



On Autobiographical Memory

Anita Kasabova

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The aim of this book is to provide an account of autobiographical memory, the memory of episodes in the subject's autobiography and to answer the following questions: what happens when we remember something and why do we remember some things rather than others. The main assumptions in this book are that autobiographical memory is an active structure of a representational nature and that autobiographical memory is a construct of the imagination enabled by a semantic principle: the ground-consequence relation. Anita Kasabova reconstructs the epistemological accounts of memory by the Prague philosopher and mathematician, Bernard Bolzano and the Prague physiologist Ewald Hering as well as the phenomenological accounts by Edmund Husserl and Roman Ingarden, and discusses various accounts put forward within analytic philosophy. She examines the trace theory and its relation to the phenomenology of autobiographical memory and the different temporal perspectives that characterize this form of memory. Kasabova formulates a philosophical explication of how autobiographical memory works, dealing with issues such as: 'what are the defining features of autobiographical memory'; 'how is it structured and how does it function'; and, 'what is a recollection and what are the necessary and (for the most part) sufficient conditions for a recollection to occur'. Kasabova argues that such conditions are a sense of self and a sense of connectedness of the self that is semantic rather than causal, the subject's sense of ownership of past experiences and the capacity of imagination: for mental time travel and thinking about past episodes, you have to be able to produce representations not bound to the current situation. It is argued that access to the subject's personal past cannot occur otherwise than by construction in imagination. In order to reproduce a past experience in the present, imagination is necessary for representing a past episode as if it were present. Other necessary conditions for autobiographical memory are time-awareness, a continuous temporal reference frame, a successive temporal order and the capacity to refer back to previous positions in time. Finally, semantic relations of part-whole and ground-consequence are crucial for explaining autobiographical memory. It is argued that the part-whole relation is the principle of the memory trace and that the grounding relation co-ordinates the subject's perspective on past episodes in recollective statements. Kasabova argues that autobiographical memory is basically semantic, as it is grounded by and constructed through a 'sense-making' relation expressed by the explanatory conjunct 'because': we recall certain experiences or actions rather than other because we are sensitive to the reasons for having experienced it.

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