autonoesis' is due to the attitude or mode of episodic recollection[64] While more work is needed to tease out the differences between these 'attitude' or 'mode-based views, the central faultline appears to be

[64] See in particular Sant'Anna et al. 2024 for discussion.

whether the relevant attitudes or modes are understood as they have been here, namely as 'noetic characters' with distinctive and constitutive phenomenological features, or as primarily to be characterised in non-conscious functional terms, with any associated phenomenology being an 'outcome' of specific subpersonal retrieval processes whose operations involve subsuming 'outputs' under specific mnemic attitudes.[65] Clearly, the account offered here opts for the former approach, but more work is needed to clarify potential connections between the kind of phenomenological account offered here and existing accounts of episodic memory that likewise appeal to attitudes or intentional modes in an explanation of the distinctiveness of episodic memory, but which are pitched primarily at the non-phenomenological level.

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[65] See e.g., Mahr and Csibra 2018.

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