

Dustin Peone, *Memory as Philosophy: The Theory and Practice of Philosophical Recollection*, Studies in Historical Philosophy, no. 1. Stuttgart: ibidem Press, 2020, Paperback, 172 pp., €39.90, ISBN: 978-3-8382-1336-1

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As the title suggests, Dustin Peone's *Memory as Philosophy* is a call to revitalize the tradition of "memory as philosophy," which has been neglected in our contemporary, technological age. According to Peone, revisiting philosophical memory is necessary to hold back the tides of barbarism and allow philosophy to move forward into new domains, grapple with the dual questions of what reality is and how to live within it, and thrive over and against the technological world. This book demonstrates the central role that memory has played in the history, progress, and transformation of philosophy, concentrating upon figures such as Montaigne and Hegel and on the possibility of holding a philosophical doctrine of memory in our contemporary age. In the first section of the work, Peone presents a theory of memory as philosophy, clarifying the meaning of "philosophy," "memory," and "memory as philosophy." Influenced by the classical understanding, he presents philosophy as the contemplation of the wondrous. Likewise, he defines memory based on the rich ancient understanding, which involves human creativity and wisdom and includes the past, present, and future. Hesiod personifies this understanding of memory as Mnemosyne, the first principle of human invention, the mother of all arts, and of the Muses (the daughters of Memory or Mnemosyne), who simultaneously hold all that was, is and shall be in memory (i.e. complete knowledge of the whole, the True that philosophers seek). Peone argues that the contemporary one-sided view of memory has lost this rich ancient understanding of the memory faculty as capturing the whole.

Following Giambattista Vico, Peone distinguishes three aspects of memory, which align with the ancient understanding: *memoria* (memory), which remembers the past; *fantasia* (imagination), which alters or

imitates things remembered; and *ingegno* (invention), which puts things remembered into proper arrangement and relationships. *Ingegno* fabricates or discovers the necessary or inner order of things and so requires a view of the whole and its parts, a view of the object's history as though upon a stage, a theater of memory. Therefore, *ingegno* is rooted in *fantasia* and the fertile images of *memoria*. *Ingegno* is not a method because it does not have rules and procedures; rather, it is playful. For Peone, *ingegno* is properly the philosophical aspect of memory; it is the crown of memory. Peone also notes that *ingegno* is not a method, it is rather a doctrine of philosophical memory that belongs to the speculative tradition. Therefore, the idea of memory as philosophy rules out several conceptions that we hold of memory, of philosophy, and of memory as philosophy. For instance, the neurobiological, psychological (e.g. memory in psychoanalysis and pathologies of memory), and many past philosophical views of memory, including Nietzsche's understanding of memory as a harmful faculty that degrades the joyous state of forgetting that soothes all pains and attains *ataraxia*.

Following a Vichian understanding of memory as the instrument to repulse degradation, Peone counters Nietzsche's view and indicates several other philosophers who acknowledge the creative power of memory. On this note, Peone underlines that memory is Vico's answer to the barbarism of reflection central to modern philosophy, evident in the philosophy of Descartes, Kant, and Locke. In reflection, the human mind can never get behind the exterior of vacuous actuality or surmount the aggressiveness of various standpoints. Thus, reflective philosophy cannot get inside the object and apprehend its essence. In contrast, Peone argues that memory is a nexus between mind and matter; it is the arena in which an objective fact is transformed into a spiritual object for the thinking subject. In other words, memory allows us to contemplate the essence of an object, cancels otherness, and overcomes critical reflection. For Bergson, who inherits this tradition of reflective philosophy, memory is his solution for getting inside the object. Likewise, Jaspers sees memory as the only means to preserve mental substance in the process of reconstitution. Memory is also the key to Montaigne's creative reconstitution of impressions and the circular dialectic that yields meaningful philosophy and ethical living. For Hegel, memory is the answer to the question about reality. It is the key to attaining self-knowledge, which is the recollection of the whole inner movement of

the self and its necessity, including all its misadventures and errors in totality. Memory is the key to the Absolute Spirit because it is through recollection that the subject takes up the object, internalizes it (*Er-Innerung*), and transforms the object or substance into the subject.

Peone is convinced that memory is the solution to our misguided contemporary technological age, which comprises methods and techniques for maximum efficiency. Here, efficiency has replaced independent thinking, technology directs thoughts, techniques have leveled humanity, autonomy has been lost, more efficient techniques have overcome the past ones, the memory of the past has become useless, and the past has become altogether dead. Consequently, technology is on the verge of canceling the entire purpose of memory. In the technological world, information replaces *memoria*, techniques of artistic production and reproduction replace *fantasia*, and so *ingegno* becomes impossible since it is founded on *memoria* and *fantasia*. Because memory has been displaced, philosophy has turned its gaze to linguistics and semantics, hermeneutics and grammatology, and even political rhetoric to retain a place in the technological world. As a result, philosophy has become integrated into technological society, and no longer concerns itself with perennial questions about good or truth, and has lost every power to initiate a holistic critique of the technological world. By rekindling memory as philosophy, which stands over and against techniques and method, philosophy will have the power to make a claim for individual memory, defy the computer with its infinite capacity for information storage, reject the external view of things given by reflection, concern itself with the past, present, and future, seek the necessary order of things, and tell us what we ought to become. Therefore, Peone advises that we must relearn the pursuit of self-knowledge, possible through self-recollection, if we desire autonomy. Philosophy can only move forward by remembering the turn which resulted in our present technological confusion and not by adopting efficient techniques.

In section II, Peone clarifies two historical lines of memory: the technical and speculative traditions. The latter views memory as a philosophical art in its own right, with Peone offering Plato's doctrine of *anamnesis* as an example of this tradition. *Anamnesis* involves learning things we already know but of which we are not conscious. According to Plato, we already have knowledge of the whole within us, and the process of knowledge is simply recollecting what we have forgotten.

Learning is, therefore, not the acquisition of new material, as the contemporary technological age would define it, but simply the recollection of what we already know but have forgotten.

Peone also understands Aristotle's *De memoria et reminiscientia* as another example belonging to this speculative tradition. Aristotle describes memory as the spiritual starting point of the ascent to wisdom. Whereas memory is concerned with the past, wisdom is concerned with the past, present, and future. Memory stores the impressions of perceived immediate particular objects, and then repeated impressions combine to form experience, which is the grasp of universals. Based on a universal movement of inference, one is able to arrive at the general axioms of a *techne*, a more general science, and a complete field of knowledge. Therefore, according to Aristotle, memory grasps the causes of all things, but a different faculty projects knowledge into the future. However, Aristotle differentiates memory from recollection. Recollection involves reasoning but depends on memory; it is memory joined to thought. Peone believes that this view of recollection captures memory as philosophy because to recollect is to search for knowledge, investigate, and deliberate with oneself, which is a form of inference. Thus, recollection plays the role of *ingegno* in Aristotle, although Peone does not explicitly mention it. Other philosophical views on memory belonging to this tradition include Plutarch's conception of memory's creative power and St. Augustine's conception of memory as the key to the search for God.

However, Peone also notes that several of these philosophers' views on memory could also be aligned with the technical tradition. For instance, Aristotle advocates memory training, and Plutarch sees memory as a means of education. The technical line views memory as a means to an end, like oratory, rhetoric, and pedagogy. This tradition advocates mnemotechnics (the art of memory or mnemonic art), serving as a method and technique for memory training. Because it is a technique, mnemonic art is opposed to memory as philosophy. However, Peone notes that mnemotechnics can serve memory as philosophy at the level of training *memoria* but is not sufficient to ascend to *ingegno*. The technical tradition of memory begins with Simonides, but many other philosophers advocate such a view. As stated above, Aristotle and Plutarch were advocates of memory training; Augustine likely employed memory training in teaching and rhetorical skills; Cicero and Quintilian outlined

the principles of mnemotechnics. For Cicero, *memoria* is an essential part of *prudentia*, and therefore cultivating and perfecting memory through memory art is an ethical obligation. Thomas Aquinas and Albert the Great synthesize the Ciceronian memory art with Aristotle's and recommend mnemotechnics as a technique for learning Christian morality. In the last part of section II, Peone emphasizes that the writings and authority of Albert the Great and Aquinas theologically restrained memory in the ascent to philosophical speculation. This hindrance facilitated the embrace of other wisdom sources that opened memory art up to a magical and creative source of reality as European thought became increasingly syncretic during the Renaissance period. Thus, during this era, *Theatrum Mundi*, memory, and divine wisdom became identical. For instance, in Camillo's theater of memory, where the whole is held in a single view (*Theatrum Mundi*), the technical line meets the speculative line, especially as regards Plato's *anamnesis* and Augustine's search for God through memory.

In section III, the last section, Peone describes the status of memory in modern philosophy, in which reflection and method replace memory as the central faculty of philosophical contemplation. However, he praises the writings of Montaigne and Hegel for teaching us how memory as philosophy can still function in a modern world given over to method, reflection, and certainty. Peone first examines Montaigne's conception of memory as monstrous because it opposes customs, norms and deconstructs the idols of human reason through the creative reconstitution of earlier impressions. On this note, Montaigne's view of memory ultimately stands against modern philosophy's main currents: certainty, reflection, methods, and techniques. Montaigne's view of memory also opposes classical memory art. For him, mnemotechnics cannot yield meaningful philosophy and ethical living; it only serves as a pedagogical tool to memorize and acquire a vast amount of information without correct application or understanding. Therefore, it only leads to learning and not education. The correct application and understanding of acquired information lead to wisdom, goodness, and judgment, and these are the proper objects of education. On this note, Montaigne argues that memory art leads to blind education, encourages deception, and has no connection to ethics. In memorization, a student's internalization, open-mindedness, judgment, and creativity are compromised by others' authority and opinions. For instance, students can re-

cite verbatim stories about virtuous action while remaining vicious. According to Montaigne, memory is ethical and leads to education and meaningful philosophy.

Additionally, in the *Essays*, Montaigne argues for a reversal of the Aristotelian view of memory as the impressions of an external object that constitute the spiritual starting point of the ascent to universal concepts. For Montaigne, memory should not be discarded after being used to ascend because the world is in perpetual motion. Instead, we should always refer back to impressions and memories for constant revaluations based on our present understanding. In this way, thoughts return to their beginnings (impressions) and possess those beginnings in a new way. Thus, Montaigne's ethical conception of memory involves circular dialectics that begins and ends in memory. In other words, impressions begin with cognition or judgment, which then returns to these impressions, investing them with new meanings. It is not only impressions that give shape to thoughts (Aristotle's view); thoughts also give shape to impressions and continue doing so as the spirit develops (Montaigne's view). This is speculative philosophy. For Montaigne, there is a perpetual chain of this circular dialectic since life and experience are in constant motion. From this, Peone concludes that the habit of standing firm in self-certainty is not philosophically meaningful for Montaigne. He sees Montaigne's memory dialectic as playing the role of *ingegno* because it gives a new order to past experience (*memoria*), which is its foundation, and places things in new relationships. Since experience never terminates and is always subject to revision, the ethical form of memory is *prudentia*.

Similarly, Montaigne argues that, because the world is in constant flux, consciousness or thoughts cannot arise except out of the flux of being. There is no fixed human essence or nature because the individual changes along with the world. Humans are animals wearing thousands of masks as the world changes rapidly. Although the self is ever-changing, every human bears the form of the entire human estate. Therefore, self-knowledge is the knowledge of the human condition as a whole and includes our individual experience, of which memory is the storehouse. Materials in this storehouse are reworked into new orders through the work of *ingegno*. While Peone's use of Montaigne on the creative role of memory is appropriate, the latter's view of self-knowledge seems to limit this creative role because it denies the possi-

bility of self-mastery and self-knowledge, thus limiting the free, playful role *ingegno* enjoys in self-discovery.

In any case, Montaigne's dialectic of memory rejects every claim of certainty and opposes the scientific approach and other currents of thought in the modern era, including reflection and critical philosophy. Consequently, Peone examines the neglect of the classical memory tradition during the modern age and notes that critical and reflective philosophy was a product of socio-political factors which contributed to the decay of the classical view. One common characteristic of all these socio-political factors was the dethronement of authority, tradition and institutions, and the empowerment of individuals. In religion, the dogmas of Protestantism, which arose out of church reformation, did not encourage the cultivation of philosophical memory. For instance, Protestantism does not accept Augustine's conception of memory as the means for searching for God and rejects obedience to tradition, which relies upon memory. The scientific revolution was another factor that led to the abandonment of the classical view, for it emphasized mathematical concepts and techniques, paying little attention to the ideas and paradigms that preceded the present moment. In politics, the rise of democracy emphasized egalitarianism and the dethronement of past authority and tradition. Instead of the latter, the authority of the inner light of reason becomes the rule directing everyone on what to do, and each generation makes its own decision about the shape of its government. In the intellectual field, an epistemological turn emerged to tackle the weakness of the human mind and establish the limits of human knowledge in the absence of authority, tradition, and institutions. Epistemology does not rely on memory but sees memory as a part of human thought, which is an object of study and not a tool of investigation. Therefore, epistemology considers memory in its purely mechanical sense, with Descartes and Locke standing at the forefront of this movement. Descartes' philosophy is, in large part, a response to Montaigne as he considers memory a mechanical process of the body rather than a spiritual faculty. In contrast, Descartes replaces memory with method and reflection, resulting in his methodic doubt, which creates a duality of mind and body. Thereupon certainty becomes the object of philosophical inquiry, the *mathesis universalis*, and the ideal of modernity. Kant's critical philosophy perfects the Cartesian reflective philosophy and carries Cartesian dualism to its *terminus ad quem*, a point where the *noumenon* (the thing-

in-itself) and *phenomenon* (appearance) can never meet. Other philosophers, influenced by Descartes, also neglected the role of memory in the modern age. For instance, Thomas Hobbes described memory as a decaying, old and fading sense, while Spinoza saw memory as an association of ideas, a view shared by Malebranche.

However, other philosophers recognized memory as philosophy. For instance, in his *New Science*, Vico refutes the Cartesian project and proposes a threefold structure of memory: *memoria*, *fantasia*, and *ingegno*. *Ingegno* is the central organ of philosophy, although it is founded on *memoria* and *fantasia*. Another important philosopher along this line is Hegel. Peone considers Hegel's philosophy as "memory as philosophy" par excellence and focuses the last part of section III on Hegel's writings to emphasize how his philosophy relies heavily on memory and to demonstrate how memory as philosophy can still function in a modern world characterized by method, reflection, and certainty. Hegel's Absolute Knowing, Peone insists, is ultimately a rejection of critical and reflective thinking, especially that of Kant, and a return to the primacy of memory. Throughout his entire system, the Absolute is always identified with recollection (*Erinnerung*). Like Montaigne, Hegel dismisses memory art for its reduction of ideas to shallow picture-thinking, placing things in an artificial order, and neglecting what is truly philosophical about recollection. Mnemotechnics is *Erinnerung* (recollection) without *Innerung* (internalization) and so inadequate for *Bildung* (education). For Hegel, memory connects the inner with the outer.

Hegel emphasizes that philosophy is the practice of discovering the necessary, inner form of things, and memory is the key to the discovery of this permanent species of truth. Truth, or "Absolute Knowing," has already occurred because there is nothing new upon the earth, as Solomon acknowledges in Scripture. All we can do is recollect the truth. Therefore, according to Hegel, to realize the truth, we must recollect: Absolute Knowing is the recollection of what has already happened and needs to come forward in its true light. In other words, recollection is the only power to attain the Absolute Idea, which is the unity of the subject and object: Aristotle's thought thinking itself. Absolute Knowing is Spirit recollecting its own development. Peone notes that, in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the history of the individual spirit seeking Absolute Knowing (i.e. spirit knowing itself as spirit, or self-knowledge) relies on the gallery of personal images in the service of memory. Thus,

the *Phenomenology* is the autobiography of the history of individual spirit. The gallery of images (*Galerie von Bildern*) offers a complete view of the whole, and this aligns the *Phenomenology* with the Renaissance idea of the *Theatrum Mundi*. This absolute perspective requires that one advances to a higher position and preserves the earlier stages in recollection to constitute a concrete whole. It requires that the previous stages first existed as recollected being-in-itself and were then converted to being-for-itself, resulting in the unity of subject and object. Hegel uses the image of killing and preserving, death and resurrection to describe this conversion. Recollection gazes upon the dead, dwells among the dead, takes up the dead, and transforms the dead into the recollected in-itself. Thus, true philosophical thought gives life to what is dead.

Peone emphasizes four moments of recollection (*Erinnerung*) through which Spirit attains Absolute Knowing. In the first moment, the spirit, relinquishing its concrete existence, goes-into-itself, gives its shape over to recollection, and absorbs itself into the night of self-consciousness. The second moment is the internalization or inwardization of previous images in recollection. The third moment is recognizing that the power of the internalized images in recollection gives access to Absolute Knowing. The fourth moment is recognizing that recollection, in its power to call forth images and organize them into a totality, is conceptually grasped history. Therefore, Peone notes that recollection is the secret of Hegel's dialectical leap from one stage of the *Phenomenology* to the next, and the *ingegno* is the aspect of memory responsible for this leap. Since *ingegno* is playful and not methodical, he argues that Hegel may not be as systematic a thinker as he claims. In contrast, forgetting leaves us stranded at one stage or another so that we cannot justify any assertion we make about reality. Similarly, reflective philosophy, as practiced by Descartes and Kant, cannot attain Absolute Knowing because it always holds objects at a distance.

Unlike the *Phenomenology*, which is the history of individual spirit, Hegel's *Science of Logic* is the universal history of pure logical thought, and so its form of recollection is not imagistic thinking but recollection from its own determination. In the *Science of Logic*, recollection is the faculty by which the subject apprehends essence, the truth of being, and the possible object of cognition. Through recollection, the subject annuls the character of immediate being (e.g. time and space), revealing its essence, or what being has always been (its truth), inwardizes being and

makes it its own. Therefore, it is again recollection that leads to the unity of subject and object. For Hegel, essence *was* while being *is*. Essence is the opposite of immediate being. As recollection is required to advance from one stage to the next in the *Phenomenology*, the *Logic* likewise progresses from immediate or determinate being to essence through recollection. Peone notes that this progress is the work of *ingegno*. Recollection reveals the otherness of essence, while reflection forgets its source. Recollection inwardizes the other, whereas reflection externalizes the other. In his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, Hegel announces at the beginning that the purpose of philosophy is to make explicit what consciousness already knows because philosophy advances nothing new. As a consequence, Hegel acknowledges that the work of philosophy is essentially *anamnesis*, connecting his philosophy to Plato. Additionally, Hegel argues that this recollection opens one to the possibility of self-knowledge, divine, and cosmic knowledge. For Hegel, the human being, in terms of knowledge, is a living image of God, and so human knowledge is potentially divine and infinite. Through the inward gaze of recollection, the individual cognizes divine necessity unfolding in the cosmos. Through recollection, the human mind rises above nature to grasp the eternal and inwardizes what is external.

In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel apprehends and portrays the state as something inherently rational, such that nobody ought to impose on this rationality, which Hegel believes to be divine will. Recollection is the only means to access this in-built rationality or divine will. Although the particulars of the future are veiled, the abstract ideas of inner development can be grasped through recollection. The task of the world, during the whole course of its history, is to recollect the abstract idea of inner development. However, history does not unfold in the same way for every nation. The development of any state depends on self-recollection, the memory of the stages along which it has progressed. Each state's development depends on how much it remembers its previous stages. The absence of historical memory leads to the absence of real political development because a state will mistake the position it has reached for the Absolute. Similarly, every individual has in-built universal reason or essence. The task of philosophy is now revealed as the recollection of reason in history: philosophy as memory.