

On Moral Memory and its Influence Over Individual and Collective Moral Identities

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Abstract

Philosophers of mind and moral philosophers have contributed to a considerable number of studies that highlight the importance of memory for moral judgements. Memory is commonly appropriated to personal conditions which harbor experiences that form personal impressions towards certain motives, actions, rhetoric, or incidents. This is also appropriable to collective memory. That is, part of the foundation of a society's political structure, institutional decision-making, and overarching culture erupt as a result of a collective memory that recollects past moral dilemmas and, subsequently, produces moral rules and regulations that restrict potential tragedies and misfortunes that often result from corrupt motives, excessive self-absorption, denialism, or false narratives. *Accordingly, this paper aims to argue that memory is a vital factor for the construction of moral identities on both the personal and collective levels.* Hence, the concept of moral memory grants us an alternative, if not a novel, interpretation of personal, social, cultural, and political formations. It also introduces a metaethical perspective within phenomenological analysis in which emphasis on memory, moral experiences, and moral identities becomes part-and-parcel of phenomenology's concern.

Key words: Moral Phenomenology; Moral Memory; Personal Memory; Moral Identity; Collective Memory

Introduction

Memory harbors past experiences and impressions to reassure a person's speculative nature towards their choices, and project their history in ways that allow them to determine which actions are most beneficial for them under the guises of knowledge and not mere true beliefs. Epistemologists argue it is likely that knowledge has attributes which closely connect it to truth more so than a justified true belief, making it more fundamental and 'basic' than the process of producing a belief. Those who have knowledge are more deserving of credit than those who hold a justified true belief as the former does not tamper with luck, while the latter usually depends on luck, and not certainty, as its prime source of validation (Lackey, 2007, p. 346).

Knowing how the past shapes one's decisions ultimately influences one's own identity, one's own moral sense, and one's own knowledge of what and why certain incidents, whether it be potential or actual, are significant and relevant. It allows individuals to be aware of factual truths rather than 'opaque' truths with *deserved credit*, distinguishing between *knowing* how and why some X is true, rather than merely *believing*.

I first start discussing the issues of moral memory in relation to personal moral identity and individual moral responsibility. This section defines moral memory and its significance in identifying the main factors which constitute one's moral responsibility and help attribute a unique moral identity onto an agent. I then move on to the notion of collective moral memory and its significance in constituting a culture's moral code, duties, norms, and moral values by recollecting past moral dilemmas which over time provides this culture with its unique identity and constitution. In both cases, I aim to show how moral memory is a vital factor for recollecting past incidents that would issue moral accountability to those who transgressed moral principles, whether it be individually or collectively.

What is Moral Memory?

Moral memory does not have an independent definition. Philosophers of memory and morality have used a combinatory method, assimilating a definition of morality and its influence on memory. Morality is concerned with what is right and wrong and suggests a metric of value that measures the goodness or badness of a given behavior. Memory is the ability to recollect and process past incidents that one has learned from or experienced over the years. When recollecting past incidents, individuals tend to question whether what they did or experienced counts as morally right or wrong. This is because most people are concerned about possessing "positive moral traits and qualities" that shape their moral identities and contribute to the maintenance of societal moral values (Stanley and De Brigard 2019, p. 387). These recollections of past events and their underlying moral inquiries are what define moral memory.

One reason why moral memory has grown popular in the literature on memory is because there are increasing interests and debates concerning moral identity and its relationship with self-agency. Personal recollections tend to be biased due to our strong desires to present ourselves in good ways, in order to accumulate the necessary amount of positive impressions to sustain a strong self-esteem. For example, there is increasing evidence which suggests that people deliberately forget details of their own behaviors that would otherwise alter their self-view. Matthew Stanley and Felipe De Brigard (2019) also note that "not only the accuracy but also the phenomenology of our remembered immoral

behaviours seem to be subject to selective and strategic obfuscation, as our unethical behaviours are remembered less clearly and less vividly than our ethical deeds” (p. 388).

In other words, certain experiences are deliberately forgotten because they run counter to our biases concerning our own moral standing. The more vaguely remembered experiences are, the less inclined we are to consider them accurate moral and epistemic representations of ourselves, leading to a lesser sense of responsibility for the content of the memory. Similarly, people tend to contend with “interpersonal feedback”, a process which normally justifies praises or punishments incurred upon individuals (Stanley and De Brigard 2019, p. 389). For instance, if one receives negative responses to their behavior by others, and these responses are recognized as justified, this would weaken one’s self-assessment of their own good moral character. Therefore, one is more likely to frame these responses as insignificant to avoid reactivating their inner self-reflections, which would otherwise recognize what others see as a flaw in one’s character. Stanley and De Brigard call this process “self-threatening feedback”, which allows individuals to forget “the the most threatening feedback assailing those particular traits and qualities of utmost importance” (Ibid.).

Consequently, one major aspect of moral memory is that it assists in developing a person’s moral agency over time. For example, past moral dilemmas are recollected to maintain a degree of caution against unnecessary or avoidable consequences, whether it be in substance (the content of the moral action or incident) or form (how the moral dilemma represents itself). Moral memory also assists people in protecting themselves from unnecessary identity crises that could lead individuals into a state of disarray, confusions, and extreme insecurities. This distances them from undesirable pasts in order to experience “self-enhancement and self-protection” (Stanley and De Brigard 2019, p. 389).

Of course, there are ways in which one could totally detach themselves from their past ‘self’. Such detachments are sometimes a result of one’s insistence on representing themselves with a particular virtuous trait or quality. It is more likely that such detachments occur when the person focuses on reorienting their identity along those traits in order to continue being perceived as virtuous persons. Stanley and De Brigard observed that participants who reflected upon some of their past moral actions usually identified themselves strictly with those actions, attributing virtues onto their characters without evidence pointing to their consistent performances of virtuous actions over time (Stanley and De Brigard 2019, p. 390). Participants that reflected upon their past immoral actions usually perceive a meaningful transformation in their identity from the time of the action to the present (Ibid.).

Finally, some argue that moral memory acts as a guide for individuals to assess past actions to deliver moral judgements in an intellectual and non-dogmatic manner (Perler, 2020, p. 134). Take the example claim - punishments are only effective if they are applied justly onto transgressors. This claim is evaluated according to our definition of good and evil, and by the strength of the justification given as evidence for the claim. This should result in the preservation of justice, upholding the order and

design of the moral structure of society. When properly preserved, social and cultural development ensues, which in turn causes the development of individual identity and the maintenance of their psychological wellbeing, all under the guise of refinement of moral knowledge and social justice. Thus, recollecting the past helps (a) identify the gaps that people usually overlook concerning moral action and value and, accordingly, (b) helps regulate social and cultural rules by identifying which actions or motivations are considered as morally transgressive. In other words, by recollecting past events and assigning them moral status, a collective can self-generate cultural and social moral laws and norms.

On Personal Moral Memories: Identity, Responsibility, and Moral Memory

One of the main facets of memory discussed by philosophers is known as the memory *criterion*. This criterion assesses the immediacy of memory connections and their relevancy for personal identity. As Newton Garver puts it: “A typical case would be where the criterion of memory suggests that the person of whom X is the case and the person of whom Z is the case are one and the same person” (1964, p. 781). One can therefore specify the qualities of one’s identity “without having recourse to any other standard” than memory (Garver 1964, p. 782). Drawing out connections between memory and personal identity provides philosophers with tools to distinguish between what I will define as ‘fundamental’ and ‘surplus’ memories. Fundamental memories are ones that are closely tied with one’s personal identity. Such memories are constitutive of one’s values, thoughts, ideas, beliefs, etc., such that removal of these memories from an individual would cause dramatic shifts in their character. On the other hand, surplus memories do not hold major influences on one’s character, or affect one’s beliefs or values. They merely reflect some past incident. This distinction marks a vital idea: the essence of ‘the self’. ‘The self’ is a substance that cannot be further deconstructed, for it is the core which characterizes a person’s moral, social, and psychological fabric, and is in turn intimately tied to fundamental memories. As Hegel (2018) points out in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*:

Observational psychology, which at first recounts its perceptions of the *universal modes* which it encounters in the active consciousness, finds all sorts of faculties, inclinations, and passions, and since, in the enumeration of this collection, the *memory* of the unity of self-consciousness defies repression, psychology must at least go so far as to be astonished that such a contingent medley of heterogeneous things can be together in the spirit, as in a bag, particularly too since they show themselves to be not dead, inert things but restless movements (pp. 122-123; emphasis added).

The concept of ‘the self’, here Hegel’s spirit, has one sole function: to maintain a degree of homogenous behavior, values, and ideas that are unique to their possessor. So, Hegel’s concept of ‘the self’ closely resembles the distinction between fundamental and surplus

memories by denoting “faculties, inclinations, and passions” as part of the person’s oneness in character. This oneness could only function if one’s memory identifies, distinguishes and recollects fundamental memories, as opposed to surplus memories.

Moral Recollections as Necessary Factors for Moral Identity

It is important to realize that part of what maintains the fabric of the self is that one has done x for the sake of y and, therefore, one is rightfully attributed such action. This statement exemplifies how accountability works; that one is assigned a particular status according to what memories dictate about their past deeds, legitimizing their presence within a larger group of equally accountable individuals. Accordingly, the only way moral accountability could materialize is by attributing a given set of events to the right person. It is through this process that aspects such as justice, order, stability, and self-knowledge manifest themselves. Furthermore, character traits such as temperament, ability, and *moral dispositions* are, more or less, defined by memories (Nichols 2017, p. 173). These factors must be accompanied by refinements in moral character that are supported by memories that are, as previously argued, validated by the past experiences which helped shape them.

However, some philosophers are skeptical regarding the closeness between experiencing recollections (i.e., memories) and personal identity, let alone moral identity. Imagine Sam, an amnesiac who develops new, virtuous aspirations, ambitions, and goals, because of his lack of memory. However, prior to his amnesia, Sam had immoral aspirations, ambitions and goals. Two concerns emerge. The first is that Sam does not seem to have consciously chosen to replace his immoral goals with moral ones. The second is that it is open whether we can hold Sam accountable for his past misdeeds. One way to address these questions is via Reidian phenomenology, which argues that “it is *nomologically* impossible to remember a past action without ‘the conviction that one existed at that time’”. As Stanley Klein and Shaun Nichols (2012) put it: “It is possible that the episodic memory system simply cannot produce any output unless the output includes the sense that the same self had the experience that is being remembered” (p. 683). In other words, it is a feeling of ownership of one’s own past commitments and actions and not the incident itself that dictates one’s identity (Klein and Nichols 2012, p. 688).

Therefore, for Reid, Sam’s current memory states do not store his past actions, yielding the idea that Sam is exempted from any sorts of moral accountability because he ceases to be

part of his own psychological continuity. This aligns with at least some of our intuitions of justice: we ourselves would regard it to be an injustice committed to us if we were to be punished for acts that we did not view as acts we (our psychological continuity) had performed.

Some philosophers deny that humans exhibit a sense of self only because we can recollect memories *par excellence*; that there surely must be some additional components that elevate the status of the “self” such that we compose a stratified personal identity from memories (Nichols 2017, p 175). They tend to argue that humans hold a very unique conceptual self-representation that pictures their identity in a way (a) exemplifies our unique ways of reflecting and representing our identities such that each individual hosts a set of traits that are constitutively unique to their pasts and present and/or (b) justifies some other philosophical critiques that argue that people who still lose their memories are subjected to accountability for their past misdeeds. Point (a) argues that the nature of a character complexion and trait acquiescence are so deeply embedded within the human psyche that it is difficult to alter (Klein and Nichols 2012, p. 695). This embedding seems to suggest that some aspects of our character remain the same despite time, providing support for point (b). Though how we come to interpret point (b) is controversial, the most prevalent explanation would be: if I existed in the past, then I am certainly the exact same self that once existed in the past. If I have done actions in the past while being myself, then I have inherited a moral accountability in light of the fact that *I am certainly the same exact self that once existed in the past*. Therefore, whether one holds the self to only be composed of memories or not, one is accountable for their past actions.

Quasi-Memories and the Question of Moral Accountability

Though it may seem that the question of moral accountability is settled, there still lies confusions and obscurities regarding the concept of *quasi-memories*, which somehow exempt a person from *direct* moral accountability (i.e., ones that incur moral judgements unto the person). Quasi-memories are memories that seem to pertain to some true past event, yet are not directly or explicitly held by a person’s conscious memory. From a Reidian perspective, since they are not appropriable to one specific person at a particular time, quasi-memories do not presuppose personal identity. As further argued by Schechtman (1990): ‘To have a quasi-memory is to have an apparent memory (properly caused) and to hold no view about whose memory it is’ (p. 78).

Schechtman proposes a moral and identity dilemma which sheds doubt on the soundness and clarity of quasi-memories. She argues that a given attribution of a quasi-memory must do one of two things: either presuppose a type of delusion that alters the factuality of the memory itself or presuppose an undeniable personal identity (assuming that the memory is factual) (Klein and Nichols 2012, p. 693). Suppose two extreme hypotheses:

- (a) One really did partake in past incident but loosely remembers it, intentionally or unintentionally.
- (b) One holds a false belief that they remember partaking in an activity with depth and accuracy but never actually happened, subjecting it to a false memory.

Again, the question of accountability arises: does an individual who holds a quasi-memory deserve to be held accountable for their action or non-action? The central issue here involves differences between what one *knew* in the past as opposed to what we *currently know* of the past; that “what one *now* knows, thinks, and feels, is different to what one *then* knew, thought, and felt” (McCarroll and Sutton 2017, p. 116). Irregularity between these two strongly alters the relationship between the individual and their past actions, making it difficult for the self and others to hold one morally accountable.

One way to resolve this might be to say that we are morally accountable for actions that one is morally responsible for. I consider moral responsibility as being contingent on moral memory, and is only attributable when an individual vividly recollects their past with clear, unequivocal, and verifiable evidence. That is, moral responsibility is contingent on recollecting certain moral instances that are substantiated through one’s awareness of first-order, or fundamental, moral propositions. It is natural to think that one is responsible for preserving a good moral character if they possess good “moral memories”, and that one suffers from bad moral character if they possess bad “moral memories”. However, people in possession of ‘bad memories’ – memories of upsetting experiences – are capable of not repeating these experiences upon others. We also intuitively think of these persons who do this as good – since not only do they behave morally, but they do so despite their moral experience. Likewise, we are likely to think that those who do not learn from good memories are more likely to be bad persons.

We have a duty to remember incidents to enable us to consider every possible condition with potential affective consequences; that every action holds immense value such that its

effects are experienced and noticed both by the agent committing the action and by the wider community (Blustein 2017, p. 352). This raises our moral sensitivities for past and future considerations. But this moral sensitivity also shapes our characters, namely, by highlighting our proclivities to react in certain ways for certain triggers. The way we react is indicative to how much self-knowledge we hold and whether or not our identities truly represent our moral conscience. If an individual continually and consistently rebukes past wrongdoings with honesty and commitment, then we can assume with reason that their moral conscience is genuinely good and their current identity is sufficiently representative of such moral status.

Moral Phenomenology as an Analysis of Moral Identities

Having to argue what constitutes one's moral conscience must be followed with the following question: what are the conditions underlying one's memory of their moral principles? The answer to that is linked to *moral phenomenology* - moral experience. Moral memory is intimately tied with phenomenological principles, as it is derived from an agent's direct experience of moral phenomena. Part of our moral knowledge is gained by experience that (1) motivates us to engage in participating or avoiding certain activities, (2) allow us to produce impressions about these activities and shape our temperaments towards them, and (3) permit us to produce first-order moral propositions. First-order moral propositions are shaped according to our direct assessments of a person's moral conscience. These impact our memories of a particular event or person, allowing for judgements to ensue either towards the person's traits or their overall character (Horgan and Timmons 2005, p. 59). We could characterize this reconstructive process as follows:

1. An agent starts identifying the axiological – morally relevant - features of a given incident.
2. Identifying axiological features allows one to structure moral principles and values in ways that contribute to strengthening their moral obligations, consequently producing basic principles.
3. Those moral obligations act as standards for one's actions to be reflected upon. As Edmund Husserl remarks, these standards are constructed upon past experiences. Husserl's argument is that memory presupposes past experiences, which indicates that experience has "its own span or extension" (Carman 2017, p. 557), taking space from one's character to reflect upon the past and anticipate for the future (i.e., assigning rewards or punishments, characterizing virtues and vices, eventually leading to ascribed

moral judgements). Husserl further claims that because “temporal openness of the present is a necessary condition of experience as such”, then it “must *a fortiori* be a condition of the possibility of remembering things experienced in the past” (Carman 2017, p. 558).

Accordingly, moral memories are memories substantiated by first-order moral propositions which are formed by the agent’s position in the world and the aggregation of beliefs generated by their past experiences. Consider the following propositions:

If S apparently remembers that p, then S is thereby aware that she seemed to perceive that p.

This proposition states that a subject’s memory is composed of their apparent awareness of what they perceived and that their memory is not linked or related to direct testimonies or subjective reasoning (Fernandez 2006, p. 44). Thus, one could argue that two key factors characterizing the relationship between memory and experience are (a) first-person factual and verifiable perception of objects and moral properties and (b) first-person experience of events which impress on a person’s memories, especially ones that are emotionally provocative.

If S has a memory experience M that she would express by saying that she remembers that p, then the content of M is p.

This claim states that each memory experience acts as a representation of the propositional content, that identifies with the set of truth-conditions that an experience is grounded in. These truth conditions refer to a ‘causal chain’ between memory experience, past perceptual and conceptual experience, and the interaction with objects or events.

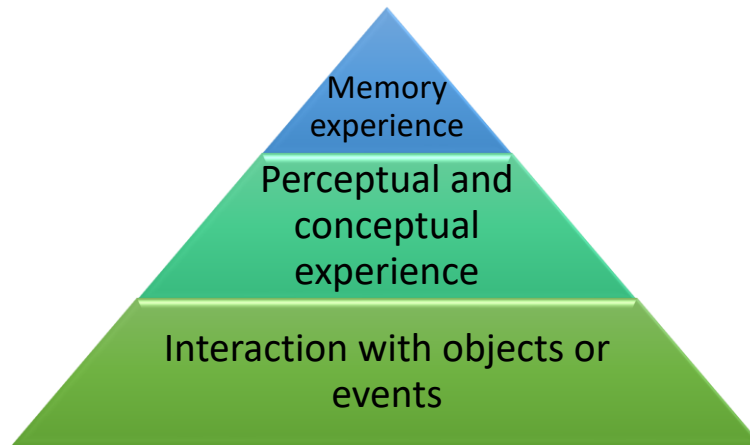


Figure 1. A hierarchized depiction of the causal chain for memory experience.

By providing a foundation for moral memory, this causal chain then produces a moral identity that is unique to the individual. This unique identity guides their moral judgements. However, how could moral memories, let alone a moral identity, be produced by interacting with events or objects (more so for the latter) that are non-axiological? While an individual interacts with non-axiological properties, the meaning which impresses the individual is then treated as a tool that extracts axiological properties from non-axiological properties. Knowing that impressions are driven by emotions, extracting axiological from non-axiological properties is best done through emotional states. As John Drummond (2008) argues: “In responding affectively to these non-axiological properties, the subject has sensations of pleasure and pain, liking or disliking, approbation or disapprobation, which, by virtue of their attachment to the underlying presentation, ground a feeling-act that values the object” (p. 38). Valuing an object, in this case being a moral proposition, allows an individual to produce a purpose for it, dictating factors such as its significance relative to its appropriate context. This would later allow individuals to pose judgements according to their cognitive insights of the object’s content, giving them a particular experience that substantiates the very “span and extension” that constitutes the nature and form of one’s memory.

On Collective Moral Memory and Collective Moral Identity

Like personal memory, collective memory is comprised of multiple factors that lead a shared commitment to cultural, social, and moral norms and values. Those commitments are structured in unique ways and vary in form depending on culture and history. Commitments to norms and values often happen through constant communication, interaction, and eventually agreements or disagreements

between individuals over certain normative principles. This is what J.L Mackie (1977) defines as “intersubjectivity”, or the amalgamation of subjective valuations that lead to a collective agreement on what constitutes morality (p. 22). Collective memory is an abstract, or “metaphorical” (Gedi and Elam 1996, p. 35), representation of the social substance which produces a framework “where concrete individuals are capable of transforming their obscure images into clear concepts” (p. 38), where in this case ‘obscure images’ denotes moral conceptualizations.

But how do these collective commitments erupt in the first place? Firstly, every successful action is connected to its corresponding intention. Such connection is evaluated according to a set of standards that are intersubjectively agreed upon, i.e., actions and intentions which produce desirable effects are collectively considered as good while actions and intentions which produce undesirable effects are bad. When this connection arises and becomes normalized, people will intuitively act according to society’s moral expectations. We can then assume that people hold intentions which concern not only their actions but also other people’s actions, or in other words each person’s intention is predicated on what others intend on doing as well (Butterfill 2017, p. 358).

Like personal moral identity, collective moral identity is configured by a collective moral memory. Cultural standards that represent a society’s moral framework are contingent on that society’s past moral experiences. This relationship is also used to meet future moral expectations. Previous moral mistakes are constantly recalled and reflected upon to restrict their reoccurrence in the future. For example, due to collective recollection of the acts of 20th century fascists, acts that align with fascist values causes the outcasting of those who committed the acts. However, this only holds if individuals treat their collective identity as having meaning. A collective identity is considered to be meaningful if and only if its members gain insight into one another’s moral and social experiences, therefore collectively producing an overarching moral law that dictates their social affairs. By delving into the memories and experiences of others, we come to know how similar conditions affect us differently, and from that we extract the different impressions held by people, enabling us to envisage their beliefs, emotions, values, behaviors, commitments, and goals (Fivush and Graci 2017, p. 270). When aggregated, these factors construct a cultural and social identity which enjoys a process of universalization, particularly being recognized first among those inhabiting the society and then acknowledged by their neighboring societies and cultures.

Recollecting past incidents that hold immense moral value is vital for historical continuity, social trust and social stability (interterritorial or extraterritorial) precisely because it allows for a mutual agreement on who must be held morally accountable for their actions. Not only does this maintain the fabric of a society’s moral law, duties, and social rules as well as regulations, thus ensuring “moral and intellectual continuity (Wang 2008, p. 310), but it also allows for individuals to reflect on their pasts to further develop their futures and bring about goals that benefit everyone equally. Thus, unlike personal

moral memories as well as personal moral judgments which are often asymmetrical in nature (i.e., the negative outweighs the positive or the inaccurate outstrips the accurate, whether it be on the side of recollections or judgements), collective moral memories and collective moral judgments are more likely to be *less* asymmetrical due to the constant negotiations and dialogues held by different members of society. The functionalist theory of memory is best representative of this case. Take the following:

For any subject S and event e, S remembers e just in case S has some mental image *i* such that *i* tends to cause in S a disposition to believe both that e happened and that S experienced e to happen, and *i* tends to be caused in S by having experienced e to happen. (Fernandez, 2018, p. 64)

Implementing such a theory on a collective basis yields the following - a society recollects event e through some general mental image *i* if, first, *i* is shared by all participating members of society S and, second, this image is agreed upon as being a justified representation of either their direct past experience or their knowledge of their past. However, not all justified propositions are accurate. Similarly, what if *i* is inaccurate due to a lack of fact-checking strategies existing between the memories of individuals? There is an easy solution: a society collectively and co-operatively strategizes fact-check mechanisms that encourages citizens to hold other citizens accountable for their actions. This mechanism is underpinned by a collective effort to evaluate past incidents as well as standardize and formalize rules concerning transgressions against the society's moral values and duties. Hence, with rigorous collective assessments comes sufficient understanding for the content of memories.

This does not entail reliability, however. Even though collective moral memory suffers less from individual asymmetry, its fact-checking dynamic is more susceptible to collective asymmetries. Take a highly censored state such as North Korea. In these states, informational exchange is heavily restricted, such that it manipulates people's sense of being, becoming, and consciousness of the world surrounding them. Whatever image appears to their collective consciousness is symmetrical in terms of local moral knowledge yet morally and factually questionable in terms of intercultural perspectives and historical accuracies. Thus, collective memory produces a sense of collective consciousness which precedes those of individual memories and introduces a sense of uniformity amongst its citizens (Funkenstein 1989, p. 13) that is not necessarily grounded in honest recollections or morally virtuous histories.

Despite the fact that some political conditions may cause some erroneous collective testimonies, I will argue that some of the methods implemented by the collective are nonetheless more rigorous than individual methods. Some of those methods are:

1. Gaining new ways to conceptualizing the past, such as through lessons learned strategies which result in the production of guidelines for conducting future commitments and measures.
2. Tracking repeated experiences such that we generalize or composite them for the sake of continuity and consistency.
3. Introducing social and personal meaning(s) into certain memories
4. Employing certain ‘knowhows’ and methodologies (i.e., objects, rituals, practices, etc.) to cohere certain purposes or underlying meanings of a particular memory designated by a collective agreement, therefore producing a collective belief towards its reliability (Campbell 2014, p. 32-33).

The significance behind those methods is that they allow for:

- (A) An emotional tie to materialize between citizens or members of a community.
- (B) A raising of the standard of trust between citizens or members of a community (which in turn increases the likelihood of informed moral decisions and judgements).
- (C) Allows for all members to actively participate in dialogues and reevaluate each other’s ideas and judgements to better contextualize and recontextualize them according to the moral, social, and cultural conditions at hand.

It is an incumbent duty upon all participating citizens to recollect past instances to avoid repeating similar mistakes and violating their society’s moral codes. However, what constructs such a duty to start with? The duty to collective recollections is based off three steps that Fivush and Graci (2017) enlist (p. 271):

1. Co-constructing and sharing narratives with different members of the society such that “socio-cultural norms of narrative practice” is ensued.
2. Formulating structures and methodologies that mediate different personal experiences such that a narrative identity materializes.
3. Producing conditions and techniques whereby social bonds between people are maintained and structured in such a way that emotional coherences are sustained over time (i.e., people understand each other emotionally).

The purpose of such duties is to elicit strong bonds between people and produce effective sentiments towards ethical matters represented by collectively shared memories of their past.

The stronger those empathetic responses are, the more affirming moral judgements become. These empathetic responses are contingent on dialogues and emotional engagements between people which engenders a general consensus towards what and how actions must be conducted. Jan Assman and John Czaplicka (1995) argue that such dialogues are important because they govern the way that citizens perceive each other. Citizens perceive each other as a collective which happens to share the same fate, same collective history, and same communal experiences (p. 126), thereby recognizing a general framework for morality that binds all people equally. Hence, we can assume that collective memory helps instigate a communitarian ethos that best represents duties and moral laws which legitimize moral judgements targeted towards transgressions. But this communitarian ethos is only possible through culture's reflective abilities to perceive themselves in ways that would allow them to:

- A. Reevaluate their own standards and claims that makes them unique and distinguishable from other cultures that harbor different experiences and memories. Therefore, they reinterpret their own practices by reevaluating their methods of recollecting their past.
- B. Attempt to explain and criticize the mistakes and/or defects found in what is assumed as being part of the culture.
- C. Attempt to produce a representation of the social system that guides the people in ways to enhance their self-image, both internally and externally, and therefore affirm a personal and moral identity.

What is the link between personal and collective memories? By harmonizing one's individual memories with others' memories, the collective can begin to identify the parameters of what constitutes a fair and authentic moral judgement. This, over time, allows personal memories to become part of the collective's memory. However, having many individuals who "all happen to remember the same episodes" does not necessarily entail a collective memory (Sutton 2008, p. 32). Rather, philosophers of memory and social theorists largely view collective moral memory as a byproduct of "constructive processes at all levels from the individual to the communal to the cultural", that eventually reduce into "socially sharable" memories (Wang 2008, p. 314) that are transitive as well as spatially and temporally consistent. That is, personal moral memories are distributed according to their factuality which is determined by an intertemporal accounting that "keeps track of past judgements and actions to check how they [the people] can constrain present decisions and plans" (Sutton 2008, p. 42).

Collective moral memories are thus contingent on individuals that managed to *share* their personal moral memories which *de facto* prompts moral standards that are either related to moral propositions or are extracted from non-moral propositions. Collective moral memories then substantiate the veracity of an individual's personal moral memory, making it relevant for delivering judgements for issues such as intentions or conduct. This relevancy is then utilized uniquely by individuals. For instance, individuals may disagree whether to preserve or change modern conditions from past conditions, but both positions originate from the same collective moral memory.

Not only does sharing memory experiences create a collective moral memory, but it also allows for the possibility to create what Wang defines as “norms of remembering” (Wang 2008, p. 309). Norms of remembering usually includes the management and regulation of a society's communitarian ethos by standardizing the appropriate means for assessing recollections, whether it be personal or communal. By understanding and knowing the correct ways of recollecting, one could begin (a) distinguishing between disingenuous and trustworthy memories and (b) distinguishing between apparent and actual moral memories (Cowan 2020, p. 209). This allows citizens to attach themselves to a particular social identity as it becomes clearer and therefore more accessible. The clearness and accessibility of social identity is nothing more than the ability to link impressions sharply and accurately with values. For some would argue that we “first see and then believe” (Huebner and Glazer 2017, p. 286). However, collective memory is predicated on expectations that result from past experiences. Past experiences are primarily driven by emotions and impressions that first develop as beliefs and later on transform into knowledge via long-term evaluations. In this case, those impressions are hallmarks for moral norms and accordingly influence our moral behavior. Amalgamating them leads to the construction of values such as rights, justice, and order which are maintained through informed and coherent intellectual processes and consistently committed socio-cultural practices.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to outline the dynamics and importance of moral memory on both personal and collective levels. The first section outlined what moral memory is and its contributions in contemporary literature for the philosophy of memory. The first half of the second section outlines the ways in which moral memory constitutes the foundations of moral responsibility in relation to the individual's identity. This relationship should allow us to perform further

research and discover more about justificatory analyses pertaining to moral judgements, that is, when and why is it appropriate to justifiably hold someone accountable for their actions. And by accurately recollecting memories and basing moral judgement on such recollections, a moral identity emerges for both the judge and the judged. Finally, the second half of the second section focuses on collective memory from a social and cultural perspective. It aims to argue that a society's culture, norms, and values arise as a result of a collectivized memory which recollects past instances and, as a result, produces future expectations that are supported by corresponding norms and regulations. This social identity then acts as a guideline that justifies the moral groundings of the society, leading to the creation of its norms, values, and other normative features which characterizes its unique 'wisdom'.

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