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The justification of memory beliefs.

Bruneau, Damien

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Abstract

In this paper I intend to argue for a position on the justification of memory beliefs. I call that position Mnemonic Phenomenal Conservatism (M-PC). My position is most similar to that set out by Huemer in *The Problem of Memory Beliefs*. M-PC is a dualist theory insofar as it endorses both a preservationist condition (PRES) and a conservative condition (PC). Mnemonic Phenomenal Conservatism can be stated as follows:

M-PC:

a) PC**:** If it seems to S that p, then, in the absence of defeaters, S thereby has at least some degree of justification for believing that p; and
b) PRES: For any subject, S, his memory belief p is justified all-things-considered at T2 iff p is justifiedly formed by S at an earlier time, T1.

I motivate M-PC in three ways. The broad contours of my argument are as follows:

i) Firstly, I argue for the dualistic nature of any satisfactory account. I do this in Section 2 by showing that our intuitions regarding the justification of memory beliefs are likely to be influenced by the perspective that we take. These are the 'historical' and the 'time-slice' perspectives. Since we consider memory beliefs from two distinct perspectives, a satisfactory theory of memory beliefs must account for the intuitions generated by looking at problem cases from each of these perspectives.
ii) Secondly, I argue that PRES is a necessary part of a satisfactory account. I do this in Section 2 by a reductio on the denial of PRES. There, I also show that a similar preservationist condition is unable to account for our time-slice intuitions: our puzzle is missing a piece. Throughout the paper, the way that PRES operates in dealing with problematic examples should convince us the PRES does most of the heavy lifting in accounting for our historical intuitions.
iii) Finally, I argue that PC is the missing piece of the puzzle. My argument to this effect is abductive. While evidentialism (two-types), coherentism and reliabilism fail to account for our time-slice intuitions, PC does so with very little fuss. Thus, PC provides the most plausible condition to add to PRES. Section 3 and 4 show that together these conditions handle mnemonic problem cases of every standard variety.