

# Emotion, Experiential Memory and Selfhood

SUNNY YANG

Department of Philosophy, Seoul National University  
Seoul 151-742, South Korea  
yangseonee@snu.ac.kr

RECEIVED: 03-03-2012 • ACCEPTED: 28-09-2012

**ABSTRACT:** Recently, emotion has attracted much attention in many areas of philosophy. In the philosophy of mind, some argue that emotions are individuated and identified with reference to feelings, beliefs, desires, or perceptions. Furthermore, they are often claimed to be changeable, unstable, and ambivalent. However, despite their instability, emotions are sometimes long-standing. They have, in addition, perspective. These characteristics of the emotions, I argue, help us in solving one of philosophy's most enduring problems, that is, the problem of personal identity. In order to illustrate this claim I elaborate on the conception of 'experiential memory' suggested by Wollheim. To understand memory as experiential, I argue, we need to understand the affective element attached to some memories. I argue that memory affects not only my past thought but also my past emotions, and those emotions deriving from the past stay on to affect my whole being and my future. Hence, I argue that experiential memory is not just confined to the recalling of events or experiences that the subject has experienced, but concerns the narrative structure of a person's life as a whole.

**KEYWORDS:** Emotion – experiential memory – Lockean psychological continuity theory – personal identity – Wollheim.

## 1. Introduction

What are the conditions under which a girl *A* at time *t*, and 10 years later, a woman *B*, are the very same person? To answer this question, I focus on a mental connectedness theory of personal identity. In much recent

work, accounts of the criteria of personal identity have divided into two camps: bodily continuity and psychological continuity theses respectively. The former has sought the criterion in the domain of the physical, identifying personal identity with sameness of body; the latter has sought it in the domain of the mental, equating personal identity with continuity of memory. The latter view has been represented in recent literature by psychological continuity theories of personal identity that take Locke's original insight and develop it into a more detailed identity criterion. These memory-based theories of personal identity take memory as providing a retrospective form from present experiences to past experiences that explains the unity of a person's life.

In what follows, I reject the psychological continuity theory described above. Instead, I defend a different version of a psychological continuity theory according to which memory has as much to do with a person's future as with a person's past, due to the role that emotions play. In order to do this, the view which follows will elaborate 'experiential memory' suggested by Wollheim.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Experiential memory

The central role of experiential memory in explaining personal identity has been neglected by many philosophers in the mental connectedness tradition. In this section, I first develop and defend a psychological criterion for personal identity in and over time based on Wollheim's notion of experiential memory. In order to understand memory as experiential, we need to understand the affective element attached to some memories. Secondly, I draw on Wollheim's work to provide an account of personal unity that relies on memory with an emphasis on its dispositional and emotional aspect, making memory as important to a person's future as to her past.

Why is emotion the key player in the "affective" component of experiential memory? This is because experiential memory has a qualitative aspect and emotional aspect has qualitative thing. What then does the 'qua-

---

<sup>1</sup> Experiential memory is also termed personal memory which is in contrast with merely factual memory of one's past. The distinction between personal and factual memory is developed further in Andrew Hamilton (forthcoming); see also Goldie (2012).

litative aspect' of experiential memory mean? If we take emotions as feelings or perceptions, there is a proprioceptive residue of sensation and a point of view.<sup>2</sup> In order to understand this, let us consider the difference between a person remembering herself watching a horror movie and remembering *that* she watched a certain horror movie. We can say that the former is an experiential memory that reminds her of what it was *like* to watch such a horror movie. In experientially remembering watching a horror movie, a person thinks and *feels* as she experienced when she watched it. When I experientially remember watching a horror movie all those years ago, I tend to remember also the thoughts I had, the feelings I experienced, while watching the movie, and when I do so, those thoughts and feelings tend to take hold of me. I once again sense my muscles tensing, my pulse quickening, and adrenaline flowing, and those sensations deriving from the past persist to affect my whole being and future. The view described here does not mean that whenever I relive past events I should feel exactly as I did then. In defence of a psychological continuity theory which I have described above, in what follows, I shall develop four claims, made by Wollheim:

- a) an event remembered is one that I have lived through;
- b) an event is remembered *as* it was experienced and not just as it occurred;
- c) when we remember an event experientially an event is remembered from a point of view and this point of view is represented within memory (see Wollheim 1984, 104);
- d) an affective tendency is attached to such memories (see Wollheim 1980, 309-310).

Experiential memories take the form of 'I remember doing such-and-such' or 'I remember your, or X's, doing such-and-such', rather than 'I remember that I X-ed' (cf. Wollheim 1979, 195; see also Hamilton 1995). Now in order to see the distinction between 'I remember X-ing' and 'I remember that I X-ed', let us take an example: What Wollheim is intending to describe is the fact that when I remember something in my past

---

<sup>2</sup> Many philosophers of emotion have recently taken emotions to be perceptions. Some people suggest that we should take emotion to be perception, or proprioception. For a discussion of taking emotion or feeling as perception, or proprioception, see Solomon (2004).

i) I draw my attention to *what it was like to be* experiencing something from my point of view. ii) The affect that a memory preserves reconnects me with a broader affective dimension, that of a specific time in my life. I argue that memory affects not only my past thought but also my past emotions and those emotions deriving from the past persist on to affect my whole being and my future. Hence for example, when I remember my failing some examination, the despair, disappointment, or regret that I experience involves the sum of my experience from that point on, considered as a unified whole. My past experiences affect my present condition – my sense of disappointment – and this feeling expresses my awareness of the past. Then my concern for my future – a desire for a successful life – causes painful feelings and emotions, for example, my heart torn with anguish and regret, in my present condition. This is possible through memory's recreation of the past and creation of the future. Hence, for example, the shame or regret that I experience when I remember my past wrongdoing is part of my identity up to now as well as at that time. In this way, I argue, we bring the person under the influence of his past, such that the past is reconstructed and then influences the future. Hence, a life – the diachronic expansion of a person – is unified. Furthermore, we can say that this kind of unity of consciousness over time requires unity of consciousness at one time.<sup>3</sup> A view that I defend on unity of consciousness is the self-conscious knowledge of bodily identity, or proprioceptive knowledge concerning my body.<sup>4</sup>

The problem of personal identity, so far I have discussed, is the problem of finding ontological criteria for the identity of the different temporal 'stages' of a person. In what follows, I shall show that emphasizing the emotional, experiential character of experiences and recollections contribute to solve the ontological problem of personal identity. I shall try to solve the transitivity problem that a memory theory faces by showing; 1) that the difference emotion makes is in the character of psychological continuity; 2) that the emotional aspect of memory allows for certain dispositions connected with it to live on when the experienced event that caused it is forgotten.

---

<sup>3</sup> For the discussion of unity of consciousness, see Hamilton (forthcoming).

<sup>4</sup> A further discussion on proprioceptive knowledge about my body, see Hamilton (forthcoming).

### 3. Identity and change

#### 3.1. Transitivity implies changes

Now some people say that personal identity is constituted by sameness of the psychological subject. But it is not obvious what is meant by this. Locke, for example, claims that personal identity consists, not in sameness of substance, but in ‘sameness of consciousness’ and holds that continuation of the consciousness itself, not that of body or soul in which that consciousness resides, is necessary for identity. Butler claims that consciousness is ‘successive’ and, therefore, “cannot be the same in any two moments, nor consequently the personality constituted by it” (Butler 1975, 102). Reid argues that “consciousness, and every kind of thought are transient and momentary, and have no continued existence” (Reid 1975, 116). Consciousness is, according to these theorists, a momentary phenomenon and does not remain numerically the same over time. If this is the case, it is not clear what it means to say that the same consciousness has continued to exist.

In order to answer the question of what it means to say that the same consciousness has continued to exist, Locke claims that if you cannot currently remember the past thoughts and action of some person, then you simply are not the same person who had and did them.<sup>5</sup> Here what Locke makes necessary for identity with a ‘past self’ is, as Shoemaker notes, “not that one remember the actions and experiences for that past self but that one have ‘memory continuity’ with that past self” (Shoemaker 1984, 81). However, one might raise an objection to Locke’s memory criterion of personal identity which focuses on the idea of *transitivity*. Reid tries to show this with his ‘brave officer’ example (cf. Reid 1975, 114-115). At a certain time a boy steals apples. Years later the same person, now a young officer, performs an act of bravery in battle, remembering still his boyhood’s theft of the apples. Many years later our man is an elderly general, who remembers the act of bravery in battle, but no longer remembers incident of stealing apples. Reid charges that on Locke’s theory the general is the same person as the young officer, who is the same person as the boy (because

---

<sup>5</sup> For Locke, ‘person’ is a forensic term, which is related to our practices of attributing responsibility and distributing rewards and punishments. According to him, a person should not be held responsible and punished for actions of his which he cannot remember doing.

identity is transitive), but the general is *not* the same person as the small boy because he has no memory of the boyhood incident.<sup>6</sup>

Locke himself acknowledges that ‘the same Consciousness’ is not the same ‘individual Action’ but ‘a present representation of a past Action’ (Locke 1979, 337). Here we should allow, as Shoemaker points out, that “one’s current person-stage contains a memory of something even if one has temporarily forgotten that thing, as long as one has the potentiality of remembering it. ... In such a case the stage will retain a ‘memory trace’ that is the basis of that potentiality”, he adds (see Shoemaker 1984, 81).

### 3.2. Memory is a disposition

Now one might wonder how the view described in the previous section might be put to use in accounting for a person’s emotional change in relation to their identity. I can recognize that my emotions or feelings have changed when I look back on past experience. For example, when I was 5 years old, I was scared of a monster which appeared in a horror movie, but now I am not. Change can also be seen in, for example, recovery from shock or grief. How then can Wollheim explain our emotional change – for example, from having been afraid to no longer being so – by appealing to experiential memory?

If we apply the above claim b) – an event is remembered *as* it was experienced and not just as it occurred – to explain one’s identity we are left with the following: what it is to be a psychologically identical being is to be a creature who can be, from a first-person, phenomenological perspective, in the same state. Concerning this claim, Lowe argues that if a person “remembers his own thoughts, experiences, feelings and actions in a special way – that is, so-called a ‘first person’ way and if the person remembers them, as it were, ‘from the inside’, as episodes undergone *by him*”, this is different from the fact that the person “remember events in the life of another person only in an ‘external’ or ‘third-person’ way, as episodes undergone *by somebody else*” (Lowe 1995, 109).<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Locke might reply to Reid as follows: the general is not the same *person* as the boy, while pointing out that the general is nonetheless the same *human being* or *man* as the boy. This is pointed by E. J. Lowe; see Lowe (1995, 113).

<sup>7</sup> I shall argue that this generates the question of synchronic unity. The synchronic unity question is: in virtue of what do different experiences or mental states occurring at the same time count as belonging to one and the same person?

Wollheim says that “the affective tone that accrues to the memory – and the impact of which is just what the beliefs, desires, and feelings – will differ qualitatively from that which would have accrued to it had the other entertained the memory” (Wollheim 1979, 230). And this is so because “when the rememberer’s affective store from which the affective tone comes was reinforced by an experiential memory, the impact of the memory was mediated by his current beliefs, desires and feelings, which become increasingly peculiar to him” (Wollheim 1979, 230). However, this seems to make trouble with Wollheim rather than helping him. For, as Lowe notes, “if one *can* have first-person memories of episodes in the lives of other people, then, clearly, such memory does *not*, after all, provide a satisfactory criterion of personal identity across time” (Lowe 1995, 110).

Faced with this difficulty, Wollheim would argue that it is not occurrent psychological states alone that are part of one’s psychological make-up, but underlying traits and dispositions as well – this concerns my claim a), namely, *a remembered event is one that I have lived through*. If we take a memory to be disposition, it is difficult to say a memory disposition which I have and a memory disposition which someone else has would manifest identical experiential memory states, even though both rely on the same initiating event.

This is because a memory disposition, established in me by my living through the event, would manifest itself differently from others’. If this is so it is impossible, as Wollheim points out, that “mental dispositions could shift from one person to another and remain intact” (Wollheim 1984, 113). Since “dispositions form... a web or network: they are ancillary to one another, and there seems no method for determining what in the way of other dispositions, what in the way of beliefs, emotions, desires, fears, and other memories, would have to be transferred along with it if the original memory is to run across persons” (Wollheim 1984, 113).<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, if we accept my claim c), namely, when we remember an event experientially an event is remembered from a point of view and this point of view is represented within the memory, then we can understand that memory has as much as to do with a person’s future as with a person’s past. It is a point of view by which one’s disposition would, on occasions, manifest itself in appropriate mental states.

---

<sup>8</sup> For these reasons, I find both the idea of memory replication and memory transfer implausible.

Having elaborated on my four claims, namely, a) memory is a disposition; b) memory has a first-person perspective; c) memory has a point of view; d) an affective tendency is attached to some memory, in what follows I shall argue that these four characteristics of experiential memory play a vital role in explaining the problem of both synchronic and diachronic unity.

### 3.3. Self-knowledge of emotional change: from the past to the present

With the understanding of psychological sameness described in section 3.1, we can explain the effect of a person's emotional change on his or her identity. I shall defend the Lockean memory criterion of personal identity, showing that change is constitutive of, rather than a threat to, personal identity.<sup>9</sup> According to Wollheim, emotional change is possible because when my affective store, from which the affective tone comes, was reinforced by an experiential memory, the impact of the memory was mediated by my current *beliefs*, *desires* and *feelings*. Hence, I should not be scared of the monster in the horror movie due to my current *belief* that it is fictional character, even though I was scared of it in my childhood. Furthermore, I am not experiencing grief over the death of my father, due to my present *recognition* that the perceptual image of my father is weakened, the *belief* that I can no longer see him, and due to my *desire* for well-being in his absence. Hence, we can say that I am a psychologically identical being, from a first-person phenomenological perspective, even though my emotions or experiences have changed.

Although Wollheim claims that change is constitutive of, rather than a threat to, a person's identity, he does not explain how change is constitutive of personal identity. Change must occur in order that a person is not for an indefinite period struck down, for example, by grief or disappointment. On this question, Wollheim claims that "it is in the nature of persons that they change", since time is not merely a static but a transient thing and a development of the new out of the past and the present. Hence "as they live, they necessarily change, and therefore it would be a merit in a criterion of personal identity". Thus Wollheim argues that the mental connectedness criterion of personal identity must permit change. "It must

---

<sup>9</sup> Some people read Locke's transitivity of consciousness as what William James (1890, Ch. 10) later calls the 'stream of consciousness.' I share this view. Cf. Lowe (1995, 114).



exhibit how change is compatible with identity” (Wollheim 1980, 313). Yet he does not develop this point. Hence, let us consider how such an account might be developed.

It might be said that emotional change is a kind of recovery. But once a person notices herself to have recovered, for example, from deep grief or shock, she could say that she is not the same as the person who once grieved or shocked. That is, she has changed. But the recognition that her feelings have been changed with passage of time is not itself a feeling. Then what is it? In order to appreciate this, let us consider ‘two senses of experience’ suggested by William James. William James defines the concept of memory as “the knowledge of an event, or fact with the additional consciousness that we have thought or experienced it before” (James 1890/1950, 648). He presents two senses of experience as follows:

A succession of feelings, in and of itself, is not a feeling of succession. And since, to our successive feelings, a feeling of their succession is added, that must be treated as an additional fact requiring its own elucidation. (James 1890/1950, 628-629)

Here James seems to suggest that the feeling of succession cannot be much like sensations or emotions. He suggests that it is one thing to be presented by a succession of feelings; it is another to appreciate it as a succession. On this view, memory plays an important role in taking notice of this succession, since without the ‘taking notice’, mere occurrence of successive perceptions would not provide us with a self-conception. But ‘taking notice’ is not itself a feeling. One might say that ‘taking notice’ of emotional change is *disaffection* with oneself. When someone, for example, finds herself not only changed but also finds that she has become an alien to herself many times over, she realizes that she is in a disaffected state. Martha Nussbaum sees this disaffected state as being in the state of “a detached, unemotional, or intellectual deliberation” (Nussbaum 2001, 24). She views this disaffected state as involving various cognitive features, such as a ‘personal point of view’, ‘cognitive denseness’, and ‘cognitive freshness’ (see Nussbaum 2001, 63-65; 79-85).<sup>10</sup> These features do not imply noncognitive components for they impart the cognitive content of the judgments.

---

<sup>10</sup> In this paper I do not discuss these features in more detail. Ben’zev (2004, 453-455) provides a critical assessment of these features in his paper ‘Emotions are not mere Judgment’.

Although I agree with Nussbaum that the recognition of emotional change depends on cognitive features, I do not accept her view that cognitive elements are both necessary and sufficient for such recognition, since in my view we can sometimes recognize our emotional change in terms of self-knowledge of bodily feelings or affects. Hence, in explaining the fact that grief fades as time passes by, Nussbaum ignores the aspects of *felt* urgency and the affective side of the emotional experience. She seems to admit this point when she says that “it is the emotion itself, and not some further reaction to it, that has urgency and heat” (Nussbaum 2001, 78). But she views this urgency as a cognitive feature for it “comes not from the unthinking force, but from my thought that my well-being is threatened by that force” (Nussbaum 2001, 78). For example, if there is urgency in being hit by a gust of wind, it is not after all a noncognitive urgency – the urgency, if it is there, comes not from the unthinking force, but from my thought that my well-being is threaten by that force (cf. Nussbaum 2001, 78). If this were right, as Peter Goldie notes, Nussbaum’s cognitivism fails to recognise that “how profoundly and systematically our emotional feelings can mislead us – how the emotions can distort perception and reason” (Goldie 2004, 91).

In order to appreciate the point, in what follows I demonstrate how affect or bodily feeling also plays an important role in self-knowledge of emotional changes. I will do this by taking an example from *Remembrance of Things Past* by Proust (1981).<sup>11</sup> When Marcel hears the news of Albertine’s death, he suffers great anguish. Up until this point he had believed that he did not love her. However, upon hearing the distressing news, he realizes with certainty that he did indeed love her. According to Proust, Marcel has deceived himself about his love for Albertine. If we hold, like the cognitivist, that recognition of our condition can be best explained by a detached unemotional and non-affective cognition, then we do not have the resources to explain Marcel’s shock and suffering. This intellectual judgment that he did not love Albertine is shattered by his anguish. Of Marcel’s self-deception, Proust writes:

I had been mistaken in thinking that I could see clearly into my own heart. But this knowledge, which the shrewdest perceptions of the mind would not have given me, had now been brought to me, hard,

---

<sup>11</sup> Nussbaum also discusses this example. See Nussbaum (1990).

glittering, strange, like a crystallised salt, by the abrupt reaction of pain.  
(Proust 1981, 426)

Marcel's feeling of anguish is said to *feel*, 'like a thunderbolt', and forces his assent to his state of love (Proust 1981, 431). His state is revealed by his feelings, not his intellect. Proust tells us that our feelings are systematically buried by the workings of habit, the primary manner in which self-deception operates. The truth of Marcel's condition is brought out by his feelings. His painful anguish demonstrates his prior state of self-deception. If this is indeed a typical or common phenomenon, then it shows that a full account of our condition cannot be given simply by appeal to a cognitive-evaluative state. Confronted with this objection, Nussbaum might say that the relevant feelings are not bodily but can themselves be unpacked 'cognitively'. She claims that the occurrence of non-cognitive features in emotional experiences is contingent to the definition of emotions. Thus, Nussbaum would say that Marcel's feeling – anguish – wasn't just a physical sensation of pain that articulated his emotion, but the pain of a particular loss. She writes:

We also have a type of pain that probably is necessary for grief: namely, the pain *that an important element of one's life is gone*. But of course that is not a noncognitive element, and we have already included it in our cognitive/evaluative account, which has stressed, with Chrysippus, that such losses are bad and that it's right to be upset about them. (Nussbaum 2001, 64)

If this were true, she might say that Marcel's feelings, in our example, is psychological pain, which would yield to a purely 'cognitive' analysis. Yet if this were right, Nussbaum must explain what 'affect' is and whether it can be fairly contrasted with cognition. However, she remains unclear on this matter. Hence, I argue that the attempt by Nussbaum to reduce the role of cognition and affect in our recognition of emotional change to a single cognitive element is implausible, since both cognition and affect play an important role in our mental lives.

#### 3.4. Self-knowledge of emotional change: from the past-present to the future

Now I shall discuss how experiential memory can play a role for illuminating a person's future. Memory is broadly understood as ability. Memory

as a kind of mental phenomenon has been divided into two categories by a number of philosophers: memory, on the one hand, is a mental state, on the other hand, a mental disposition.<sup>12</sup> What is the difference between a mental disposition and a mental state? A mental disposition differs from a mental state in that mental states are events, in that they can be ascribed a discrete temporal location, whereas mental dispositions are manifested intermittently over a certain period. Mental states are “episodic or transient phenomena”, whereas mental dispositions are persisting and they “manifest themselves intermittently” (Wollheim 1984, 34-35). A disposition explains events that occur in a person’s life and underlies mental states.

In order for my current mental state and the earlier experience to be connected some kind of causal connection is needed. But what kind of connection? Not just any causal connection; the current mental state and the past event have to be connected in the right way. This idea can be illuminated in terms of what Wollheim calls a ‘dependency relation’. What then is the ‘dependency relation’? If we see memory as a disposition as Wollheim does, it entails that it has ‘causal dependence’, surely on earlier events. Wollheim calls this the dependency relation. Thus there is a three term relation to be found in the orbit of experiential memory. First, “the original event causes the disposition to be”. Second, “the disposition causes the mental state to occur” (Wollheim 1984, 98).<sup>13</sup> Third, the mediating disposition has the role of keeping an event “causally alive” (Wollheim 1984, 98). Here we can say that “causation occurs not just once but twice in the orbit of experiential memory, or that the memory onwardly transmits the causal influence of the remembered event” (Wollheim 1980, 308). Given that memory is a disposition, it exerts a causal influence over the manifestations of a person’s later life. Hence, we can explain a person’s future life in terms of memory as disposition. Having established that memories, as dispositions, have a backward and a forward looking dimension, Wollheim argues that a memory criterion of personal identity is not merely an

---

<sup>12</sup> In developing this idea I draw heavily on aspects of Wollheim’s philosophical psychology. See Wollheim (1984); and also Wollheim (1980).

<sup>13</sup> It could be argued that for a disposition to occur upon some event there had to be some prior disposition that disposed me to develop a disposition upon facing a certain type of events. So after all, it is dispositions all the way down. I would like to thank for this point to an anonymous reviewer of *Organon F*. But I leave the metaphysical issue of what dispositions are for a later occasion.

‘indicative’ criterion: “it is creative in that, when it holds, it brings about or helps to bring about that for which it is a criterion” (Wollheim 1984, 109).

On this view, a person’s memories are not merely instances of the spatio-temporal connections of psychological states, in the way that the traditional mental connectedness proponents, including Locke and Hume, propose. According to Locke and Hume, memory is a kind of store of the occurrent psychological state. On this traditional view, memory has a retrospective form only. However, the view which I defend says that it is not the occurrent psychological states alone that are part of one’s psychological make-up, but underlying traits and dispositions as well. On this view, memory and the forward-looking dimension in the temporal unity of a person’s life are interwoven.<sup>14</sup> The most distinctive feature of this forward-looking dimension is the emotional tone and richness of each person’s life, since as Byers notes, for Proust, “memory is the emotionally textured expanse or register of a person’s life, as without it the past would be empty, rather than emotionally nuanced, textured, and on occasion, devastating”, as in *Traumatic Stress and Disorder* (see Byers 2005, 175). This idea suggests that in a person’s life memory is deeply implicated in the forward-looking orientation or impetus of a person’s life. Now in order to understand this idea, the implication that memory has a point of view needs to be spelled out. This concerns my claim c), namely that when we remember an event experientially, it is remembered from a point of view and this point of view is represented within the memory.

The discussion which follows will show how memory has a perspective or a point of view in our emotional change. This idea will show us how experiential memory helps to create one’s future. The reason why the emotional change is possible is that memory embedded in feelings also has a perspective, or a forward-looking dimension. The idea that memory em-

---

<sup>14</sup> I am indebted for this point to Philippa Byers. See Byers (2005), especially, Chapter 5, Section 5.5. Byers discusses the relation between memory and time drawing on Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*. On Byers’s analysis of Proust, the time that memory recalls is time that memory recreates. According to Byers’s Proust, although the stuff of memory is the past, what is produced from the past, as the result of the labour of remembering, is new. Memory calls forth something new, rather than something repeated (cf. Byers 2005, 170). This view implies that memory not only recreates time but also has a future. In this respect, Byers criticizes the traditional memory-based theories of personal identity, such as Locke’s, where memory is characterized as presenting a retrospective form of unity.

bedded in feelings has a perspective can be shown by using an analogy with *perceptions*. We can compare a memory which has a perspective with the Muller-Lyer lines: the Muller-Lyer lines are known to be equal while they continue to appear to be of different lengths. Many people have used this example to illustrate how, at times, our perceptions seem to behave with a mind of their own despite our best efforts in trying to control them. This is because, the content of memory embedded in feelings, resembles the content of sense-perception in that both kinds of representational content may not be revised in the light of belief and better knowledge.

We can also apply this kind of analogy to the emotions as follows: just as our perception that the two lines differ in length persists in the faces of our belief that the lines are the same length, so some emotions may persist even though we have relevant and countervailing knowledge. Thus, we can say that a person can have a sense-perception or can feel emotion that *p*, and at the same time consciously believe that not-*p*. However, this is not the case in the case of contradictory beliefs. The point that I want to make here is that in the cases of emotion or experiential memory, we are able to be in a contradictory or ambivalent state while in the case of belief, this is impossible. This is because, we can say, both memory and emotion have a perspective.

If emotion and memory do not have a perspective, then we cannot understand how someone who has been in the grip of jealousy is eventually indifferent concerning the object of jealousy, for example. In order to appreciate this point, let us imagine the following example: Suppose that Kate wants to gain revenge on her ex-husband who had an affair with her friend, Lucy and left her. Kate is also jealous of Lucy, and wants to gain revenge on her as well. Kate knows that her ex-husband depended on her financially and also Lucy is impoverished. Kate desires to see him financially ruined so that he will regret leaving her. But one day Kate falls in love with a man whom she dreams of marrying. Then she realizes that she has become a person who is no longer obsessed with her ex-husband, and no longer jealous of Lucy.

Having established that emotion and experiential memory have a perspective, we can say that Kate's jealousy is comparable to the following cases: the snake is not dangerous and at the same time someone fears it; a person believes that the Muller-Lyre lines are equal while they continue to appear to be of different lengths. As I have said before, this implies that Kate's jealousy, for example, like sense-perception can present in the face of better

knowledge. She may know that Lucy is superior to her and more attractive than her. However, the emotion does not tend to get out of control, due to the passivity of feeling. In this respect, I argue that the emotion which does not vanish in the face of better knowledge is 'recalcitrant emotion' in the sense that to some extent our emotions and emotional responses are passive, and cannot be controlled.<sup>15</sup> This is because the subject's attitude toward those involved in jealousy is very complex and the desire in which jealousy is involved depends on all kinds of things: the circumstances, character-traits and moods that the person has.

Now if emotion and memory does not also have a perspective, then we cannot understand how Kate who has been in the grip of jealousy is eventually indifferent concerning the object of jealousy. But from Kate's self-concern in her future, this emotional change is understandable. Her self-concern and self-love, which possess perspective, have forward-looking dimensions. If we adopt my claim a), *a remembered event is something that I have lived through*, then we can say that the person has been and will be persisting, since a person is only able to experience something on the basis of his or her past action or experiences and concern for his or her future life. The reason why she is psychologically continuous over time is because she is aware of the fact that her past actions or experiences, and her concern for her future life, influence her present condition. Hence we can say that the recovery from the obsession or jealousy, for example, due to her awareness of a future shows that she is a successor of a series of past embodied subjects, who are similar but not numerically identical to each other. If this is right, we can say that change does not imply the loss of identity, rather change reveals how one and the same person is obsessed and miserable and then becomes no longer obsessed and miserable. This view implies that the unity of a person's life includes changes, for our condition and experiences change.

In explaining change there are elements of both discovery and creation. Self-knowledge of emotional change involves discovering something new in oneself. Self-knowledge of something new is awareness of both the fact that the past is differentiated from the present, and the fact that the future is the new creation of the past and present. In this respect, we can say that experiential memories of someone recreate a dimension of her/his past life

---

<sup>15</sup> The familiar example for emotional recalcitrance is phobia: the phobic who is afraid of something despite believing that it poses little or no danger.

and create her/his future life. She tends to remember the thoughts and the feelings that she had. Furthermore, her remembering drives her life towards the future. This shows us that experiential memory is not just concerned with the recollection of events or experiences that the subject has undergone, but concerns the narrative structure of one's life as a whole.

#### 4. Conclusion

In this paper I have defended a psychological continuity theory of personal identity which claims that memory has as much to do with a person's future as with a person's past with reference to emotions. Specifically, on the view which I have defended, memory does not simply invoke past events, but creates dispositions for future actions, thoughts and emotions. In this respect, we can say that memory is both past and future-regarding.

In order to illustrate this idea, I have elaborated on the conception of 'experiential memory' suggested by Wollheim. The characteristics of experiential memory are: first, it is a memory of an event lived through; second, it involves remembering an event *as* I experienced it, intrinsic to which are affective elements, as opposed to the mere recall of facts; third, it is a memory of an event from a person's own point of view. Hence, when we experientially remember a past event with feeling and perspective, our remembering not only *recreates* a dimension of our past life but also drives our future life in a certain direction. If my argument is right, we can say that experiential memory is not just confined to the recalling of events or experiences that the subject has experienced, but concerns the narrative structure of a person's life as a whole.

One might say that the view which I have discussed implies a narrative conception of the self. What then is the narrative conception of the self? The proponent of a narrative thesis claims that autobiographical memory is an essentially constructive and reconstructive phenomenon rather than a merely reproductive one. Yet the problem with autobiographical memory is that it involves the possibility of revision when a person reconstructs his or her past life.<sup>16</sup> However, if revision is necessary to being a narrative, a person's life which is reconstructed by revision is not a genuinely identical

---

<sup>16</sup> Strawson (2004) presents the problem of the possibility of revision in his argument against the narrative thesis.



one. If this is true, I do not want to commit myself to the narrative theory. Whatever narrativity means by the unity of a life, it seems to me that it is not the same as personal identity but seems to presuppose it, since in order for us to stitch together the event of our life into a whole self we should already know which events those are. So some notion of personal identity is presupposed. Hence, in order to do justice to the narrativity thesis, narrative theorists need to respond to some facts which seem to be problematic for their account: for example, people can remember and relive only a small part of their lives, those things which happened to us when we were very young being forever inaccessible to most of us. I have attempted to meet this kind of objection by taking memory to be a disposition. However, if we adopt the narrative thesis, then we cannot avoid the following objection: there is an important difference between what one *actually* did at a particular time and a *story* that is made up to explain those events that they do remember. I leave this kind of difficulty open in this paper. Instead I want to suggest that as a philosopher, I'd suggest we go for an historical narrative for a past self while trying to be creative about a future self, leaving fiction for the novelists, since I am not convinced that I have been constructed. Autobiographies are not sufficiently reliable for philosophical account of identity.<sup>17</sup>

### References

- AINSLIE, D. (2001): Hume's Reflections on the Identity and Simplicity of Mind. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 62, 557-578.
- BEN-ZE'EV, A. (2004): Emotions are not Mere Judgments. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 450-457.
- BYERS, P. (2005): *Personal Identity: Temporality and Continuity*. PhD thesis, University of Sydney.
- BIRO, J. (1976): Self-Identity and Memory. *The Review of Metaphysics* 26.

---

<sup>17</sup> This paper was presented in the conference of *Emotion, Others, and the Self* at Abo Akademi University, Turku, in August 2005. I am very grateful to the audience at the conference, especially, Lili Alanen, Kathy Behrendt, and Michael Lacewing for their useful comments. I also thank Andy Hamilton and Roger Squires, who suggested, in personal correspondence, some important improvements. Finally, I would like to thank Ronald De Sousa and Peter Goldie, who gave me an inspiration on Philosophy of Emotion.

- BUTLER, J. (1975): Of the Personal Identity. In Perry, J. (ed.): *Personal Identity*. California University Press.
- CAMPBELL, J. (1994): *Past, Space, and Self*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- DEONNA, J. A. (2006): Emotion, Perception and Perspective. *Dialectica* 60, 29-46.
- EVANS, G. (1982): *The Varieties of Reference*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- GOLDIE, P. (2004): Emotion, Feeling and Knowledge of the World. In: Solomon, R. (ed.): *Thinking about Feeling*. Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press.
- GOLDIE, P. (2012): *The Mess Inside: Narrative, Emotion and the Mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- HAMILTON, A. (1995): A New Look at Personal Identity. *Philosophical Quarterly* 45, 332-349.
- HAMILTON, A. (forthcoming): Memory and Body: A Study of Self-Consciousness.
- HUME, D. (1978): *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Revised by P. H. Nidditch. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- JAMES, W. (1890/1950): *The Principles of Psychology*. New York.
- LOCKE, J. (1975). *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Edited by Peter H. Nidditch. Oxford.
- LOWE, E. J. (1991): Substance and Selfhood. *Philosophy* 66, 81-99.
- LOWE, E. J. (1995): *Locke: On Human Understanding*. New York: Routledge.
- LOWE, E. J. (2000): Personal Identity and Self-Knowledge. In: *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- NOONAN, H. W. (1989): *Personal Identity*. Routledge.
- NUSSBAUM, M. C. (1990): *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- NUSSBAUM, M. C. (2001): *Upheavals of Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- PARFIT, D. (1987): *Reason and Persons*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- PENELHUM, T. (2000): *Themes in Hume: The Self, The Will, Religion*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- PERRY, J. (1975): *Personal Identity*. California University Press.
- PROUST, M. (1981): *Remembrance of Things Past*, Vol III. Transl. by Scott Moncrieff, C. K. – Mayor, A. – Kilmartin, T. (rev). London: Vintage.
- REID, T. (1975): Of Mr. Locke's Account of Our Personal Identity. In: Perry, J. (ed.): *Personal Identity*. California University Press.
- SCHECHTMAN, M. (1994): The Same and the Same: Two Views of Psychological Continuity. *American Philosophical Quarterly* 31, 199-212.
- SCHECHTMAN, M. (1997): *The Constitution of Selves*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- SHOEMAKER, S. (1963): *Self-Knowledge and Self-Identity*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- SHOEMAKER, S. (1984): Personal Identity: A Materialist Account. In: Shoemaker, S. – Swinburne, R. (eds.): *Personal Identity*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- STRAWSON, G. (2004): Against Narrativity. *Ratio* 17, 428-452.

- WIGGINS, D. (1967): *Identity and Spatio-Temporal Continuity*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- WILLIAMS, B. (1973): *Problem of the Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- WOLLHEIM, R. (1979): Memory, Experiential Memory, and Personal Identity. In: McDonald, G. F. (ed.): *Perception and Identity: Essays Presented to A. J. Ayer with His Replies to Them*. London: Macmillan.
- WOLLHEIM, R. (1980): On Persons and Their Lives. In: Rorty, A. (ed.): *Explaining Emotion*. University of California Press.
- WOLLHEIM, R. (1984): *The Thread of Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.