# UNIT-5: MEMORY

**UNIT STRUCTURE**


5.1. Learning objectives

5.2. Introduction

5.3. Definitions of memory

5.4. Characteristics of good memory

5.5. Stages of memory

5.6. Theories of memory

5.6.1. The representative theory

5.6.2. The realist theory

5.7. Forms of memory

5.7.1. Factual memory

5.7.2. Practical memory

5.7.3. Personal memory

5.8. Is memory reliable?

5.9. The indispensability of memory-knowledge

5.10. Let us sum up

5.11. Further readings

5.12. Answers to check your progress

5.13. Model questions


## 5.1. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- explain the concept of memory
- discuss characteristics of good memory
- describe the theories of memory
- discuss the forms of memory

## 5.2. INTRODUCTION

Our first questions are obvious. What precisely is memory? What is it to remember something? These philosophical questions need to be

distinguished from the similar questions that might be asked by a psychologists or neurologist. There are problems about how memory operates, about what goes on in our body or brain when we remember, about what physical and psychological factors help or hinder our remembering, and so on. These are the concern of the scientist, who investigates the functioning of the human capacity we call memory. But our question is different; we are asking what memory is in itself, what that human capacity consists in, however it may operate. We want to explain not the mechanism of memory, but its nature; not how it works, but what it is. The question is, in effect, what it is that we are talking about when we talk about memory, as we all do, without knowing anything of the physical processes involved. When we say that we remember something, what are we referring to? When we talk about remembering, what, exactly, are we talking about?

Memory means the ideal revival of an object or event or experience. It is the recall of an old personal experience which had temporarily dropped from our consciousness. It may be exemplified by taking the case of our remembering some past fact of our childhood. A witness giving evidence in a court furnishes typical example of memory. He recalls, as far as possible, the past objects and events which he had witnessed, in the order and manner of their original occurrence. Thus in memory, the fact remembered is referred to the past. But the mere dating of an event in the past is not memory; it must be dated in our own past. Hence, in strict appropriateness, memory is the recall or're-instatement' of an old experience, with the additional consciousness that we have thought or experienced in its occurrence.

**LET US KNOW**



Memory means the ideal revival of an object or event or experience. It is the recall of an old personal experience which had temporarily dropped from our consciousness.

## 5.3. DEFINITIONS OF MEMORY

For a layman, memory implies the power to remember the past experience. Psychologists have attempted to define memory in different ways. A few definitions are given below:

1. **Stout's view:** "Memory is the ideal revival of past experiences, as far as possible, in the manner and order in which they originally occurred."

2. **Woodworth's view:** "Memory consists in remembering what has previously been learnt." He regards memory as involving learning, retaining, recall and recognition."

3. **Ross's view:** Ross defines memory as a "new experience determined by the disposition laid down by previous experiences, the relation between the two being clearly apprehended."

4. **James Draver in dictionary of psychology** defines memory as the "characteristic of living organism in virtue of what they experience, leaves behind effects which modify future experience and behaviour."

   From the above definitions, we conclude that memory consists in

(i) Learning something by certain experience
(ii) Each experience leaves behind certain impressions
(iii) These impressions are recalled in order
(iv) This recall of impressions modifies future behaviour.

Memory is, therefore, the conservation of past experiences to be utilized later, as and when the occasion arises.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

Q 1: What is meant by memory?

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Q 2: What is Stout's view about memory?

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**ACTIVITY 5.1.**

Explain the definitions of memory given by various thinkers.

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## 5.4. CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD MEMORY

Good memory is a great asset. A number of characteristics distinguish good memory from bad memory. These are mentioned below:

1. **Rapid learning:** Good memory facilitates learning and not much time is wasted. Certain other factors like concentration, attention, interest are also involved in rapid learning.

2. **Longer retention:** Good memory helps a person in retaining the learnt material for a longer time.

3. **Early and accurate recall:** Early recall is another mark of good memory. Certain people cannot recall the right thing at the right time. They have bad memory. Good memory facilitates rapid and accurate recall when a certain occasion demands it so.

4. **Rapid recognition:** Early recall must be accompanied by quick recognition of the definite idea needed for certain occasion. Unless you are able to recognize the idea which provides correct answer

to a ticklish situation, you will give a proof of poor memory, and will not do well in that situation.

Thus, good memory is always serviceable and helps in recalling the required details with case, speed, accuracy and promptness. According to Stont, rapidity, quickness in length of timeand duration, promptness and accuracy are the marks of good memory.



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Memory has certain characteristics e.g; rapid learning, longer retention, early and accurate recall, and rapid recognition



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

Q 1: What are the characteristics of good memory?

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Q 2: What is rapid learning?

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Q 3: What is known as rapid recognition?

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**ACTIVITY. 5.2**

Explain the characteristics of good memory.

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## 5.5. STAGES OF MEMORY

Memory has certain stages. They are as follows:

1. **Registration or learning:** Learning or registration is the first step in memory. Whenever something is learnt, it leaves behind a record or impression. The impression is registered in our mind in the form of memory traces. There are several laws of learning which help to facilitate learning process. The other three factors are dependent upon learning.

2. **Retention:** Every experience leaves behind is residual dispositions or traces which are retained and they help its subsequent recall. This fact of retaining the traces is named retention or retentiveness. Retention is a longing state of impressions received by the mind.

3. **Recall:** Recall is the reproduction of the material learnt and retained in the mind. It implies the reviving of the memory trace of brain structure. If an idea is associated frequently, recently and vividly with an event, the recall of the latter is prompter than otherwise.

   Recall is of two types: spontaneous and deliberate. The recall is spontaneous when no special effort is involved to recall an event or a name. The recall is deliberate when we exert our mind to remember certain facts, e.g.; recall in the examination hall.

4. **Recognition:** The last and the most important factor in memory is recognition. Whenever an event or an experience is recalled, it must be recognized to be our own, i.e.; we have ourselves experienced it in the past. Recognition simply means consciousness that we have experienced the recalled event before.

To sum up, memory involves learning, retention, recollection and recognition. These four factors are interrelated. Recollection is impossible without retention and retention is useless without recollection. Again, retention and recollection both would be meaningless without recognition

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The stages of memory are registration or learning, recall, retention and recognition.

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**



Q 4: What are the four stages of memory?

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Q 5: What do you mean by retention?

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Q 6: How does recall become a stage of memory?

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Q 7: What is recognition?

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**ACTIVITY: 5.3**



Elaborate the four stages of memory.

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## 5.6. THEORIES OF MEMORY

### 5.6.1. The representative theory:

The representative theory of memory was most widely held by philosophers ranging from Aristotle to Bertrand Russell. According to the representative theory to remember is to undergo a certain sort of mental experience. In particular, it is to experience an image, a memory-image,

which reproduces some past sense-experience. The image might even be said to be literally a reproduction of the original sense-impression, which has, in the meantime, been stored away in the mind. This image provides us with the information we are then said to remember; it is because we have and experience the image that we have the particular piece of memory-knowledge. So, the distinctive feature of the representative theory is that memory is held to involve representations in the form of memory-images of what has happened. But this raises difficulties.

One such difficulty is that these representations, the memory-images, are things that occur now, when we are remembering, so that, according to the theory, what we are apprehended when we remember is not what has happened, but what is happening now. But if that is so, how can memory be awareness of the past? So Aristotle said, "how it is possible that, though perceiving only the impression, we remember the absent thing which we do not perceive." Aristotle's answer is that, just as we can see Coriscus when we look at a portrait, because the portrait is a representation of Coriscus, so we can be aware of the past when we have the present experience, because the present experience is a representation of the past. But the question now is, in what way is the present image a representation of what has happened?

One suggestion might be that this present image is not so much a fresh impression that represents the past event, as the original sense-impression produced all over again. Thus, John Locke in his Essay Concerning Human Understanding had spoken of memory as "the storehouse of our ideas" in which the various experiences we have had are laid up out of sight until we revive them.

Thomas Reid also points out that it is very difficult to revive things which have ceased to be anything, as it is to lay them up in a repository, or to bring them out of it. When a thing is once annihilated, the same thing cannot be again produced, though another thing similar to it may. Locke also acknowledges that the same thing cannot have two beginnings of

existence, and that things that have different beginnings are not the same but diverse. From this it can be said that an ability to revive our ideas or perceptions, after they have ceased to be, can signify no more but an ability to create new ideas or perceptions similar to those we had before.

The representative theory suffers from two disabilities. The theory is that to remember is to have an image that represents some past event or reproduces some past experiences. But if the image is all I have to go on, I can never tell whether it does do this, and so cannot know whether it is a memory image at all though there is no difficulty in establishing that that is what it is meant to be. So the Representative theory makes it impossible to know whether we actually are remembering, as opposed to trying to remember or thinking we remember; and as a consequence of this, it makes it impossible for memory to provide us with knowledge of the past or of anything else. If we are to avoid these difficulties it seems that, as Reid argues, we will have to make use of some other form of remembering, a form in which memory is, in Reid's words, "an immediate knowledge of something past," rather than the awareness of some present representation."

### 5.6.2. The realist theory

The realist theory of memory hopes to avoid the difficulties inherent in the representative theory by maintaining that what we are aware of, when we remember, are not representations of past items, but those past items themselves-just as, according to the realist theory of perception, what we are aware of, when we perceive, are not ideas or representations of objects in the world around us, but those objects themselves. As J. Laird puts it, "memory does not mean the existence of present representations of past things. It is the mind's awareness of past things themselves." This realist theory has been by no means as widespread as the Representative account, but it was common in the first quarter of this century, through the influence of Henri Bergson, for whose metaphysics the notion of "pure memory," a direct awareness of the past, was of central importance. Other significant realists were Alexander, Stout, and Laird, and more recently Woozley, Earle,

Taylor, and Smith; the theory was also held, in a rather different form, by Moore, Russell and Price. So, the realist theory of memory to have a memory-image is to be aware, in a unique and characteristic way, of past events. What we call the image is no more than the way this past event appears to us when we so remember it. Remembering is compared not with looking at pictures, but with looking at things themselves. According to Alexander, "the pastness of the object is a datum of experience, directly apprehended. The object is compresent with me as past. The act of remembering is the process whereby this object becomes attached to or appropriated by myself."

However, the realist theory of memory has certain objections. For example, C.D. Broad points out that the memory-image may differ in many respects from the item remembered, which suggests that the image cannot exactly be what is remembered. The answer to this is that when we describe the memory-image, we describe the item as we remember it, as it appears to us in our remembering, and this may very well differ from what actually was the case. The fact that a thing appears different from what it really is does not mean that we cannot perceive that thing itself. This applies equally whether we are talking about perception or about memory. A second objection of Broad's is that the one thing may be remembered at different times, which suggests that according to the realist, images occurring at numerically different times are nevertheless one and the same thing. The answer to this is that, if we are prepared to talk about numerically distinct appearances-which is what memory-images amount to on a realist view, there is no reason why we should not be aware of numerically distinct appearances of one and the same thing at different points in time, just as we may be aware of numerically distinct appearances of one and the same thing from different points in space.

The more serious objection to the realist theory is that it remains totally unexplained how in memory we can be aware of the past, of what no longer exists. According to Aristotle, "one might as well suppose it possible

also to see or hear that which is not present." Then Reid writes, "It is by memory that we have an immediate knowledge of things past." Hamilton adds, "An immediate knowledge of a past thing is a contradiction. For we can only know a thing immediately, if we know it in itself, or as existing; but what is past cannot be known in itself, for it is non-existent." Laird insists that the past does exist, although, of course, it does not exist now; existence includes past existence, and there is therefore no difficulty about direct acquaintance with the past. Price also maintains that talk of a past event being present to consciousness need not mean that that past event exists again in the present; it may mean only that it is presented to us and that we are now aware of it. Nothing prevents a past event from being presented to consciousness, though it may be a contradiction to say that a past event could be present in the sense of 'now existing'. But none of the above views become successful in clearing how the strange quasi-perceptual awareness of the past operates.

Moreover, it is not at all clear that the realist theory in its present form avoids the objections to the representative theory. It may or may not be an advantage to speak of a mysterious form of awareness of the past rather than of a form of awareness of mysterious present entities, but the major difficulties remain. We saw that the representative theorist seems to have no way of telling from the experience whether or not he is genuinely remembering, and therefore cannot use memory in order to arrive at knowledge of the past. The problem remains, irrespective of whether we think of the experience as looking at some present representation or whether we think of it as looking at an appearance of the past event itself. This may seem surprising, since we arrived at the realist theory precisely in order to avoid that problem. It has been argued that since we can check the accuracy of our memory-images, we must have a direct awareness of the past to check the images against. Thus Russell claims that we are certainly able to some extent to compare our image with the object remembered, so that we often know, within somewhat wide limits, how far our image is accurate; but this would be impossible, unless the object, as opposed to the image,

were in some way before the mind. According to H.H. Price, memory-images are often inadequate and known to be so. If we can detect their inadequacy and correct it, surely we must have some 'direct acquaintance' with past events themselves.

The solution to these difficulties is that memory is not to be thought of as a form of consciousness or awareness at all, but as a form of knowledge. Almost alone among those who adopted the realist approach, Stout explicitly distinguished the claim that memory provides an immediate experience of the pats from the claim that it provides immediate knowledge of the past. Stout suggests that to say that memory directly acquaints us with the past is not to say that it provides some inexplicable immediate awareness or experience of things that no longer exist, but that it provides us with immediate knowledge of the past; where by "immediate knowledge" he means non-inferential knowledge, such that the ground of the memory judgment "is not capable of being known by itself in such a way as to be asserted in a proposition distinct from the memory judgment itself as premise is distinct from conclusion" that is, Stout is suggesting that, when I make a memory judgment, this judgment is not based on some present experience of remembering, but is simply a report of what I know about the past, and as such is not based on anything apart from the fact that I know it.

The realist account was common only towards the beginning of this century and soon it led quickly to a view of memory that replaces both it and the representative account. Because if memory is explained as direct awareness of the past, this "direct awareness" might refer either to some form of experience of past events, in which case we have the realist theory or it might refer to Stout's non-inferential knowledge of the past. Indeed, the two interpretations will hardly be distinguished as long as it is held, as in Russell's theory of knowledge by acquaintance that the only way of knowing something directly or immediately is to experience it. But once we distinguish knowing from experiencing, the way is open for an entirely different approach to the problems of memory, according to which

remembering is not a type of experience, but a type of knowledge. This is the contemporary approach towards knowledge according to which memory is a form of knowledge and there is a familiar distinction between these three types of knowledge or three different ways in which we can speak of knowing things which again lead towards the three forms of memory.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

Q 8: What are the two theories of memory?

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Q 9: What is representative theory of memory?

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Q 10: Who are main advocates of representative theory of memory?

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Q 11: What is the realist theory of memory?

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Q 12: Who are the supporters of realist theory of memory?

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**ACTIVITY: 5.4**

Explain the representative theory of memory.

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Elaborate the realist theory of memory.

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## 5.7 FORMS OF MEMORY

### 5.7.1 Factual memory

Factual memory is that type of memory where we speak of knowing or remembering that something is the case that it is so e.g.; Brutus stabbed Caesar. Factual memory is factual knowledge that has been acquired in the past and does not come from present experience or observation. We can remember facts about the present and even about the future as when I remember that today is Tuesday or that I have an important appointment in the morning. The distinguishing feature of the factual memory is not that it is knowledge of the past, but that it is knowledge acquired in the past.

However, factual memory cannot be defined simply as knowledge acquired in the past, because there is always a lot of information we have acquired and forgotten. Rather, we should define factual memory as retained factual knowledge, i.e.; as knowledge we have possessed before and still possess. This definition serves to rule out only such factual knowledge as is acquired at the time in question, as when I know that something happened because I now read about it in a book. Remembering a fact is incompatible with having just learned it; if you remember it, then you knew it before.

More generally, it seems a mistake to suggest that knowledge in memory depends on past knowledge. My present knowledge that Brutus stabbed Caesar does not depend on previous knowledge that Brutus stabbed Caesar; it is precisely the same knowledge, which I still possess. But once we say that memory is the retention of knowledge, then, we do not need to think of the present knowledge as depending on the past knowledge. Retention, says Squires, is simply continuous possession. To say that memory is retained knowledge is only to say that it is knowledge possessed continuously from past acquisition up to the time of remembering.

However, there are some crucial cases where I cannot remember someone's name for a long time, and then it comes back to me, it might be said that the knowledge was nevertheless continuously possessed, that I

knew it all along even though I could not think of it. But if someone reminds me of some fact I had completely forgotten, and would not have remembered if he had not reminded me, it does not seem correct to say that I possessed that knowledge continuously. Something has been retained, something that enables me to say when reminded, "ah yes, I remember it now." But that something does not seem to be a piece of knowledge, because, before I was reminded, I no longer knew the fact in question. Hence, factual memory is not to be defined not as retained factual knowledge , but as knowledge that depends partly on something that might be called a "memory-trace."

### 5.7.2. Practical Memory

Practical memory is that type of memory where we speak of knowing or remembering how to do something, which amounts to possessing some skill or ability.Practical memory can be defined in terms of practical knowledge. To remember how to drive a car is to know how to drive one, where this is not knowledge I have just acquired, but something I knew before; just as factual memory is retained factual knowledge, so, in the same way, practical memory is retained practical knowledge. Just as practical knowledge seems to consist in possessing certain acquired abilities and skills, so too does practical memory; to remember or know how to drive a car is simply to be able to do so.

However, Brian Smith has argued that remembering how to do something is not simply a matter of being able to do it, but is more a matter of knowing what to do, of knowing that certain things have to be done-as knowing how to drive this particular car involves knowing that the starter button is on the floor, not on the dashboard. This may not affect the definition of practical memory in terms of practical knowledge, since I suspect that smith would say the same things about knowing how to do something that he says about remembering how to do it, but if Smith is correct remembering how would seem to reduce to a form of remembering that, which would mean that practical memory is not a separate form of memory distinct from factual memory. Smith argues that we can speak of someone remembering

how to do something even when he is not doing it and is perhaps unable to do it; and conversely, someone may be able to do or even actually do something without our wanting to say that he is remembering how to do it. He suggests that a purely automatic response cannot count as remembering how, but the explanation might rather be that we speak of remembering how only where we are referring to skills that have had to be acquired, more particularly skills that have to be acquired outside the normal process of development -we do not speak of remembering how to breathe, or even how to walk, as we do speak of remembering how to ride a bicycle. Nevertheless, Smith insists that someone who is doing, in a completely automatic manner, something he has learned to do, is not remembering how to do it.

### 5.7.3. Personal Memory

Personal memory is that kind of memory where we speak of knowing or remembering some particular person we have met or place we have been visited. Personal memory is the memory we have of particular items like people, places, things, events, situations that we have personally experienced. The distinctive feature of this form of memory is not that it is memory of specific items as opposed to memory of facts and skills; we sometimes speak of remembering specific items without it being personal memory that is involved.

However, Ayer has argued that it is only a contingent fact what I am calling personal memory is restricted to what we have personally experienced, since it is at least logically possible that we might remember the experiences of others. If Ayer is right, then perhaps we should modify our account to say that personal memory is memory of things as if we have experienced them for ourselves, but I am not sure that he is right. Certainly, a person could have knowledge and imagery of something he had not experienced, just as if he had experienced it, and it might turn out to be just the knowledge and imagery as was once possessed by someone else who did experience it. But the question is whether we would describe this as

remembering. A person can seem to remember something he did not experience, just as he can seem to remember something that did not happen, but seeming to remember is notitself remembering.

Personal memory consists in bringing some previously experienced thing to mind, thinking about it again, and going over what it was like, whether we realize that we have actually experienced it or not, where the ability to do this depends on our having experienced it. According to Broad, it is the one and only kind of memory which can plausibly be regarded as closely analogous to perception. For this reason Broad calls this type of memory not "personal" but "perceptual" memory



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

Q 13: What are various kinds of memory?

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Q 14: What do you mean by factual memory?

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Q 15: What is personal memory?

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**ACTIVITY.5.5**

Elaborate the different types of memory.

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**LET US KNOW**

There are three kinds of memory- factual, perceptual and personal

## 5.8. IS MEMORY RELIABLE?

The question of whether memory is reliable or not arises because if there is to be such a thing as memory knowledge, we will need some way of telling whether the facts we remember are indeed facts whether the things we remember happening did actually happen. For memory is not always correct, we sometimes think we remember various things, and it turns out that those things are not so, sometimes we are not sure, or simply do not know, whether we are remembering something or merely imagining it. This leads to the search for a "memory indicator", something that will mark off the genuine cases of memory from cases of mere imagination or of mistakenly thinking we remember. But the search proved unsuccessful; we saw that although we can tell-or rather, know without having to tell-whether we are trying to remember as opposed to deliberately making things up, there is no way of telling, from our remembering itself, whether we are remembering correctly or not. To establish that our memories are correct we have to get outside the remembering and compare what is remembered with the facts. But the trouble is it seems that the only way of getting at the facts is through memory. If we have no way of telling whether our memory is correct in any particular case, we have no way of telling whether it is ever correct. We are entitled to rely on something which proves itself as an accurate guide to the facts of the matter. But if we never tell when memory is correct and when it is not, we can never establish that it is a reliable guide to anything, and so we can never be entitled to rely on our memories. Unless we can show that memory is often correct, we cannot show that memory is reliable, we cannot be entitled to speak of memory-knowledge at all. If I am to know something from memory, or because I remember it, I have first to establish that my memory is reliable and to do that I need to establish that my memory is correct more often than not.

One simple-minded approach to the above problem would be to argue that memory is by definition infallible because so far as it is concerned we cannot be said to remember something unless it is so.But this does not solve the problem. It only shifts the problem to another field. It may be that

we cannot remember a fact unless it is a fact, but the question remains of whether we are remembering when we think we are.The problem can be stated not in terms of remembering, but in terms of seeming to remember, or 'ostensible remembering.' Again, it can be argued that factual memory is, by definition, a form of knowledge, so there can be question but that we know what we factually remember. But once the fact remains that we can think we are remembering when we are not, and the question remains of how we are to know whether and when cases of 'ostensible' remembering are in fact cases of genuine remembering.

Another argument is that we cannot show that memory is unreliable without implicitly relying on memory.We know that memory is not always correct only because we remember that it has let us down in the past, so the argument itself presupposes that memory is sometimes correct, viz., when it tells us we have gone wrong in the past: there cannot be reasonable grounds for asserting or even for suspecting the falsity of any memory-judgement unless the infallibility of some memory-judgement is assumed. Yet even if memory had never been shown to be incorrect, the problem of whether we can ever prove it correct would still remain. We don't have to presuppose the correctness of one memory-judgement in order to show that some memory-judgements are false; if I now remember or think I remember that my memory has been mistaken in the past, then either my memory has been mistaken in the past or this present memory is mistaken. Either way, some memory is shown to be incorrect, without my having to assume the correctness of any particular piece of remembering.

But any attempt to show the reliability of memory fails in its ultimate stage. Our problem of showing memory reliable turns out to be insoluble. We cannot rely on anything not even memory itself, unless we already rely on memory. But it is nothing but a circularjustification and according to J. T. Saunders"a circular justification is no justification at all. It only serves to show that the reliability of ostensible memory is a fundamental assumption of the knowledge enterprise as we in fact pursue it. Such an enterprise must have its unprovable first principles. What we need if we are to avoid it

is some justification for relying on memory as a contingent first premise of human knowledge, even though no non-circular proof of its reliability is possible. One suggestion offered by Richard Brandt, is that even if we cannot in the last analysis demonstrate that memory is reliable, nevertheless, it is the only simplest, indeed the only plausible assumption to make when we come to explain the plain facts of the human situation. In such cases, the only acceptable theory would be that which asserts that a large proportion of our memory beliefs are veridical. No alternative to such a theory has been proposed; nor can we imagine what it would be like.This would certainly be a reason to accept that memory is reliable. This is the theory that there has actually been no past at all us to remember or retain knowledge from, the theory that we have been created just as we are, complete with our existing but delusive memories. This theory seems farfetched, but unless we can rule it out, unless we can establish that there has been a past, as we naturally think there has, we cannot accept that memory is reliable. The past is remembered in the present and the claim to remember some fact involves the claim not only that it is a fact, but also that the knowledge was acquired in the past. But for all that present experience can show, it may be that something we claim to remember is not remembered at all but just happens, to come to mind without being information we acquired in the past. So if the claim to remember something, as opposed to the claim that what is said to be remembered is correct, is ever to be verified, we will need to have some knowledge of the past.

## 5.9. THE INDISPENSABILITY OF MEMORY-KNOWLEDGE

Memory-knowledge is an indispensable element in human knowledge. Most of the things we know we know because we remember them, and the progress of knowledge or even day-today conduct of our lives, would be quite impossible without the ability to remember. Indeed without memory we could not even have knowledge of our present environments. So without memory one could know nothing at all and there would be no such thing as human knowledge.

Norman Malcolm draws an even stronger conclusion that without memory we could scarcely be human. According to Malcolm a being without factual memory would not have the ability to remember that he was about to do so-and-so or that he had been doing such-and-such. He would not remember where he had put anything, where he was, or when he was to do a certain thing. A being without factual memory would have no mental powers to speak of, and he would not really be a man even if he had the human form. He maintained that true memory is the sort of occurrence that constitutes the essence of memory and both factual and personal memories are essential to mankind. They are so thoroughly entwined with one another that it would be impossible to say which is more essential.

In such case we must be prepared to rely on what we remember or seem to remember if there is to be human knowledge at all. This has two important consequences. First, we were quite wrong to be worried by the fact that the reliability of memory has to be accepted, without proof, as a contingent premise or first principle of human knowledge because it is not something that could possibly be otherwise. Although ostensible memory is a contingent fact, yet we cannot prove that fact. Secondly, though the general reliability of memory can be described as a first principle of human knowledge, but since this 'first principle' is contingent, and yet, in the last analysis, unprovable, it looked as though human knowledge must therefore be built on an unjustifiable assumption. However, this assumption should be reasonable because it has to be made if knowledge is ever to be possible at all. This will be called a 'transcendental argument' for the reliability of memory. In fact, it seems to be the position we are in with regard to our reliance on memory; we have either to accept this reliance as legitimate, or give up all claim to knowledge of the past or acquired in the past or in any way based on such knowledge. Memory-knowledge along with knowledge is only possible only so far as we are prepared to accept memory as reliable.

Perhaps it is a necessary or logical truth thatmemory is reliable, or that our reliance on memory cannot legitimately be questioned at all. Memory is the store of common knowledge. Sydney Shoemaker argues against

this, that we have to accept it as a necessary truth that confident memory beliefs and similarly confident perceptual beliefs are generally true, if we are ever to know anything on the basis of memory or perception. Because he argues that if it is a contingent fact, which could be otherwise, that one's confident perceptual and memory beliefs are generally true, and if one cannot establish this fact on the basis of observation and memory, then surely there is no way in which I could establish it. But it does not follow from this argument that we have to take the reliability of memory to be a necessary truth, knowledge depends on its being a fact that memory is reliable, not on its being a necessary or logical fact. Perception and memory themselves cannot used to establish that they are reliable, but this is according to Shoemaker a logical truth that they are reliable, if it is to be true at all. In fact, it is a transcendental argument that we have to accept something as true even though it is neither a necessary truth nor one that can be established by experience. One main function of such arguments is to show how certain presuppositions are essential to various modes of human thought. This must be the conclusion of our discussion of memory-knowledge, there is such a thing as memory-knowledge, and memory has to be accepted as reliable,because without it there would be no knowledge at all, in particular no knowledge of the past. One cannot question the possibility of memory-knowledge without shaking the entire structure of human knowledge to its foundations.



## 5.10. LET US SUM UP

- Memory means the ideal revival of an object or event or experience. It is the recall of an old personal experience which had temporarily dropped from our consciousness. It may be exemplified by taking the case of our remembering some past fact of our childhood.

- Good memory has certain characteristics like: rapid learning, longer retention, early and accurate recall, and rapid recognition.

- Memory has certain stages like registration or learning, retention, recall and recognition.

- Learning or registration is the first step in memory. Whenever something is learnt, it leaves behind a record or impression. The impression is registered in our mind in the form of memory traces.
- Retention is a longing state of impressions received by the mind.
- Recall is the reproduction of the material learnt and retained in the mind. It implies the reviving of the memory trace of brain structure.
- Recognition simply means consciousness that we have experienced the recalled event before.
- Memory involves learning, retention, recollection and recognition. These four factors are interrelated. Recollection is impossible without retention and retention is useless without recollection. Again, retention and recollection both would be meaningless without recognition.
- There are two types of theories of memory: the representative theory and the realist theory of memory.
- The representative theory of memory was most widely held by philosophers ranging from Aristotle to Bertrand Russell. According to the representative theory to remember is to undergo a certain sort of mental experience. In particular, it is to experience an image, a memory-image, which reproduces some past sense-experience.
- The realist theory of memory hopes to avoid the difficulties inherent in the representative theory by maintaining that what we are aware of, when we remember, are not representations of past items, but those past items themselves-just as, according to the realist theory of perception, what we are aware of, when we perceive, are not ideas or representations of objects in the world around us, but those objects themselves.
- Memory has certain forms: factual, practical and personal.

- Factual memory is that type of memory where we speak of knowing or remembering that something is the case that it is so e.g.; Brutus stabbed Caesar. Factual memory is factual knowledge that has been acquired in the past and does not come from present experience or observation.

- Practical memory is that type of memory where we speak of knowing or remembering how to do something, which amounts to possessing some skill or ability. Practical memory can be defined in terms of practical knowledge.

- Personal memory is that kind of memory where we speak of knowing or remembering some particular person we have met or place we have been visited. Personal memory is the memory we have of particular items like people, places, things, events, situations that we have personally experienced.

- The question of whether memory is reliable or not arises because if there is to be such a thing as memory knowledge, we will need some way of telling whether the facts we remember are indeed facts whether the things we remember happening did actually happen. To establish that memory is correct we need to have some knowledge of the past.

- Memory-knowledge is an indispensable element in human knowledge. Most of the things we know we know because we remember them, and the progress of knowledge or even day-today conduct of our lives, would be quite impossible without the ability to remember. Indeed without memory we could not even have knowledge of our present environments. So without memory one could know nothing at all and there would be no such thing as human knowledge.

- It is a necessary or logical truth that memory is reliable, or that our reliance on memory cannot legitimately be questioned at all. Memory is the store of common knowledge.

- Memory has to be accepted as reliable, because without it there would be no knowledge at all, in particular no knowledge of the past. One cannot question the possibility of memory-knowledge without shaking the entire structure of human knowledge to its foundations.



## 5.11. FURTHER READINGS

1) Aristotle, On Memory and Reminiscence, in R. Mekeon, ed., The Basic Works of Aristotle, 1941 Random House.

2) Benjamin, B. S. Remembering, 1956, Mind.

3) Locke, John, Essay Concerning Human Understanding, BK.II. chptr. 10.

4) Munsat, S. The concept of Memory, 1966, Random house.

5) Locke, Don, Memory, 1971, The Macmillan press LTD., London



## 5.12. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:

**Ans to Q.1:** Good memory has certain characteristics like: rapid learning, longer retention, early and accurate recall, and rapid recognition.

**Ans to Q.2:** Rapid learning is that characteristics of memory which facilitates learning and where not much time is wasted.

**Ans to Q.3:** Rapid recognition is the quick recognition of the definite idea needed for certain occasion and without it our memory will be poor.

**Ans to Q.4:** Memory has four stages like registration or learning, retention, recall and recognition.

**Ans to Q..5:** The retaining traces of every experience which help in subsequent recall is named retention or retentiveness.

**Ans to Q.6:** Recall associate es different ideas frequently, recently and vividly with an event, the recall of the latter is prompter than otherwise.

**Ans to Q.7:** Recognition simply means consciousness that we have experienced the recalled event before.

**Ans to Q.8:** The two theories of memory are the representative theory and the realist theory of memory.

**Ans to Q 9:** According to the representative theory to remember is to undergo a certain sort of mental experience.

**Ans to Q.10:** Aristotle and Bertrand Russell were the main advocates of the representative theory of memory.

**Ans to Q.11.** The realist theory says that what we are aware of are not ideas or representations of objects in the world around us, but those objects themselves.

**Ans to Q.12.** The supporters of realist theory are Henri Bergson, Alexander, Stout, and Laird, Woozley, Earle, Taylor, and Smith, Moore, Russell and Price.



## 5.13. MODEL QUESTIONS

### A) Very short questions

**Q 1:** What is memory?
**Q 2:** What are the first characteristics of memory?
**Q 3:** What is the third stage of memory?
**Q 4:** What are the two theories of memory?
**Q 5:** What kind of theory of memory was advocated by Aristotle?
**Q 6:** What is retention?
**Q 7:** What is practical memory?

**Q 8:** Is memory reliable?

**Q 9:** What is the indispensability of memory?

## B) Short questions (answer each question in about 100-150 words)

Q 1. What do memory consists of?

Q 2. What do you mean by rapid learning?

Q 3: What are the first two characteristics of good memory?

Q 4: What are the stages of memory?

Q 5: Is memory reliable? Briefly explain

Q 6: Is memory indispensable for our learning? Briefly explain

## C) Write Short notes (answer each question in about 100-150 words)

Q 1: Types of memory

Q 2: Stages of memory

Q 3: Personal memory

Q 4: Reliability of memory

Q 5: Indispensability of memory

Q 6: The representative theory of memory

Q 7: The realist theory of memory

## D) Long questions (answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: Explain the characteristics of memory.

Q 2: Elaborate the different forms of memory with suitable examples.

Q 3: Explain the realist theory of memory.

Q 4: Is memory reliable? Explain.

Q 5: How is memory-knowledge indispensable for learning? Elaborate.

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