



MEMORY IN LANGUAGE
UNDERSTANDING
OF PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT:
AN ANTHROPOCENTRIC SHIFT

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MEMORY

- A – the faculty by which the mind stores and remembers information
- B – something remembered from the past
- C – the part of a computer in which data and program instructions can be stored

Oxford Dictionary of British and World's English

The word's meaning can be viewed through a semantic structure where the new and old senses become interrelated to form a hierarchy.

Natalia Gvishiani. *An Introduction to Contrastive Lexicology*, 2010

HISTORIC OVERVIEW

- ❖ The Art of Memory in the age of rhetoric
- ❖ Temporary container (mnemonic tool)

vs.

Permanent container

(identity forming psychological quality)

- ❖ “Mind palace” mnemonic method

EARLY METAPHORS

- ❖ **Wax Plate** metaphor in Plato's dialogue *Theaetetus*
- ❖ Aristotle defines memory as a sense faculty “*which has the power to receive into itself the sensible forms of things without the matter*”
(Aristotle. *Parts of Animals*. The Loeb Classic Library, 1961)
- ❖ Socrates in *Protagoras* argues that “*you cannot carry away doctrines in a separate vessel: you are compelled, when you have handed over the price, to take in you very soul by learning it*”
(Plato. Vol.3. Cambridge, 1967)
- ❖ Memory stores **images** rather than objects themselves

MECHANISTIC APPROACH

- ❖ Brain as the container of the mind, a body engine, stated in the works of Claudius Galenus, Andreas Vesalius and William Harvey
- ❖ Voluntariness of remembering
- ❖ Memory ascribed to other body parts
 - muscle memory
 - reflexes
 - other somatic behavior patterns
- ❖ Complex role of the brain in memorizing

PROTOTYPICAL MEANINGS

- ❖ The sense frequency of the lexical unit memory corresponds with its vocabulary definitions
- ❖ **(A) ability to learn**
 - reflects subjective experience of the real world
 - through conceptualization
 - by coding incoming impulses
- ❖ **(B) knowledge**
 - originates in the real world
 - is personalized

COMPUTER METAPHOR

- ❖ Computer metaphor is a suggestion that “*the mind literary works like a human-made database*”

Steven Pinker. *The Blank Slate*, 2002

- ❖ **Key similarities:** electric impulses, coding, algorithmic processing,
hierarchical organization of data etc.
- ❖ **Key distinctions:** complexity, voluntariness, mysteries, imagination, forgetting, individuality, etc.

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

- ❖ **Compost Heap** metaphor by William L. Randall (Theory and Psychology, 2007)
- ❖ Human memories are living memories
- ❖ Autobiography: **creative** reproduction of one's personal experience
- ❖ Conceptual feature of **creativity**: *to draw from memory*
- ❖ **Prototypical** meaning: *to quote from memory*
- ❖ Vast periphery of the semantic field. Anthropocentric aspects such as
 - collective memories,
 - traumatic memories,
 - memories of war

THANK YOU!