ARISTOTLE ON REMEMBERING AND RECOLLECTING

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Abstract

In the *De Memoria*, Aristotle offers a rigorous and carefully delineated account of memory, one that in my view has not yet been properly understood. My dissertation rectifies current misunderstandings of Aristotle’s account and demonstrates that Aristotle conceives of remembering as a means of cognitive access to the external world akin to perceiving and thinking. For Aristotle, the panorama of reality includes the past (in addition to the present and future) and memory is the cognitive power in virtue of which we apprehend objects in the past.

Chapter 1 argues that for Aristotle, remembering is simply the awareness of objects in the past, as such. This conception of remembering excludes much that today is considered part of memory, such as procedural memory and the memory of unqualifiedly intelligible objects (e.g., scientific theorems). Chapter 2 argues that Aristotle’s limited conception of remembering is assuaged by his robust account of recollection, according to which humans uniquely have the ability to search for information stored in the mind. Recollection often takes place for the sake of remembering, but it is also used to facilitate perceiving, imagining, thinking, and understanding. On Aristotle’s account, when students display their feats of learning on an exam, they are recollecting, not remembering, the objects of their learning.

In Chapter 3 I support my argument of the first two chapters with a careful analysis of Aristotle's remarks on slow people and fast and good learners at the outset of the *De Memoria*. Specifically, Aristotle says that slow people are better at remembering, whereas fast and good leaners are better at recollecting. I take these remarks to stem from Plato's observation in the *Theaetetus* that some people are good at learning but bad at remembering. Plato somehow fails to see the implications of his observation. For it suggests that some people are good at recollecting but bad at remembering, and this in turn suggests that memory and recollection are
distinct powers of the soul. In the *De Memoria*, Aristotle takes it upon himself to correct Plato's mistake.
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My interest in the *De Memoria* began at a summer workshop. In 2010, Princeton and the University of Crete held a week-long workshop on Aristotle's *De Memoria*. Students and faculty from both Universities gathered everyday in Rethymnon to pour over the text and grapple with its challenging complexity. I'm grateful to all the participants of that workshop for the lively (and at times heated!) discussions about even the most obscure features of the text, giving me a confident sense of how closely one must look and how careful one must be. Many of the issues I address in the dissertation were first brought to my attention during these discussions. I'm grateful to PIIRS and Hellenic Studies for the funding that made the workshop possible.

My greatest thanks go to my family. It is not without a swell of tears that I write this paragraph. On March 24th, 2013, my mother sadly passed away after an 11-month battle with pancreatic cancer. It will never get better, and I will always miss her. I only hope, having finally finished this dissertation, to have made her proud. I also want to express deep love and thanks to my father, who has been an inspiration throughout my life and continues to be now in his eighth year of living with the progressive challenges of Parkinson's disease. His outstanding career as a physician has been surpassed by the unbelievable perseverance and determination with which he lives each day of his remarkable life with Parkinson's.

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Introductory Remarks

In the *De Memoria*, Aristotle offers a rigorous and carefully delineated account of memory, one that in my view has not yet been properly understood. This dissertation aims to rectify current misunderstandings of Aristotle’s account and demonstrate that Aristotle conceives of remembering as a means of cognitive access to the external world akin to perceiving and thinking. For Aristotle, the panorama of reality includes the past (in addition to the present and future) and memory is the cognitive power in virtue of which we apprehend objects in the past.

Aristotle’s account of memory is somewhat in line with the modern-day notion of episodic memory, yet there are important differences. On Aristotle’s view, remembering does not include the encoding, storage, and retrieval processes that are central to modern-day accounts of remembering. For Aristotle, these processes are largely the work of *phantasia*. In addition, Aristotle conceives of remembering as an awareness of objects in the past, in which case he would seem to presuppose the independent existence of those objects in a way that is certainly not presupposed by theorists today. We tend to assume that only present objects exist and are accessible to awareness, but Aristotle seems to think that past objects, though absent, nonetheless exist in some sense and are available to awareness.

Aristotle’s account of memory provides the resources for critical reflection on modern-day theories of memory, which generally treat memory as an umbrella category for a vast range of activities rather than as a specific form of cognition. In this dissertation I do not undertake a comparison with modern-day theories of memory. Instead I lay the groundwork for that project by presenting what I take to be the correct interpretation of Aristotle’s account of memory.
In Aristotle on Memory, Richard Sorabji readily highlights the differences between the Aristotelian account of memory and modern-day accounts. But rather than recognize the force of Aristotle’s account, Sorabji consistently views Aristotle's divergence from contemporary usage of the verb "to remember" as a shortcoming. Much of Sorabji’s focus stems, I think, from a specific mistake in his interpretation of Aristotle's account. Sorabji mistakenly takes Aristotle's main characterization of remembering at the outset of the De Memoria to be a characterization of dispositional memory rather than the activity of remembering. In chapter 1 of this dissertation, I present what I take to be the correct interpretation these texts. I then argue for why Sorabji's view in particular is mistaken.

Chapter 1 of the dissertation builds upon an important insight provided by Hendrik Lorenz in The Brute Within. In his discussion of memory, Lorenz notes that Aristotle's use of the term ἕξις in the De Memoria is unlikely to mean "state." Rather, Aristotle seems to have a more active use in mind, akin to Plato's use of ἕξις in the aviary simile of the Theaetetus, where the term denotes "a having" and is contrasted with κτῆσις, meaning "possession."

This more active sense of ἕξις is in keeping with the context of Aristotle's discussion, which focuses on the activity of memory as opposed to dispositional memory. In chapter 1, I offer a full defense of this interpretation of Aristotle's use of ἕξις in the De Memoria. I also draw out some of the main implications for Aristotle's account of remembering. Then, as mentioned, I argue against Sorabji's central mistake, which is more specifically that he takes Aristotle's use of

1 R. Sorabji, Aristotle on Memory, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). Critical comparisons with contemporary views permeate Sorabji's account, though most notably his first essay, "Memory" (pp.1-21) and the notes to chapter 1 of the De Memoria (pp. 63-87). For a specific example, see p. 2, footnote 1.
Sorabji’s preoccupation with the supposed shortcomings of Aristotle’s account leads him to overlook Aristotle's unique contribution to the study of memory. He also fails to see the ways in which the *De Memoria* furthers our understanding of Aristotle's account of *phantasia*. For Aristotle appeals to *phantasia* in order to explain many of the phenomena that today we would categorize as remembering. At the end of chapter 1, I briefly discuss the role of *phantasia* in Aristotle’s account of memory. In so doing, it becomes apparent that the *De Memoria* provides central insight into this otherwise under-represented topic in the transmitted Aristotelian corpus.

Chapter 2 of the dissertation focuses on Aristotle's account of recollection. I argue that Aristotle’s narrow conception of remembering as the awareness of past objects as past is compensated for by his expansive account of recollection. On this account, recollecting is not only for the purpose of remembering but also serves the powers of perception, imagination, and thought. A close analysis of the text of chapter 2 of the *De Memoria* reveals that Aristotle is intent on distinguishing the proper objects of memory and recollection, precisely so as to make way for a more expansive account of recollection, such that it is not essentially tied to memory.

Chapter 3 of the dissertation consists of a careful study of Aristotle's remarks on slow people and fast and good learners at the outset of the *De Memoria*. Specifically, Aristotle says that slow people are better at remembering, whereas fast and good leaners are better at recollecting. I take these remarks to stem from Plato's observation in the *Theaetetus* that some people are good at learning but bad at remembering. On Aristotle's view, Plato has failed to recognize the full implications of this observation. In particular, the observation suggests that some people are good at recollecting but bad at remembering, and this in turn suggests that
memory and recollection are distinct powers of the soul. In chapter 3, I work through the reasoning that would have lead Aristotle to want to correct Plato's mistake. If I am right, it supports my arguments in chapters 1 and 2 of the dissertation.

To date, Aristotle’s views in the *De Memoria* have been misunderstood in various ways that have tended to obscure his true contribution to the study of memory. The purpose of this dissertation is to facilitate the re-assessment of that contribution by providing a defensible, and, it is hoped, more accurate interpretation of Aristotle’s account of memory.
Chapter 1: The Proper Objects and Activity of Memory

Introduction

My aim in this first chapter is to address a pivotal interpretive issue of Aristotle’s theory of memory: his characterization of the proper objects and activity of memory. The notion of the proper objects and activity of a power can be traced back at least to book 5 of Plato’s Republic, where Socrates notes that although powers cannot be distinguished by shape or color, they are nonetheless differentiated by their objects and accomplishments. In the De Memoria, Aristotle seeks to understand the nature of memory as a power of the soul, and he begins this inquiry by first identifying the proper objects of memory, after which he characterizes the proper activity of memory (remembering) in terms of those objects.

My argument will be that remembering, for Aristotle, is a form of awareness on a par with sense perceiving and thinking. On Aristotle’s view, the full cognition of reality requires not only sense perception and thought, but also memory. The following are examples of remembering on Aristotle’s view: remembering what you had for lunch the other day, remembering your last vacation, and remembering specific events from your childhood.

This chapter is divided into five sections. In Section I, I address the proper objects of memory as objects in the past and I argue that for Aristotle, unqualifiedly intelligible objects are

3 “[A]nd that which is set over the same thing and accomplishes the same thing I call the same power [καὶ τὴν μὲν ἐπὶ τῷ ἀυτῷ τεταγμένην καὶ τὸ ἀυτὸ ἀπεργαζομένην τὴν ἀυτὴν καλό]” (477c-d). Translations throughout this chapter are my own, unless otherwise specified.

4 In De Anima 2.4, Aristotle uses the term ἀντικείµενον to designate the proper objects of a power (415a20). Elsewhere he uses the familiar expression “καθ’ ἀυτὰ” and contrasts proper objects with the incidental objects of a power (“κατὰ συμβεβηκός”). See e.g., De Anima 2.6, 418a8-9, and De Memoria 1, 450a23-25. Throughout this dissertation, the term “object” should be construed broadly to include events, actions, emotions, essences, and states of affairs, although the proper objects of a given power may not include all of these.
not among the proper objects of memory. In Section II, I provide a framework for interpreting Aristotle’s characterization of remembering. In Section III, I argue that Aristotle conceives of remembering as a form of awareness, that is, as the apprehension of past objects with a consciousness of them as past.

In Sections IV and V, I defend this view against other interpretations. I begin in Section IV by locating the fulcrum of the interpretive debate. This lies with the translation of the Greek term ἑξίς in line 449b25 of the De Memoria. In Section V, I defend my translation of this term as “a having” against Richard Sorabji’s translation as “a state.” I then refute other interpretations that similarly translate ἑξίς as “a having,” yet view this activity as the soul’s retention and preservation of phantasmata rather than as the active awareness of past objects.

Section I: The Proper Objects of Memory

One might wonder why Aristotle chooses to begin his investigation of the nature of memory with a discussion of the proper objects of memory. Isn’t it obvious that we remember all manner of things, such as events, facts, people, appointments, lyrics, skills, and theorems? What more is there to say here? And why does Aristotle think it is important to begin this way?

Aristotle thinks a good theory of memory must carefully delineate the proper objects of memory in a manner that distinguishes them from the objects of other powers of the soul such as perception and thought.5 This is in keeping with his approach in De Anima 2.4, where he says:

Ἀναγκαῖον δὲ τὸν μέλλοντα περὶ τούτων σκέψιν ποιεῖσθαι λαβεῖν ἐκαστὸν αὐτὸν τι ἄρτι ἐστιν, εἰδ’ οὕτως περὶ τῶν ἐχομένων καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἐπιζητεῖν. εἰ δὲ χρὴ λέγειν τι ἐκαστὸν αὐτῶν, οἷον τὸ νοητικὸν ἢ τὸ ἀισθητικὸν ἢ τὸ θρεπτικὸν, πρῶτον ἐπὶ λεκτέον τί τὸ νοεῖν καὶ τί τὸ αἰσθάνεσθαι: πρῶτερα γὰρ εἰσὶ τῶν δυνάμεων αἱ ἐνέργειαι καὶ αἱ πράξεις κατὰ τὸν λόγον. εἰ δ’ οὕτως, τούτων δ’ ἔτι πρῶτερα τὰ ἀντικείμενα δεῖ τεδειωρηκέναι, περὶ ἐκείνων πρῶτον ἄν δέοι διορίσαι διὰ τὴν αὐτὴν αἰτίαν, οἷον περὶ τροφῆς καὶ αἰσθητοῦ καὶ νοητοῦ.

5 Throughout this chapter, I use the term “perception” and its variants to refer specifically to “sense perception,” that is, to the awareness of present objects obtained through one or more of the five senses.
It is necessary for the one who undertakes an investigation of these things [sc. the nutritive, sensory, self-locomotive, and other powers of the soul] to apprehend what each of them is and then to inquire concerning their properties and other attributes. Yet if one is to say what each of them is, for example, what the power for thought is, or the power for perception or nutrition, prior still one must say what thinking is, and what perceiving is. For the activities and actions are prior in account to the powers. If this is the case, and if still prior to this one must have considered the corresponding objects [τὰ ἄντικείµενα] of these activities, one must for the same reason determine first about them, for example about food, and the object of perception and the object of thought. (415a14-22)

Here Aristotle says that in order to define a power of the soul, one must first have an account of the activity that corresponds to the power in question. He says, for example, that in order to say what thought is, one must first say what thinking is. This is because thought is nothing more than the power for thinking. Thus, if the definition of thought is to be informative, one needs an account of thinking. Aristotle suggests that a similar priority of definition holds between activities and their objects.\(^6\) That is, thinking is the apprehension of objects of thought, in which case the definition of thinking requires an independent account of the objects of thought.

In the De Memoria, Aristotle assumes that memory is a distinct power of the soul. The opening section of the De Memoria provides us with one of the clearest applications of the methodology described in De Anima 2.4 for defining powers of the soul.\(^7\) Aristotle begins by distinguishing the proper objects of memory from those of other powers of the soul, after which he characterizes the activity of memory—remembering—in terms of those objects. Aristotle says that failure to carefully delineate the proper objects of memory leads to theoretical

\(^6\) Aristotle is more tentative about the definitional priority of objects to activities. Yet, for both perception and thought he defines the proper objects of these powers independently of their proper activities (and he defines the proper activities in reference to the proper objects). See e.g., De Anima 3.4, 429b10-18 and De Sensu, 439b10ff. It may be that the definitional priority of proper objects requires a case-by-case assessment.

\(^7\) In the case of perception and thought, Aristotle similarly employs the methodology from De Anima 2.4, though in a less clear and straightforward manner.
confusion, implying that his predecessors have made precisely this mistake. It is no wonder, then, that Aristotle begins his discussion of memory with a discussion of its proper objects.

Aristotle observes that the objects of memory are best distinguished as objects in the past:

ἡ δὲ μνήμη τοῦ γενομένου· τὸ δὲ παρόν ὅτε πάρεστιν, οὐδὲν τοδε τὸ λευκὸν ὅτε ὁρᾷ, οὔδείς ἂν φαίη μνημονεύειν, οὐδὲ τὸ θεωρούμενον, θεωρών καὶ ἐννοῶν, ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν αἰσθάνεσθαι φησι, τὸ δ’ ἐπίστασθαι μόνον.

Memory is of what is in the past. No one would say that he remembers what is in the present when it is present, for example this white thing while he sees it, nor even the object of thought while he attends to it theoretically and has it in mind, but in the first case he says only that he perceives it and in the second case that he understands it. (449b15-18)

Aristotle here makes the simple observation that when we perceive something or think of something, we do not refer to this event, as such, as a case of remembering. “Do you see that statue over there?” is a distinct question from “Do you remember that statue over there?”

When we try to explain this distinction in terms of a difference in the objects referred to, it becomes apparent that while thinking is a power for apprehending intelligible objects, and perception is a power for apprehending objects in the present, memory is a power for apprehending objects in the past. Memory is distinguished from other psychological powers by the fact that the objects it apprehends are objects in the past.

The implications of this observation are far-reaching. As mentioned, most of us have the intuition that just about anything might be a proper object of memory, but on Aristotle’s view this is incorrect. More specifically, on Aristotle’s view unqualifiedly intelligible objects as a whole are excluded from the proper objects of memory. This is because such objects are immaterial and unchanging (though many are manifested only in material, changing things), in which case they cannot, of themselves, be qualified as past, present, or future.

8 “First, then, we must consider what kinds of things are the objects of memory, for this is often a source of confusion [πρῶτον μὲν οὖν σκέπτεσθαι ποῖα ἐστι τὰ μνημονεύειν· πολλάκις γὰρ ἐξαπατά τοῦτο]” (449b9-10). Aristotle most likely has in mind Plato’s account of memory.
Unqualifiedly intelligible objects, for Aristotle, are the universals (and truths about universals) that form the objects of theoretical reason. These include mathematical objects, scientific theorems, and the immaterial essences of perceptible particulars (e.g., the essence of rock, tree, or human being). In *Nichomachean Ethics* 6.1-2, Aristotle distinguishes between two kinds of reason, theoretical reason and practical reason. Both powers aim at grasping the truth in their respective domains, but practical reason is ultimately concerned with the truth about perceptible particulars, whereas theoretical reason aims at grasping the truth about universals.

Universals, and the truths about universals, are abstractions from material, changing particulars, and as such they are themselves immaterial and unchanging. They are the objects of theoretical reason, since this part of thought, according to Aristotle, aims at what is necessarily and eternally the case (or what cannot be otherwise). Universals alone lend themselves to this pursuit, since truths about universals hold necessarily and eternally. These very features of universals, however, also entail that they are atemporal, in the sense that they do not, in and of themselves, exist in time and bear temporal qualifications.

In *Physics* 4.12, Aristotle distinguishes between objects that and are and are not in time (ἐν χρόνῳ). Among the objects that are not in time are those that are unchanging in the sense

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9 In *De Anima* 3.4, 429b10-11, Aristotle captures the notion of an immaterial essence when he distinguishes between “water and having being for water [ἐπεὶ δ’ ἄλλο ἐστὶ ... ὑδώρ καὶ ὑδατι εἶναι]” (the latter expression refers to the essence of water).

10 Aristotle distinguishes between τὸ ἐπιστημονικὸν (theoretical reason) and τὸ λογιστικὸν (practical reason) as follows: “Let us grant that there are two parts having reason: one with which we study the kinds of beings whose principles do not admit of being otherwise, and the other with which we study beings whose principles do admit of being otherwise [καὶ ὑποκείσθω δύο τὰ λόγον ἔχοντα, ἐν μὲν ὦ θεωροῦμεν τὰ τοιαῦτα τῶν ὑπατῶν ὅσων αἱ ἄρχαι μὴ ἐνδέχονται ἄλλως ἔχειν, ἐν δὲ ὦ τὰ ἐνδεχόμενα]” (1139a6-8). It becomes clear as the chapter proceeds that the former is primarily concerned with universals and the latter with particulars, though of course there is interdependence between the two through induction and deduction. See e.g., *NE* 6.6, 1140b30-31 and 6.11, 1143a25-43b6.

11 See e.g., *Posterior Analytics* 1.6, 74b5-12; 1.8, 75b21-26; and 1.33, 88b30-89a4.
that they do not undergo movement or rest (where things are only properly said to be at rest when they are capable of being moved):

\[ \text{ὥστε τὸ κινούμενον οὐχ ἀπλῶς ἔσται μετρητὸν ὑπὸ χρόνου, ἃς ποσὸν τί ἔστιν, ἀλλ' ἡ ἡ κίνησις αὐτοῦ ποσῆ. ὥστε δεῖ μήτε κινεῖται μήτ' ἠρεμεῖ, οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν χρόνῳ· τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἐν χρόνῳ εἶναι τὸ μετρεῖσθαι ἐστὶ χρόνῳ, ὁ δὲ χρόνος κινήσεως καὶ ἠρεμίας μέτρον.} \]

And so what is moved will be measured by time not simply in so far as it has any quantity but in so far as its movement has quantity. Thus, whatever is such as to be neither moved nor at rest is not in time. For to be in time is to be measured in time, and time is a measure of movement and rest. (221b19-21)

Since unqualifiedly intelligible objects are immaterial and unchanging, they do not undergo movement or rest, in which case they are not in time and cannot be qualified as past, present, or future. As a result, they are not among the proper objects of memory.

The same cannot be said, however, for the particular manifestations of these intelligible objects in compound substances. “This rock,” “that tree,” and “the person over there,” for example, are material manifestations of immaterial essences, and as such they are intelligible, albeit qualifiedly. Indeed, they are the objects of practical reason. As mentioned above, practical reason is concerned with grasping the truth about perceptible particulars. Perceptible particulars clearly count as being in time (they undergo movement and rest), in which case they are the appropriate bearers of time relations and can be qualified as past, present, or future.

These qualifiedly intelligible objects, then, in contrast with their unqualified counterparts, are among the proper objects of memory.\(^{12}\)

Aristotle goes on in the *De Memoria* to distinguish between the proper and incidental objects of memory. Generally speaking, proper objects of a power are those with which it is essentially concerned and in respect of which it accomplishes whatever it accomplishes, while the incidental objects of a power are those it relates to indirectly, on account of being in some

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\(^{12}\) For a more detailed discussion of things in time, in particular the complication that arises with infinitely long changes, see Ursula Coope, *Time for Aristotle: Physics IV.10-14* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), pp. 75-76, 105-106, and c. 9.
accidental relation with the proper objects of that power. In the De Memoria, Aristotle says that unqualifiedly intelligible objects are the incidental objects of memory:

τίνος μὲν οὖν τὸν τῆς ψυχῆς ἐστὶ μνήμη, φανερὸν, ὅτι οὔπερ καὶ φαντασία· καὶ ἐστὶ μνημονευτὰ καθ’ αὐτὰ μὲν ἄν ἐστι φαντασία, κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς δὲ ὅσα μὴ ἄνευ φαντασίας.

To which of the parts of the soul memory belongs is clear, it is the part of the soul to which phantasia also belongs. And the objects of memory are in themselves the things of which there is phantasia, and incidentally as many things as are not without phantasia. (450a22-25)

Here Aristotle distinguishes between the types of objects that can be the proper objects of memory and those that are the incidental objects of memory. The distinction would seem to be that between particulars and universals, respectively. For as we know from De Anima 3.3, phantasia results from the movements of perception, and perception is of particulars, in which case “the things of which there is phantasia [ὡν ἐστι φαντασία]” must be a reference to perceptible particulars. On the other hand, Aristotle makes it clear in the De Anima that we do not think without a phantasma. Given that thought is dependent in this way on phantasia, Aristotle is likely referring to the unqualifiedly intelligible objects of theoretical reason—i.e., to universals—when he characterizes the incidental objects of memory as objects that are “not without phantasia [μὴ ἄνευ φαντασίας].”

One might object, however, that the expression “μὴ ἄνευ φαντασίας” refers equally to the qualifiedly intelligible objects of practical reason, which are particulars. Indeed, Aristotle’s remarks in the De Anima about the need for phantasmata in thinking apply both to theoretical

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13 For example, in De Anima 2.6, Aristotle says that incidental objects of perception are those that do not affect the senses directly, but only indirectly through their accidental properties, which properties are themselves the proper objects of perception: “We say that a thing is incidentally perceptible, for example if this white thing is the son of Diaries; for we perceive this thing incidentally because it happens to be the white thing that we perceive, and so in no way does it affect us through the senses as such [κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς δὲ λέγεται αἰσθητόν, οἷον εἰ τὸ λευκὸν εἴη Διάρους υἱός· κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς γὰρ τούτου αἰσθάνεται, ὃτι τὸ λευκὸ συμβεβήκε τοῦτο, οὗ αἰσθάνεται· διὸ καὶ ἐνδεῖ πάσχει ἢ τοιοῦτον ὑπὸ τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ]” (418a20-24).

14 See De Anima 3.7, 431a15-20, 431b2-9; 3.8, 432a4-9; and 3.11, 434a6-9.
and practical thought. So why think (as I have suggested) that Aristotle refers only to universals as the incidental objects of memory?

On this point it helps to consider a slightly earlier passage in chapter 1 of the *De Memoria*, where Aristotle elaborates on his claim in the *De Anima* that thinking requires a *phantasma*. The passage arises in the context of Aristotle’s argument that memory belongs in itself to the primary perceptual capacity, and incidentally to thought:

ἐπεὶ δὲ περὶ φαντασίας εἴρηται πρότερον ἐν τοῖς περὶ ψυχῆς, καὶ νοεῖν οὐκ ἔστιν ἄνευ φαντάσματος—συμβαίνει γὰρ τὸ αὐτὸ πάθος ἐν τῷ νοεῖν ὑπὲρ καὶ ἐν τῷ διαγράφειν· ἐκεῖ τε γὰρ οὐθὲν προσχρώμενοι τῷ τὸ ποσόν ώρισμένον ἐνίαυ τοῦ τριγώνου, ὅμως γράφομεν ώρισμένον κατὰ τὸ ποσὸν, καὶ ἡ νοῦν ύσιάτως, κῶν μὴ ποσόν νοητή, τίθεται πρὸ ὀμμάτων ποσόν, νοεῖ δ’ οὖν ἢ ποσόν; ἢ ποσόν· ἢν δ’ ἡ φύσις ἢ τῶν ποσῶν, ἀφορίστων δὲ, τίθεται μὲν ποσόν οὐρισμένον, νοεῖ δ’ ἢ ποσόν μόνον—διὰ τίνα τάν μὲν οὖν αὐτάν οὐκ ἐνδέχεται νοεῖν οὐδὲν ἄνευ συνεχοῦς, οὐδ’ ἄνευ χρόνου τὰ μὴ ἐν χρόνῳ ὄντα, ἀλλος λόγος;

We spoke earlier concerning *phantasia* in the discussions concerning the soul, and thinking is not possible without a *phantasmatoσ*—for the same affection takes place in thinking and in drawing diagrams: for there, although we make no use of the fact that a determinate quantity belongs to the triangle, we nevertheless draw one with a determinate quantity. And similarly with one who thinks: even if he does not think something with a quantity, he sets something with a quantity before his eyes, but he does not think of it as having a quantity. And if its nature is among those things that have a quantity, but an indeterminate one, he assumes a determinate quantity, but he thinks of it as having a quantity only—the reason why it is not possible to think anything without continuity, nor without time things that are not in time, is for another discussion. (449b30-450a9)

In this passage Aristotle explains the way in which thinking does not take place without a *phantasma*. He gives the analogy of drawing a triangle. In such cases, one aims to represent triangles in general, and so while one must draw some particular triangle with particular dimensions, these particularities are irrelevant to one’s purposes. Aristotle says that the way we use *phantasmata* in thinking is quite similar, since while *phantasia* presents thought with a *phantasma* of a particular thing with a particular quantity, the thinking individual does not think of it as having a quantity or a particular quantity (as the case may be). Instead, she abstracts from particularity and takes the *phantasma* to be representative of any object of the kind in question.
It seems clear that in the above passage Aristotle is discussing theoretical thought. He is illustrating the way in which one employs phantasmata in thinking about universals. Aristotle is not discussing practical thought, since for practical thought, by contrast with theoretical thought, the particularity of the phantasmata, far from being ignored, is all important. For example, a burglar strategizing about how to break into a particular building considers the specific dimensions and location of each point of entry. In considering a particular window, for example, she will think about its size and location. If it’s too small for her to fit through or if it is visible from the street, she will likely decide against using that entry point. Thus, in deliberating about how to proceed, she makes essential use of the particularity of phantasmata in question.

Given these considerations, it seems that, in the limited context of De Memoria 1, Aristotle is specifically discussing universals when he refers to objects that are “μὴ ἄνευ φαντασίας.” Aristotle’s remarks about the proper and incidental objects of memory come after his discussion of thought and phantasmata. The latter discussion, as mentioned, occurs as part of his argument that memory belongs primarily to the primary perceptual capacity, and incidentally to thought. And from this same argument, Aristotle draws the further conclusion that the proper objects of memory are “things of which there is phantasia [ὅν ἐστὶ φαντασία]” and the incidental objects are “as many things as are not without phantasia [ὅσα μὴ ἄνευ φαντασίας].” Given the connection between the two passages, it is reasonable to conclude that Aristotle designates universals, the unqualifiedly intelligible objects of theoretical reason, as the incidental objects of memory. This conclusion is further supported by the considerations I gave earlier, namely, that the qualifiedly intelligible objects of practical reason are in time according to Aristotle’s reasoning in Physics 4.12, whereas unqualifiedly intelligible objects are not.
Assuming, then, that unqualifiedly intelligible objects are the incidental objects of memory, we can now ask what Aristotle means, exactly, in saying that we remember them only incidentally. Recall the example of incidental perception from *De Anima* 2.6, where the son of Diates is incidentally perceptible in so far as he happens to be a white thing (since the white thing is properly perceptible). The analogous case for memory would seem to be one where an unqualifiedly intelligible object, despite being atemporal and unchanging in itself, acquires the accidental property of being in the past through its accidental association with an object that is itself in the past. Thus, we remember unqualifiedly intelligible objects incidentally in virtue of their accidental association with proper objects of remembering. But how does this accidental association take place, exactly?

One possibility is that universals are accidentally in time in virtue of their particular manifestations. Consider, for example, someone remembering having lunch with the Son of Diates. The Son of Diates is among proper objects of this memory, while the universal “human being” is an incidental object of this memory in virtue of its particular manifestation in the Son of Diates.

Another possibility is that universals take on the accidental property of being in time in so far as they are thought about in time. In other words, when humans engage in theoretical reasoning, the objects of their reasoning acquire the accidental property of being in time. In the case of someone who remembers a past instance of theoretical reasoning, the proper object of the memory is the past event itself, while the incidental object is the object contemplated.

To illustrate, consider Sally, who is remembering the first time she learned geometry. Let us suppose she learns the Pythagorean theorem (which states that the length of the hypotenuse squared of a right triangle is equal to the sum of squared lengths of the other two
sides). In virtue of Sally’s exercise of theoretical reasoning, the object of her reasoning, the Pythagorean theorem, takes on the accidental property of being in time. When Sally later remembers this past experience of learning, the proper objects of her memory are the past perceptible particulars, including herself, her activity, and her surroundings (the blackboard, textbook, the teacher’s voice, and other such things). The Pythagorean theorem is an incidental object of this memory. Thus, just as the Son of Diares is an incidental object of perception in virtue of being accidentally related to the proper objects of perception, the Pythagorean theorem is an incidental object of memory in virtue of being accidentally related to the proper objects of memory.

Aristotle is not particularly clear on the way in which unqualifiedly intelligible objects are the incidental objects of memory. I have offered two suggestions for what he might have in mind. The important thing to note is that remembering an object incidentally is, on Aristotle’s view, distinct from actually thinking about that object. This is because unqualifiedly intelligible objects are not, of themselves, in time, in which case, in so far as they are the proper objects of cognition, they are by definition not viewed as objects in the past (as is required for remembering). Thus, if Sally, upon remembering the past event of learning the Pythagorean theorem, proceeds to think about that theorem itself, she is no longer remembering but thinking.

There is one way of understanding the incidental objects of memory that I would specifically like to resist. This is the account offered by Pavel Gregoric in *Aristotle on the Common Sense*. On Gregoric’s view, since the *phantasmata* employed in theoretical thought are in time, it is by remembering these *phantasmata* that we remember our thoughts. Gregoric takes remembering our thoughts to be a form of actual thinking. The only difference, for Gregoric, between remembering a thought and “thinking it afresh” is that in the former case we

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are aware of having thought the same thing before. We do this, he thinks, by remembering having used the same phantasmata in the past. These phantasmata are somehow “time-tagged,” such that each time we employ the same phantasmata, we remember having used them before, and in so doing we “remembering our thought” instead of “thinking it afresh.”

This account is problematic, however, since it conflicts with the way in which Aristotle says we use phantasmata in thinking. Specifically, Aristotle says that when thinking we do not pay heed, in any way, to the particularity of the phantasmata employed. To view them as belonging to the past, however, and thus to take them as the proper objects of remembering, requires viewing these phantasmata in exactly the way that Aristotle says we do not view them when engaged in theoretical reasoning. Thus, in so far as we remember these phantasmata, we are not viewing them in the manner required for theoretical thought. In short, each instance of thinking is, for Aristotle, what Gregoric has called “thinking it afresh.” There is no such thing as remembering our thoughts where this is taken to involve actual thinking. While we may shift quickly and easily between remembering and thinking, giving us the impression that “remembering our thoughts” involves theoretical reasoning, on Aristotle’s view this impression is mistaken, since remembering and theoretical reasoning are, conceptually speaking, distinct activities.

So far I have explained how Aristotle’s methodological approach in the De Memoria (which distinguishes powers of the soul by their proper objects) leads him to exclude unqualifedly intelligible objects as a whole from the proper objects of memory, since, unlike perceptible particulars, universals do not admit, in and of themselves, of temporal qualification and thus cannot be qualified as belonging to the past, except incidentally. With this result in mind, let us now consider Aristotle’s characterization of remembering.

16 Ibid., pp. 100-101.
Section II: The Proper Activity of Memory

In this Section, I present the specific text from the De Memoria that will be the focus of my interpretive argument regarding Aristotle’s characterization of remembering. On my interpretation, Aristotle conceives of remembering as the apprehension of past objects with a consciousness of them as past. Remembering is a mode of awareness that involves not only (1) cognizing an object in the past, but also (2) being conscious of that past object as past. This view should be contrasted with any account that takes the proper activity of remembering to be the storage or retention of information, as well as any account on which it is possible to remember an object without recognizing it as past.

I mentioned earlier that Aristotle’s account of remembering maps somewhat onto the modern-day notion of episodic memory, with some important exceptions.\(^\text{17}\) It is worth emphasizing that for Aristotle, remembering is *nothing more* than the type of awareness I just described. It does not include, for example, procedural memory. The latter notion encompasses a wide range of activities, such as tying one’s shoe, cooking rice, and employing the rules of grammar. These activities are thought to be forms of remembering in that they involve the encoding, storage, and retrieval of information, which itself is thought to be the proper activity of memory. Procedural memory is excluded from Aristotle’s account of remembering, however, because it does not involve the awareness of past objects as such. Tying one’s shoe, for example, does not involve (or need not involve) awareness of the last time one did so.

I make my case for the above interpretation by offering a close reading of certain lines of the De Memoria and by appealing to additional sources, in particular the De Sensu, the De

\(^{17}\) I mentioned in the Introduction that remembering, for Aristotle, does not include the encoding, storage, and retrieval processes that are central to modern-day accounts of remembering. Also, Aristotle thinks that objects in the past have being, and this view is not necessarily embraced by modern-day conceptions of memory.
Anima, Metaphysics Δ, and an important discussion in Plato’s Theaetetus. In addressing the central text of the De Memoria, I make frequent reference to line numbers, in which case I present that text here, line by line.

In the De Memoria Aristotle describes remembering as follows:


[18] But whenever [19] he has [σχῇ]¹⁸ knowledge and perception without the activities [τῶν ἔργων] [just mentioned], then [20] he remembers [µέµνηται], in the first case that [21] he learned or attended theoretically, and in the second case that he heard or saw or something of this sort. [22] For always, whenever one is active on the basis of remembering [ἐνεργῇ κατὰ τὸ μνημονεύειν], in this way he says in his soul [23] that he previously heard or perceived or had this in mind. [24] Thus memory [µνήµη] is neither perception nor supposition, but [25] a having [ἐξεῖ] or undergoing [πάθος] of one of these, whenever time has passed. (449b18-25)

Here we see that, for Aristotle, remembering relates to (but is distinct from) perceiving and thinking. A basic pre-requisite of remembering is that the relevant perceiving or thinking has already taken place and is no longer active (lines 18-19: “But whenever … without the activities …”). Beyond this, Aristotle’s meaning is a bit obscure. For instance, why does Aristotle use indirect speech to describe remembering at lines 20-23 (“he remembers … that he heard or saw …”)? And what does it mean to say in line 19 that the person who remembers “has” the relevant perception or knowledge? Finally, why does Aristotle think that the one who remembers “says in his soul” (line 22) that he previously perceived the object in question or had it in mind?

Clarifying these issues will help us to better understand how Aristotle conceives of remembering. In the next Section, I argue that Aristotle’s use of indirect speech in the above

¹⁸ I follow the β manuscript tradition of the aorist here, as opposed to ἔχῃ in the α tradition. The philosophical considerations that I provide in Section V favor the simple aspect of the aorist over the progressive aspect of the present tense, though my interpretation is consistent with either text. Since the manuscripts are more or less equally divided, I allow philosophical considerations to be determinative. Since all but one of the β manuscripts (U) pair σχῇ with τῶν ἔργων as opposed to τῶν ἐνεργείων found in the α tradition, I follow β on this point of difference as well.
text, along with the expression “he says in his soul,” indicate that Aristotle views remembering as a form of awareness of the external world. In Sections IV and V, I further support this conclusion by arguing that in line 19, where it is said that the agent who remembers “has” the relevant perception or knowledge, Aristotle has in mind a second actuality that is akin to exercising one’s knowledge.

Aristotle distinguishes between the potential to acquire knowledge and the potential to exercise knowledge. The potential to acquire knowledge is the first potentiality of knowledge. It is actualized through the process of learning, and when complete it constitutes the first actuality of knowledge. This first actuality of knowledge is the possession of knowledge without exercising it. It is also a second potentiality, as it constitutes the potential to exercise the knowledge one possesses. The actual exercise of acquired knowledge constitutes the second actuality of knowledge.

These ontological gradations, according to Aristotle, are found in perception as well, with the important difference that when we are born we already possess the first actuality (second potentiality) of perception. The senses are the result of a process of acquisition that takes place before birth, in which case at birth they are already analogous to the first actuality (second potentiality) of knowledge. The second actuality of perception—corresponding to the exercise of knowledge—consists in the use of our senses.

My view is that the ontological gradations of memory are, for Aristotle, more akin to those of knowledge than to those of perception, in that the first actuality of memory is acquired after birth, through a process of receiving, organizing and retaining phantasmata. The first actuality of memory, dispositional memory, exists so long as these phantasmata are retained and

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19 De Anima 2.5, 417a22-b1.
20 De Anima 2.1, 412a10-11.
21 De Anima 2.5, 417b17-20.
have the potential upon activation to ground our awareness of past objects. The second actuality of memory, remembering, is the actual awareness of past objects.

Later in the dissertation I discuss the mechanics, as it were, of remembering. I argue that for Aristotle, remembering is the simulation of the perceptual experience of a past object, and through this simulation the agent is aware of the past object in question. This simulation and its object are what the agent “has” when she remembers. The current chapter is devoted to establishing the preliminary claim that Aristotle views remembering as a form of awareness. This includes a refutation of the alternative view, on which Aristotle employs “has” to refer to the unconscious activity of receiving, organizing, and retaining phantasmata. On the retention view, the first actuality (second potentiality) of memory, like perception, is acquired before birth. It is the potential that we are born with to receive, organize, and retain phantasmata. On this view, the second actuality of memory, remembering, is simply the exercise of that potential. In Section V, I argue against the retention view.

The overall picture that emerges from this chapter is that remembering, perceiving, and thinking are all modes of awareness, distinguished primarily by the kinds of objects they apprehend (past perceptible objects, present perceptible objects, and intelligible objects, respectively). Each type of cognition grasps a different facet of reality, and without any one of them our access to the world is incomplete.

**Section III: Remembering as the Awareness of Past Objects as Past**

In this Section, I argue that Aristotle views remembering as a form of awareness of the external world. It is curious that Aristotle’s first description of remembering is phrased in indirect speech. He says in lines 20-23 that the agent “remembers … that he heard or saw …” Why not simply say that the agent “remembers a sound or a color”? I think Aristotle makes use
here of a mode of description that is specifically available for types of awareness, and that he
does this to indicate that remembering is a type of awareness on a par with, but distinct from,
perceiving and thinking. A comparison to perception will be helpful.

In De Anima 3.2, Aristotle seeks to explain a particular feature of the bodily changes
involved in perceiving, which is that they constitute awareness of a present object. It is a
remarkable fact that some bodily changes do, and others do not, involve awareness of an object
(we are not aware of food that is being digested, for example). I will not delve into Aristotle’s
explanation of that difference here (especially given that it is a much disputed topic). What is
important for our purposes is the language Aristotle uses to describe this feature of perceiving.22

Aristotle uses indirect speech to express the fact that perceiving is a form of awareness.
He says, for example, “[W]e perceive that we see and hear ...”23 What he means is that
perceiving is not simply a series of material changes caused in the perceiver by a present external
object. Rather, these unique changes somehow constitute a noticing by the perceiver of the
object of perception. Thus, for Aristotle, the expressions, “I see red” and “I perceive that I see
red” are equivalent. The second expression aims simply to articulate what is implicit in the first,
which is that vision is a form of awareness.

22 In what follows, I agree with L.A. Kosman that in De Anima 3.2, Aristotle seeks only to explain the fact
that perceiving is a form of awareness. See L.A. Kosman, “Perceiving that We Perceive: On the Soul
III.2,” Philosophical Review, 84:4 (1975), pp. 499-519. In other words, Aristotle is not addressing a non-
standard use of perception, such as the sense of sight taking itself as an object (though Aristotle does
describe such non-standard uses elsewhere, for example in De Anima 2.10, where he says that it is with
sight that we are aware of darkness—i.e., of not seeing anything, 422a20ff.). The fact that perceiving is a
form of awareness indeed enables certain non-standard uses, but Aristotle is not primarily concerned with
those when he employs the phrases “[W]e perceive that we see and hear ...” and “[H]e remembers ... that
he heard or saw ...” Nor is Aristotle concerned with the higher-order self-consciousness found in humans,
since this involves reason. In De Anima 3.2, Aristotle is concerned with sense perception, which belongs
to non-rational and rational animals alike.

23 “Ἐπεὶ δ’ αἰσθανόµεθα ὅτι ὁρῶµεν καὶ ἀκούοµεν ...” (De Anima 3.2, 425b11).
A text from the *De Sensu* further supports my claim that Aristotle’s indirect formulations seek to capture the basic phenomenon of awareness. In the *De Sensu*, Aristotle’s formulation is similar to that of the *De Anima*, except that he uses the verb λανθάνειν (to escape notice) in place of the verb αἰσθάνεσθαι (to perceive):

εἰ γάρ, ὅτε αὐτὸς αὑτοῦ τις αἰσθάνεται ἢ ἄλλου ἐν συνεχεί χρόνῳ, (a) μὴ ἐνδέχεται τότε λανθάνειν ὅτι ἔστιν, (b) ἔστι δὲ τις ἐν τῷ συνεχεί καὶ τοσοῦτος ὅλως ἀναίσθητός ἐστι, δῆλον ὅτι τότε λανθάνοι ἢ ἔστιν αὐτὸς αὐτόν, καὶ εἰ ὅρα καὶ αἰσθάνεται [καὶ εἰ αἰσθάνεται].

For if, when someone perceives himself or another thing in continuous time, (a) it cannot then escape his notice [λανθάνειν] that he is [perceiving himself or another thing], but (b) there is some part in continuous time such as to be wholly imperceptible, [then] clearly he would at that time be unaware [λανθάνοι ἂν] of whether he is [perceiving] himself and whether he is seeing and perceiving. (448a26-30)

In this passage Aristotle uses a *reductio* style argument to deny the possibility of imperceptible time. He argues that if any portion of time were imperceptible, this would mean that there are times in which we perceive but fail to notice anything at all, which he takes to be impossible. This is because perceiving is nothing other than the noticing of an object and thereby a noticing of oneself as well (and sometimes one takes oneself as the object of perception). To be currently perceiving but aware of nothing at all is a contradiction in terms.24

Interestingly, Aristotle also uses the verb λανθάνειν (“to escape notice”) in chapter 2 of the *De Memoria* to describe remembering: “But it is not possible for the one who is actively remembering not to think so but for remembering to escape his notice [λανθάνειν μεμημένον]; for this is remembering itself.”25 Aristotle’s claim, “for this is remembering itself,” refers us back to chapter 1 of the *De Memoria* where he gives his characterization of remembering. Here

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24 According to Aristotle, for creatures with a sense of time, perception of time follows upon the perception of change, and this in turn follows upon the perception of things that change. Even the bare activity of the soul is enough to make us sense that time has elapsed (see *Physics* 4.11, 218b20ff.). The notion of imperceptible time would thus entail that everything in the relevant time period is also imperceptible. To hold that the agent in such a case is nonetheless perceiving is nonsensical.

25 “ἐνεργοῦντα δὲ τῇ μνήμῃ μὴ οἴεσθαι ἄλλα λανθάνειν μεμημένον οὐκ ἔστιν· τοῦτο γὰρ ἢν αὐτὸ τὸ μεμημήσθαι” (452b26-28).
in chapter 2, he uses the verb λανθάνειν (“to escape notice”) in order to re-state the point he takes himself to have made in chapter 1, which is that remembering is a form of awareness.

Indeed, Aristotle seems to want to make this very point more explicitly in chapter 1 when he uses the expression “he says in his soul” (lines 22-23: “he says in his soul that earlier he heard or perceived or had this in mind”). Most likely, this expression is yet another way for Aristotle to emphasize the point that remembering is a form of awareness.\(^\text{26}\) We therefore should not take Aristotle too literally when he uses this expression—he is not specifying an additional requirement of remembering, such as the power of speech. This is confirmed by the fact that Aristotle attributes memory to some non-rational animals.\(^\text{27}\)

The similarities between Aristotle’s language in reference to perceiving (in the *De Anima* and the *De Sensu*) and remembering (in the *De Memoria*) are clear, and I take it that in each case Aristotle is making a similar point, which is that perceiving and remembering, respectively, are forms of awareness. In other words, it is impossible to engage in these activities without noticing subject and object.

What this awareness amounts to in the case of remembering can be further specified. According to Aristotle’s methodology, the activity of memory is to be characterized in relation to its objects, which we have seen are objects in the past. Remembering, then, is best described as the awareness of past objects *as such*. What it means to be aware of a past object *as such* will be further discussed in Chapter 3. For now we can say that it involves awareness of an object that is

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\(^{26}\) In using indirect speech in his characterization of remembering, Aristotle likely also wishes to emphasize the distinction between remembering, perceiving, and thinking. He has just claimed that they are distinct, and that remembering only comes into play once the relevant perceiving or thinking is no longer active, in which case it makes sense for him to describe remembering in terms of past perceiving or thinking (rather than with reference to the past objects themselves). The point to bear in mind, however, is that this form of speech is only available to Aristotle because he takes remembering to be a form of awareness.

\(^{27}\) *De Memoria*, 450a15-19.
in fact an object of past experience, where this object is somehow distinguished from objects in
the present and future.

Section IV: Remembering as a ἔξις (“a having”)

In this section and the next, I defend the above-stated view that the proper activity of
memory is the awareness of past objects as past. Defending the interpretation I have offered
requires arguing for a specific translation of the text I presented in Section II. In particular, I will
focus on line 19, where Aristotle first describes the proper activity of memory (remembering):
“whenever he has [σχῇ] knowledge and perception without the activities [just mentioned], then
he remembers.” There are two central questions to ask regarding this text. First, is Aristotle here
describing the activity of remembering, or just the potential for that activity? As I discuss in
more detail in the next section, the same Greek verb is often used to describe either an activity or
the potential for that activity. Thus it is a fair question whether Aristotle is here discussing the
activity of memory, or merely the potential for that activity. On the latter view, the translation
should read, “whenever he has [σχῇ] knowledge and perception without the activities [just
mentioned], then he is able to remember.”

Even if we can settle this question, another important one arises. That is, if we assume
for the moment that Aristotle is describing the activity of memory in line 19 (versus the potential
for that activity), a further question arises as to the nature of this activity. What is remembering,
exactly? As discussed in Section II, my view is that when Aristotle says the one who remembers
“has” knowledge and perception, he is referring to the second actuality of being aware of objects
in the past. This is the proper activity of memory. But another interpretation is possible.
Perhaps Aristotle instead has in mind the activity of storing and maintaining phantasmata. If so,
this would be the second actuality of memory. Remembering would involve nothing more than
the reception, organization, and retention of *phantasmata* in the soul, and the first actuality (second potentiality) of memory would be the potential we are born with for this activity.

Resolving this issue hangs on a proper understanding of Aristotle’s use of “has” in line 19. The manuscripts are equally divided as to whether Aristotle employs “has” with a progressive aspect, which would allow for the retention view, or a simple aspect, which would preclude the retention view. The matter cannot be resolved through grammatical considerations alone.28 I will argue for the simple aspect, which favors my view that remembering is a form of awareness (as I explain in Section V; however, the awareness view is also compatible with the progressive aspect). I make my argument somewhat circuitously, focusing the debate on the translation of ἕξις in line 25 of Aristotle’s description of remembering. In the remainder of this section, I explain what allows us to focus the debate in this way, and I home in on the questions at issue.

To begin with, for ease of reference it is worth reproducing the text we will be discussing:


[18] But whenever [19] he has [σχή] knowledge and perception without the activities [τῶν ἔργων] [just mentioned], then [20] he remembers [μέμνηται], in the first case that [21] he learned or attended theoretically, and in the second case that he heard or saw or something of this sort. [22] For always, whenever one is active on the basis of remembering [ἐνεργῇ κατὰ τὸ μνημονεύειν], in this way he says in his soul [23] that he previously heard or perceived or had this in mind. [24] Thus memory [μνήμη] is neither perception nor supposition, but [25] a having [ἔξις] or undergoing [πάθος] of one of these, whenever time has passed. (449b18-25)

Our inquiry into the meaning of “has” in line 19 can be conducted through a discussion of the meaning of ἕξις in line 25 (which I translate as “a having”). This is because the term ἕξις is a nominalization of the verb ἔχειν (to have). A nominalization is a noun derived from a verb. For

28 See footnote 18.
example, the verb “to produce” has several nominalizations, including “product” and “production.” Given that the term ἔξις, as mentioned, is a nominalization of the verb ἔχειν (to have), it is likely that Aristotle intends the meaning ἔξις in line 25 to correspond with his preceding use of “he has” in line 19. We can therefore discover the meaning of “has” by working backwards, as it were, from an examination of the meaning of ἔξις in line 25.

In book Δ of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle presents two different senses of the term ἔξις:

"Ἔξις δὲ λέγεται ἕνα μὲν τρόπον οἴον ἑνέργεια τις τοῦ ἔχοντος καὶ ἐχομένου, ὡσπερ πρᾶξις τῆς ἐνέργειας (ὅταν γὰρ τὸ μὲν ποιήτη ἔστι ποίημα μεταξύ· οὕτω καὶ τοῦ ἔχοντος ἐστὶν καὶ τῆς ἐχομένης ἐστὶν μεταξύ ἔξις); ἄλλον δὲ τρόπον ἔξις λέγεται διάθεσις καθ’ ἓν ἢ εὖ ἢ κακῶς διάκειται τὸ διακείμενον, καὶ ἢ καθ’ αὐτὸ ἢ πρὸς ἄλλο, οἴον ἢ ὑγίεια ἔξις τις· διάθεσις γάρ ἐστὶ τοιαύτη.

“Having” [ἔξις] refers in one way to some sort of activity of having and being had, in the way that one speaks of any making or motion (for whenever one thing makes and another is made, there is a making between them, in this way also there is a having [ἔξις] between the one who has a garment and the garment that is had) ... In another way “having” [ἔξις] refers to a disposition in respect of which the disposed is disposed either well or badly, either with respect to itself or in relation to something else, for example health is a certain “having” [ἔξις] for it is this kind of disposition. (1022b4-12)

One should note that these two senses of ἔξις correspond to the transitive and intransitive uses of ἔχειν (“to have” and “to be disposed,” respectively). The first sense of ἔξις that Aristotle discusses stems from the transitive use of ἔχειν and takes a direct object.29 Aristotle describes this sense of ἔξις as ἑνέργεια (an activity) and says that it implies a relation of having and being had.

The second sense of ἔξις is based on the intransitive use of ἔχειν. This sense of ἔξις is quite different from the first and refers to a disposition by which one is well or badly off, either in respect of oneself or in relation to something else. The second sense of ἔξις is often translated as “state,” and it is to this sense that Aristotle appeals in the *Nicomachean Ethics* when he describes a person’s character as a ἔξις. In the above text from the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle gives

29 Note that the phrase “he has [σχῇ]” in line 449b19 of the De Memoria is transitive and takes “knowledge” and “perception” as direct objects.
the example of health as a non-relational disposition by which the healthy person is well off in respect of herself. An example of a relational disposition would be parental love, the disposition to love one’s child in virtue of which a parent is well off in relation to their child (in contrast to a disposition of parental abuse, neglect, or hatred). Aristotle has more to say about the second sense of ἕξις in the Categories:

óstē diaphērei ἕξις διαθέσεως τῷ τὸ μὲν εὐκίνητον εἶναι τὸ δὲ πολυχρονιώτερόν τε καὶ δυσκινητότερον. —eiśi ἓ δὲ αἱ μὲν ἕξεις καὶ διαθέσεις, αἱ δὲ διαθέσεις οὐκ ἕξις ἀνάγκης ἕξεις· οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἕξεις ἔχοντες καὶ διάκειναι πως κατὰ ταύτας, οἱ δὲ διακείμενοι οὐ πάντως καὶ ἔξιν ἔχουσιν.

Thus a state [ἕξις] differs from a disposition in that the latter is easily changed while the former lasts more time and is more difficult to change. And states [ἕξεις] are dispositions, but dispositions are not necessarily states [ἕξεις]. For those with states [ἕξεις] are disposed in some way on the basis of them, but those who are disposed are by no means also in a state [ἕξις]. (9a8-13)

Note that Metaphysics Δ does not specify a characteristic duration for the dispositional sense of ἕξις, whereas in this text from the Categories Aristotle describes a ἕξις as a disposition that is lasting and difficult to change. Conversely, Aristotle makes no mention in the Categories of being well or badly off in respect of a ἕξις. In general, book Δ is a codification of common philosophical usage, but one should look elsewhere in the corpus for refinements to Aristotle’s own use of terms. It may be that in the Categories Aristotle is further specifying the intransitive sense of ἕξις as referring to a more permanent disposition, one that extends beyond cases of being well or badly off in some regard. In any event, one must bear the Categories text in mind when interpreting the intransitive use of ἕξις in Aristotle’s works.

The question we must ask is which sense of ἕξις does Aristotle employ in lines 24-25 when he says that “memory [μνήµη] is neither perception nor supposition, but a having [ἔξις] or

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30 This is not to say that Aristotle is re-defining the term or straying significantly from common usage. More likely he is further specifying the meaning of the term.
undergoing \(\pi\acute{a}\theta\omicron\omicron\varsigma\) of one of these, whenever time has passed”? That is, should \(\epsilon\epsilon\izi\varsigma\) here be given the transitive meaning of “having” or the intransitive meaning of “state”?

The answer to this question bears on the two questions raised earlier in this section. The first question was whether Aristotle discusses potential or actual remembering in line 19. Someone who takes the view that potential remembering is at issue will prefer to translate \(\epsilon\epsilon\izi\varsigma\) in line 25 as “state.” They will argue that when Aristotle describes memory as a \(\epsilon\epsilon\izi\varsigma\) in line 25, he is referring to dispositional memory (i.e., he is referring to memory as the power or potential for remembering). On this view, Aristotle uses the term \(\epsilon\epsilon\izi\varsigma\) in line 25 to define memory as a more or less permanent disposition in respect of perception and supposition, a disposition that meets the criteria of a \(\epsilon\epsilon\izi\varsigma\) articulated in the *Categories*. If this is correct, it supports the contention that in line 19 Aristotle addresses the potential for remembering, not actual remembering. In other words, in line 19 Aristotle identifies the moment at which the potential for remembering (and thus dispositional memory) arises. On this view, the entire passage is devoted to a discussion of dispositional memory. In the next section, I argue against this position.

Assuming for the moment that \(\epsilon\epsilon\izi\varsigma\) in line 25 should be translated as “a having,” and that, correspondingly, Aristotle discusses actual, not potential remembering in both lines 19 and 25, the second question I raised was as to the nature of this activity—is the activity of remembering simply the retention of *phantasmata* in the soul, or is it an awareness of past objects as past? Which of these constitutes the second actuality of memory? In the next section, I argue that further investigation of the transitive sense of \(\epsilon\epsilon\izi\varsigma\) favors my awareness account over a retention account.

To clarify, both the retention view and my view would seem to advocate translating \(\epsilon\epsilon\izi\varsigma\) in line 25 as “a having.” On both views, Aristotle is describing actual remembering in line 19 as
some sort of “having.” This continues in lines 24-25 where Aristotle says that “memory [μνήμη] is neither perception nor supposition, but a having [ἕξις] or undergoing [πάθος] of one of these, whenever time has passed.” Here Aristotle describes not the disposition to remember, but actual remembering, which is a “having” or “undergoing” of past perception or supposition. The only difference between the views is that the retention view takes this “having” to be the unconscious activity of retaining the phantasmata of past experience, whereas the awareness view (my view) takes this “having” to be the actual awareness of a past object constituted by the activation of these phantasmata.

In the next section, I will argue both that the interpretation of ἕξις as “state” is implausible and that taking ἕξις in the transitive sense favors my interpretation over a retention account of remembering. The same considerations also speak in favor of a simple aspect interpretation of “has” in line 19. My argument focuses on the view of Richard Sorabji, which differs somewhat from the alternatives above. The objections that I make to Sorabji’s view, however, serve as objections to any view that translates ἕξις in line 25 as “state,” as well as any view that espouses a retention account of remembering.

Section V: ἕξις and the Second Actuality of Memory

Sorabji translates ἕξις in line 25 as “state.” This is because he thinks Aristotle uses the term μνήμη (memory) throughout the De Memoria to refer to the disposition or ability to remember (as opposed to the activity of remembering). According to Sorabji, dispositional memory is constituted by (1) the retention of an imprint or affection from past perception or knowledge, and (2) a stable disposition from which one may excite this imprint and bring about remembering.31 Sorabji agrees with my view that Aristotle employs the verb “has” in the

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characterization of remembering at line 19 to refer to the activity of memory, yet he thinks Aristotle shifts to a discussion of dispositional memory at lines 24-25.\(^{32}\) Sorabji thus does not fit neatly with any of the interpretations discussed in Section IV. Still, he is an appropriate opponent, as his view appears to challenge both my claim that the meaning of “has” in line 19 corresponds with that of ἕξις in line 25, as well as my claim that ἕξις in line 25 should be translated transitively as “a having.”

Sorabji translates lines 24-25 as follows: “Therefore memory is not perception or conception, but a state or affection connected with one of these, when time has elapsed.”\(^{33}\) As mentioned, he thinks Aristotle uses the term µνήµη throughout the De Memoria to refer to dispositional memory. The intransitive sense of ἕξις denotes a disposition. Given that ἕξις appears in line 25 as part of a description or characterization of µνήµη, which Sorabji takes to be dispositional, it is natural from his point of view to translate ἕξις intransitively as “state.”

The problem for Sorabji’s interpretation is that he gives no particular justification for thinking that Aristotle uses µνήµη throughout the De Memoria to refer exclusively to dispositional memory. Sorabji would acknowledge that there is nothing in the Greek term µνήµη that forces this view upon us. Aristotle points out in a number of places outside the De Memoria that Greek verbs and their corresponding nouns have active and dispositional senses.\(^{34}\) So, “Gordon αἰσθάνεται” can mean either “Gordon is actively perceiving,” or “Gordon is able to perceive.” Similarly, “Bethany µνηµονεύει” can mean either “Bethany is actively remember,” or “Bethany is able to remember.” The nouns αἴσθησις and µνήµη likewise refer to either the activity of perceiving and remembering, respectively, or to the power or disposition

\(^{32}\) Ibid., p. 69.
\(^{33}\) Ibid., p. 48 [emphasis added].
\(^{34}\) See e.g., De Anima 2.5, 417a9-14; Metaphysics, 1017b1-3, 1048a33-34.
for that activity. In the above text, it is perfectly acceptable to take μνήµη as a reference to the activity of remembering, and I think we have good reason to do so.

For one thing, Aristotle does not yet have the resources to discuss dispositional memory. For that, he will first need to explain the power of recollection, which is what he does in chapter 2 of the De Memoria, where we find, not surprisingly, an explicit reference to dispositional memory.35 As I discuss in the next chapter, dispositional memory intersects with the power of recollection, since both depend on the networks of potential psychic movements within us. These networks, when activated, bring affections before the mind that enable remembering, thinking, and other activities, as the case may be. Aristotle prefers to discuss these networks in chapter 2 of the De Memoria as they are central to the account of recollection. I am mostly in agreement with Sorabji’s characterization of dispositional memory. I simply disagree that Aristotle is discussing dispositional memory in lines 24-25.

Sorabji acknowledges that Aristotle’s investigation of the nature of memory in the De Memoria follows the methodology laid out in De Anima 2.4, according to which powers of the soul are to be defined in light of their proper objects and activities.36 Sorabji also acknowledges that chapter 1 of the De Memoria seems to focus quite heavily on the activity of memory and neglects dispositional memory.37 Nonetheless, Sorabji thinks that Aristotle somewhat randomly interjects the discussion of remembering at the outset of chapter 1 with a characterization of dispositional memory (which I have suggested cannot fairly be done without a discussion of recollection). It would seem that Sorabji’s own considerations speak against taking μνήµη in line 24 in the dispositional sense, in which case they also speak against translating ἕξις as “state.”

35 452a10-12.
36 Sorabji, p. 65.
37 Ibid., p. 2.
Additionally, certain grammatical considerations make Sorabji’s translation of ἕξις in line 25 unlikely. In our text, ἕξις is paired with “perception” and “supposition” in the genitive case. In Greek, a noun in the genitive case can play various grammatical roles. Two common roles are referred to as the “subjective genitive” and the “objective genitive,” both of which are translated in English with the preposition “of.” The subjective genitive denotes belonging (e.g., “the plight of the poor”) whereas the objective genitive denotes a direct object (e.g., “the suffering of pain”).

If one translates ἕξις intransitively to mean “state,” an objective genitive reading of the terms “perception” and “supposition” in our text is impossible (this is because an objective genitive reading of these terms requires that ἕξις be taken transitively as “a having”). The resulting problem for Sorabji is that the alternative subjective genitive reading in this context makes little sense: Aristotle is not trying to say that memory is a state belonging to perception and supposition.

There are a number of other possible grammatical roles for nouns in the genitive, such as to denote cause or origin. Indeed, Sorabji seems to have some such genitive in mind, since on his translation, memory is a state “connected with” perception and supposition. But this is a non-standard use of the genitive, especially with ἕξις: one is hard pressed to find ἕξις paired with the genitive in Aristotle’s works where the genitive in question is clearly neither a subjective nor an objective genitive. Given that an objective genitive reading is available and plausible for our text, the onus is on Sorabji to show that the balance of considerations somehow favors his non-standard translation. Yet, as I’ve pointed out, Sorabji gives no clear justification for his position, and if anything, his own considerations speak against it.

A final point against translating ἕξις as “state” is that it’s not clear why there should be any sort of permanence requirement on dispositional memory. As mentioned earlier, Aristotle
describes ἕξις in the *Categories* as a lasting disposition. Yet the disposition to remember is often short-lived. As we will see in Chapter 3, Aristotle was acutely aware of this fact. Far from making longevity a part of dispositional memory, Aristotle instead sees it as a distinguishing feature of a good memory.

So far I have objected to Sorabji’s translation of ἕξις in line 25 as “state,” first on the grounds that Aristotle is not discussing dispositional memory in chapter 1 of the *De Memoria*, and second on the grounds that “state” is the grammatically disfavored translation, in which case one would need particularly strong countervailing considerations to sustain that choice, yet such considerations are conspicuously lacking. As for my next and final point, evidence from Plato’s *Theaetetus* not only further refutes Sorabji’s translation of ἕξις in line 25 as “state” but also challenges those translations of ἕξις as “a having” on which remembering is the unconscious retention of past experience.

Note that the *De Memoria* contains implicit references to the *Theaetetus*, and so there is independent reason to think that this dialogue was in the background for Aristotle when he wrote the *De Memoria*. The important part of the *Theaetetus* for our current purposes is the distinction that Socrates makes between possessing knowledge and “having” it at the opening of the aviary simile:

**Socrates:** Ἐπιστήμης ποι ἕξιν φασίν αὐτὸ εἶναι.
They say, I think, that [knowing] is the having [ἕξιν] of knowledge.

**Theaetetus:** Ἀλήθη.
Yes, that’s true.

**Socrates:** Ἡμεῖς τοίνυν σμικρὸν μεταθώμεθα καὶ εἴπωμεν ἐπιστήμης κτήσιν.

38 For example, at 450a30-32, Aristotle makes implicit use of the wax block analogy that Socrates uses in the *Theaetetus* to illustrate the internal preservation of thoughts and perceptions (*Theaetetus*, 191d3-e2). And like Socrates, Aristotle makes further use of this analogy to explain differences in mnemonic ability (*De Memoria*, 450b7-10; *Theaetetus*, 194c-195b).
Now let us change things slightly and call it the possession [κτῆσιν] of knowledge.

**Theaetetus:** Τί οὖν δὴ φήσεις τούτο ἐκείνον διαφέρειν;
In what way do you think this one differs from the other one?

**Socrates:** Ἰσως μὲν οὐδέν· ὃ δ' οὖν δοκεῖ ἀκούσας συνδοκίμαζε.
Perhaps in no way. Hear how it seems to me, and consider the matter yourself.

**Theaetetus:** Ἐάνπερ γε οἷός τ' ὦ.
If I am able to, I will.

**Socrates:** Οὐ τοίνυν μοι ταὐτὸν φαίνεται τῷ κεκτῆσθαι τὸ ἔχειν. οἷον ἵματιν πριάμενός τις καὶ ἐγκρατής ὄν μὴ φορῶν, ἔχειν μὲν οὐκ ἂν αὐτόν αὐτό, κεκτῆσθαί γε μὴν φαίμεν.
Well then, “having” [τὸ ἔχειν] does not seem to me to be the same thing as “possessing” [τῷ κεκτῆσθαι]. For example, if someone buys a coat and it is at his disposal but he is not wearing it, we would not say that he has [ἔχειν] it on, but that he possesses [κεκτῆσθαι] it.

**Theaetetus:** Ὡρθῶς γε.
That’s correct. (197b-c)

Here Socrates distinguishes between the noun ἔξις (having), which he takes to relate to the transitive verb ἔχειν (to have), and the noun κτῆσιν (possession), which relates to the transitive verb κεκτῆσθαι (to possess). The latter noun denotes being able to have or use something, despite not actually having or using it (in this context, the thing in question is knowledge), whereas ἔξις denotes actually having or using that thing (actually knowing). This distinction maps onto Aristotle’s distinction in the *De Anima* between first and second actuality as applied to knowledge. Aristotle considers the mere possession of knowledge a first actuality and contrasts this with the exercise of knowledge as a second actuality. Thus, in Aristotelian terms, Plato uses ἔχειν and ἔξις in the *Theaetetus* to refer to the second actuality of exercising one’s knowledge, distinguishing this from the first actuality of knowledge, which is to possess knowledge without actually exercising it.
The interplay in the *Theaetetus* between the noun ἐξίς and the verb ἔχειν is exactly what we find in the *De Memoria* when Aristotle says in line 19 that the person who remembers “has [σχῇ] the knowledge or perception,” and then subsequently concludes in line 25 that “memory is neither perception nor supposition, but a having [ἐξίς] or undergoing of one of these, whenever time has passed.” Given the influence of Plato’s *Theaetetus* on the *De Memoria*, it is likely that Aristotle is applying these terms to remembering in a manner analogous to Plato’s use of them in respect of knowledge.

If this is correct, it suggests not only ([contra Sorabji](#)) that Aristotle uses both ἐξίς and ἔχειν to refer specifically to the exercise of memory rather than to the mere possession thereof, it also suggests that exercising one’s memory—actively remembering—is a second actuality akin to exercising one’s knowledge. In Section II, I discussed Aristotle’s ontological gradations, first and second actuality, as applied to perception and knowledge. A salient difference between perception and knowledge, discussed by Aristotle in *De Anima* 2.5, is that the first actuality of perception is present before birth, whereas the first actuality of knowledge is acquired after birth, through a process of learning.39

This difference relates to a further one, which is that the first actuality of knowledge consists in having already acquired the objects of knowledge. The term κτήσις (possession), which Socrates employs in the *Theaetetus* for knowledge that is not being exercised, implies having already acquired the objects of knowledge (they are possessed, but not in use). The term κτήσις is appropriate to describe the first actuality of knowledge but not the first actuality of perception. This is because the perceiving agent’s ability to perceive a particular color or sound does not depend on having already acquired those objects. The objects of perception are not

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39 *De Anima* 2.5, 417b17-20.
already possessed prior to actual perceiving, in which case the contrast found in the *Theaetetus* between κτῆσις and ἕξις does not apply to them.

If we are to understand remembering as a second actuality akin to exercising one’s knowledge, the appropriate and comparable activity is the actual awareness of past objects. The process of acquiring, organizing and retaining the objects of memory is what grounds the first actuality of memory (dispositional memory). This stage is analogous to the mere possession of knowledge. In actual remembering, these past objects become the objects of awareness, and this activity constitutes the second actuality of memory, akin to the exercise of one’s knowledge.

The problem with the retention view, then, is that it fails to capture this analogy with knowledge. On the retention view, the second actuality of memory is the activity of retaining the objects of memory. The first actuality of memory, like perception, is present before birth. If we take the *Theaetetus* background seriously, however, it’s clear that retention is not the type of activity Aristotle would describe using the transitive noun ἕξις, since that term expresses the active use or “having” of an object, in contrast with the mere possession of the same object. On the retention view, there is no contrast with the mere possession of an object of memory. The retention view obliterates the distinction Socrates sought to establish between κτῆσις and ἕξις. As a result, the analogy between the exercise of memory and knowledge does not succeed.

In this Section, I have argued against translating ἕξις in line 25 of the *De Memoria* as “state.” This translation presupposes that Aristotle is discussing dispositional memory at this stage of the text, yet, as I have pointed out, Aristotle is following the methodology for defining powers of the soul, according to which one begins by identifying the objects of the power, after which one defines the proper activity of the power in terms of those objects. This gives us strong reason to take Aristotle’s initial discussions of remembering in the *De Memoria* as concerned
solely with the activity of remembering, especially since they follow straight on the heels of a
discussion of the proper objects of memory. I also pointed out that Aristotle lacks the resources
at this point in the text to discuss dispositional memory. To explain dispositional memory,
Aristotle must first discuss the networks of potential psychic movements that ground
dispositional memory. Since these networks are central to the account of recollection, Aristotle
postpones that discussion to chapter 2. Finally, grammatical considerations make the translation
of ἔξις as “state” implausible.

I have also argued against any view on which the activity of memory is the unconscious
retention or preservation of phantasmata. I based my argument on considerations from the
Theaetetus, where Socrates uses the transitive ἔξις in a manner that contrasts it with κτῆσις. I
argued that this background suggests Aristotle views the second actuality of memory as akin to
the exercise of one’s knowledge, in the sense that both presuppose a first actuality that consists
of having already acquired the proper objects of the power in question. The retention view fails
to satisfy this analogy with knowledge. Instead, the background considerations from the
Theaetetus favor the awareness view, on which remembering is the awareness of past objects as
past, since on this view the exercise of memory presupposes prior acquisition of the objects of
memory through perception.

These same considerations speak in favor of adopting the simple aspect “σχῇ” in line 19,
over the progressive aspect “ἔχῃ.” The retention view is only viable if we adopt the progressive
aspect for line 19. To the extent that one should adopt readings of the text that clarify Aristotle’s
view and prevent misunderstanding, we should favor the simple aspect. On the other hand,
Plato’s use of the progressive ἔχειν in the Theaetetus (to refer to the active exercise of one’s
knowledge) shows that the awareness view is compatible with “ἔχῃ” as well. To the extent that
it is preferable to adopt readings of the text that allow for more rather than fewer interpretations and translations, even mistaken ones, one should perhaps favor the progressive aspect. As mentioned earlier, the manuscripts are divided on this issue. I have argued that philosophical considerations favor “σχῇ” (since it best captures Aristotle’s meaning); nonetheless, I grant that as a matter of policy one might fairly choose the less restrictive “ἔχῃ.”

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have argued for a renewed understanding of Aristotle’s theory of memory, according to which the proper activity of memory, remembering, is a means of cognitive access to the past similar to the way in which perceiving and thinking are means of cognitive access to the present and to intelligible reality, respectively.

Earlier in the chapter I argued that one of the results of Aristotle’s conceptual rigor in the *De Memoria* is that unqualifiedly intelligible objects are not among the proper objects of memory, though they may feature as the incidental objects of memory. Before ending I will briefly gesture toward how Aristotle’s assuages concerns over this initially counter-intuitive result. I will also discuss the importance of *phantasia* to Aristotle’s account of memory.

According to Aristotle, while memory is shared by human and non-human animals alike and is related essentially to past perceptual objects, humans uniquely have the additional power of recollection, which is the ability to actively search for and retrieve *phantasmata* stored in the mind.40 This power can be used either for the sake of remembering or for the sake of thinking. For Aristotle, some cases that we would describe as remembering an unqualifiedly intelligible object are more precisely characterized as recollecting and thinking about that object.

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40 *De Memoria*, 453a6-9.
For example, according to Aristotle, the activity we would refer to as “remembering the Ontological Argument” (i.e., in response to the question, “How does the Ontological Argument go, again?”) is really a case of recollecting certain phantasmata for the purpose of thinking about the Ontological Argument. This is because the (so-called) activity of “remembering the Ontological Argument” does not essentially involve apprehending a past object as past, which Aristotle argues is required for any activity to count as remembering. In short, Aristotle does not ignore the phenomenon that we refer to as “remembering X” (where X is an unqualifiedly intelligible object); instead he exercises conceptual rigor and allocates this activity to the powers of recollection and thought rather than to the power of memory.

The conceptually rigorous account of memory and remembering that we find in the De Memoria leads one to question how Aristotle accounts for other activities usually assigned to memory, such as encoding, preservation, and retrieval. On Aristotle’s view, these are all largely the work of phantasia, which is responsible for preserving and organizing the potential psychic movements that result from perception and thereby facilitates activation of phantasmata before the mind. Phantasia organizes these movements into habit-based and necessity-based networks of activation. The movements themselves have a natural tendency to be activated in succession, such that the activation of one movement sets off a series of movements in the same network.\footnote{De Memoria, 450a27-b11, 451b10-24.}

In the case of recollection, humans deliberately seek to bring something before the mind by capitalizing both on this natural tendency of movements and on the organizational work of phantasia. The same process regularly occurs, however, without initiation. For example, when the perception of one thing (e.g., a rose) causes you to remember another (e.g., the past experience of being given a rose), this is not a case of recollection followed by remembering (for
there was no deliberate search), but simply a case of remembering that results from the natural workings of *phantasia*.

The extent of Aristotle’s reliance on *phantasia* is especially apparent from a comparison with Plato. There are several activities that Plato ascribes to memory that Aristotle would ascribe to *phantasia*. In the *Philebus*, Plato holds that memory is responsible for a variety of activities, such as the continuity of experience, the preservation of perception, and the phenomenon of desire (Socrates says that it is our memory of past fillings that directs us toward being filled again).

For Aristotle, all of these activities are attributable to *phantasia*. It is thanks to *phantasia* that sensory impressions persist before the mind, constituting a connected experience. And as mentioned, *phantasia* provides for the preservation and organization of movements that result from perception, enabling subsequent activities such as recollecting and remembering. Finally, these movements, as mentioned, are organized within *phantasia* according to our habits, and this is in part what explains the phenomenon of desire. Habitually, the experience of hunger, for example, activates a *phantasma* that pertains to satisfying hunger, and this is what directs desire. Desire is not a case of remembering, for Aristotle, since the object of desire is future, not past. Rather, desire results from the workings of *phantasia*.

There is much more to say about Aristotle’s *De Memoria*. In this chapter I hope to have conveyed one of its most important contributions, which is a conceptually rigorous account of remembering. The *De Memoria* also indirectly provides us with insight into Aristotle’s account

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42 21c1-4: “And similarly it is necessary that without memory you would not remember that you ever were pleased, since if the pleasure does not survive from one moment to the next, no memory of it remains [Καὶ µὴν ὡσαύτως µνήµην µὴ κεκτηµένον ἀνάγκη δὴπου µηδ’ ὅτι ποτὲ ἐξαιρέτας µεµνήσθαι, τὴς τ’ ἐν τῷ παραχρήµα ἡδονῆς προσπιπτούσης µηδ’ ἤντινον µνήµην ὑποµένειαν].”

43 Ibid., 33c-34b.

44 Ibid., 34d-35d.
of *phantasia*. Aristotle’s rich account of *phantasia* allows for a more precise and streamlined account of remembering, one that is worth considering not only for its historical value but also for its potential benefits to modern-day theories of memory.
Chapter 2: Recollection as an Adjunct Power

Introduction

In chapter 1 of the *De Memoria* Aristotle offers a conceptually rigorous analysis of the proper objects and activity of memory. In particular, he argues that the proper objects of memory are objects in the past, and that the activity of remembering is the awareness of these objects as such.

As I noted in the last chapter, Aristotle’s rigorous account of memory excludes many of the activities commonly attributed to memory, such as procedural memory and the storage and retrieval functions commonly thought to be the work of memory. Most importantly, however, Aristotle’s account excludes unqualifiedly intelligible objects from the proper objects of memory. This is because such objects do not bear temporal qualifications, except incidentally, in which case we cannot be aware of them as past (except incidentally).

More specifically, to directly grasp an unqualifiedly intelligible object, for Aristotle, is to grasp something atemporal. Since remembering, for Aristotle, involves viewing the object of remembering as past, it is not possible for unqualifiedly intelligible objects to be the proper objects of remembering. Instead we remember them only incidentally through their accidental relations with the proper objects of memory. I suggested two ways in which Aristotle might think unqualifiedly intelligible objects are accidentally in time. The first is through their manifestation in perceptible particulars, the second is in virtue of individual exercises of theoretical reasoning.

At first sight, Aristotle’s exclusion of unqualifiedly intelligible objects from the proper objects of memory is problematic. For we often speak of remembering intelligible
objects. We might speak of a student, for instance, as remembering her understanding of Newton’s universal gravitation formula on an exam. As I will argue in this chapter, however, on Aristotle’s view, this is a case of recollecting the formula in order to think about it. Indeed, as we will see, Aristotle compensates for his limited account of memory with an expansive account of recollection in chapter 2 of the *De Memoria*, according to which recollection is an adjunct power that serves several cognitive powers including thought, knowledge, perception, memory, and phantasia.

This chapter is divided into five sections. In Section I, I argue that the proper object of recollection, for Aristotle, is not a memory—it is not the specific affection we have when remembering. Rather, the proper objects of recollection are the affections that arise with original learning or experience, and these affections are importantly different from memories. The proper activity of recollection is the search for and retrieval of such affections. These clarifications pave the way for understanding recollection as essentially an adjunct power, one that is successful only when it results in some other activity, specifically, the activity for the sake of which it is initiated. The activities for the sake of which we engage in recollection include not just remembering, but also thinking, knowing, perceiving, and imagining.

In Section II, I examine the phenomenon of “psychic movements.” This is the term I use for the kinds of bodily movements that, on Aristotle’s view, originate, constitute, and terminate in awareness. For Aristotle, recollection involves psychic movements and it capitalizes on the fact that such movements bear relations of activation to one another, in that when one of them is activated, others will follow suit. In Section III, I examine the relations of activation that Aristotle takes to hold between psychic movements. Specifically, he thinks
that over time, the psychic movements involved in original learning and experience result in complex networks of activation that are grounded in and correspond to the necessary and habitual connections in the world. When we recollect, we capitalize on these networks of activation—they are the channels through which we are led to the specific affection(s) that we seek.

In Section IV, I bring the discussion from the prior sections to bear on Aristotle’s distinction between recollecting and relearning. I also address Aristotle’s characterization of dispositional memory, which clearly intersects with dispositional recollection. As I noted in the last chapter, this interdependence explains why Aristotle prefers to discuss dispositional memory in conjunction with his account of recollection.

Finally, in Section V, I discuss what Aristotle refers to as the starting point of recollection. Recollection, for Aristotle, is a distinctly human activity in that it begins in thought. That is, recollection is an active search for an affection within us, a search that is initiated in thought with the selection of a starting point. The starting point, for Aristotle, is a normative notion, in that it is the point from which recollection best occurs. By this Aristotle means that it is the point from which recollection occurs most quickly and easily. I explain why Aristotle thinks that in most cases the starting point is the midpoint.

**Section I: The Proper Objects and Activity of Recollection**

Aristotle begins the chapter on recollection by distancing his account of recollection from the accounts of his predecessors: “To begin with, we must take as our foundation only so much as is true in the attempted arguments.”

His next words are at once epexegetic (indicated by γὰρ)—signaling a mistake of his predecessors—and serve to state his own

45 “πρῶτον μὲν οὖν ὁσά ἐν τοῖς ἐπιχειρηματικοῖς λόγοις ἐστίν ἀληθῆ, δεῖ τιθέναι ώς ὑπάρχοντα” (451a18-20).
view: “For recollection is neither a recovery nor taking hold of a memory.” Here Aristotle clarifies the central mistake of his predecessors, which has been to think that the proper object of recollection is a memory, and thus to see recollection as either a form or component of memory.

Aristotle proceeds to offer a rather condensed argument against the view that the proper object of recollection is a memory. The argument is at first difficult to follow but upon closer inspection becomes clearer. Here is the argument in full:

Περὶ δὲ τοῦ ἀναμιμήσκεσθαι λοιπὸν εἰπεῖν. πρῶτον μὲν οὖν ὃσα ἐν τοῖς ἐπιχειρηματικοῖς λόγοις ἐστίν ἀληθῆ, δεὶ τιθέναι ὡς ὑπάρχοντα. οὔτε γὰρ μνήμης ἐστίν ἀνάληψις ἢ ἀνάμνησις οὔτε λήψις· ὅταν γὰρ τὸ πρῶτον ἢ μάθη ἢ πάθη, οὔτ’ ἀναλαμβάνει μνήμην οὐδεμίαν (οὐδεμία γὰρ προτέρου) οὔτ’ εἴξ ἄρχης λαμβάνει· ὅταν γὰρ γένηται ἢ ἐξίς ἢ τὸ πάθος, τότε μνήμη ἐστὶν, ὅσετε μετὰ τοῦ πάθους ἐγγεγομένου οὐκ ἐγγίγνεται. ἕτε δ’ ὅτε τὸ πρῶτον ἐγγέγονε τῷ ἀτόμῳ καὶ ἐσχάτῳ, τὸ μὲν πάθος ἐνυπάρχει ἢ ἐσχάτῳ καὶ ἐσχάτῳ, τὸν ἐνυπάρχει καὶ ἐσχάτῳ καὶ ἐσχάτῳ οὐκ ἐπιστήμη (εἰ δὲ καλεῖν ἐπιστήμην τὴν ἐξίς ἢ τὸ πάθος—οὐθέν δὲ κολλύει κατὰ συμβεβηκός καὶ μηνυμενοὺς ἐνία ών ἐπιστάμεθα)· τὸ δὲ μηνυμονεύειν καθ’ αὐτὸ οὐχ ὑπάρχει πρὶν χρονισθῆναι· μηνυμενοὺς γὰρ νῦν δ’ εἶδεν ἢ ἐπαθεὶ πρῶτον, οὐχ’ δ’ νῦν ἐπαθεῖ, νῦν μηνυμονεύει.

To begin with, we must take as our foundation only so much as is true in the attempted arguments. For recollection is neither a recovery nor taking hold of a memory. For when we first learn or experience something, we neither recover any memory (for there was none before) nor do we take hold of one from the outset. For whenever the having or undergoing comes to be, then there is a memory, so that it does not come to be alongside the affection coming to be. Furthermore, at the indivisible and ultimate moment when the first learning or experience occurs, the affection and the knowledge are already present in the one who experiences (if we should call the having or undergoing knowledge—but nothing prevents us from incidentally also remembering some of the things we know), whereas remembering itself is not present until time has passed. For we remember now what we learned or experienced earlier, we do not remember now what we now experience. (450a18-31)

The central difficulty in understanding this argument lies with Aristotle’s abrupt transition from the claim, “recollection is neither a recovery nor taking hold of a memory,” to the subsequent claim, “for when we first learn or experience something, we neither recover any memory (for there was none before) nor do we take hold of one from the outset.” Given

46 “οὔτε γὰρ μνήμης ἐστίν ἀνάληψις ἢ ἀνάμνησις οὔτε λήψις” (451a20-21).
the presence of γὰρ, the latter claim is meant to support the former. And it is the latter claim that Aristotle proceeds to defend and explain in the remainder of the paragraph. Yet it’s not obvious how, exactly, the claim about initial learning and experience is relevant to a discussion of recollection.

My view is that there is a missing premise between these two claims. Once supplied, this premise helps to make sense of the passage as a whole. The missing premise is along the following lines: “The proper object of recollection, the object recovered in episodes of recollecting, is the affection of initial learning or experience.” Aristotle wants to show that this affection is not a memory. The rest of the passage, I take it, is devoted to establishing this point with a view to supporting Aristotle’s overall claim that recollection is neither the recovery nor taking up of a memory. Aristotle assumes, then, that the proper object of recollection is the affection of initial learning or experience. He then proceeds to show that this affection is distinct from a memory. In particular, he shows that it is neither an actual nor a potential memory.

Before examining the argument in detail, it bears noting that Aristotle is once again following the methodology he laid out in De Anima 2.4 for defining powers of the soul. Just as he did in chapter 1, Aristotle begins chapter 2 by clarifying the proper objects of the power in question. Further, it should come as no surprise that Aristotle is concerned with distinguishing the proper object of recollection from a memory. Aristotle indicates at the outset of the De Memoria that memory and recollection are distinct powers. For there he says that the people who are good at remembering are not the same as those who are good at recollecting. Given these remarks, one expects Aristotle to formally clarify the distinction between memory and recollection. And he does exactly that here at the opening of chapter 2.
Aristotle’s first point is that the affection of original learning or experience is not an actual memory. This is because an actual memory exists only in so far as one is actually remembering. Specifically, Aristotle says, “For whenever the having or undergoing comes to be, then there is a memory, so that it does not come to be alongside the affection coming to be.” The point here is that since the original affection and an actual memory do not come into being simultaneously, they are not identical.

Aristotle’s use of terminology in making this point refers us back to the beginning of chapter 1, where remembering is described as “neither sense perception nor supposition, but a having or undergoing of one of these, whenever time has passed.”47 As I argued in the previous chapter, Aristotle uses the expression “a having” (and at times, “a having or undergoing”) to describe actual remembering. At the opening of chapter 2, Aristotle uses this expression again to make the point that an actual memory exists only with actual remembering.

To better understand why Aristotle thinks an actual memory exists only with actual remembering, we can look again to chapter 1. There, Aristotle specifically discusses the affection that one has when remembering, saying that it derives from original experience. It is preserved in the individual’s constitution, and as such it is numerically one and the same as the affection of the original experience. Despite numerical sameness, however, Aristotle says that the affection we have when remembering—which for Aristotle is an actual memory—is different in being from the original affection.48

Aristotle makes this point in response to an aporia about how we remember an absent object. The aporia runs as follows:

47 De Memoria, 449b24-25.
48 Ibid., 450a27-32, 450b20-27.
ἀλλ’ εἰ δὴ τοιοῦτόν ἐστι τὸ συμβαῖνον περὶ τὴν μνήμην, πότερον τούτῳ μνημονεύει τὸ πάθος ἢ ἐκεῖνο ἢ’ οὐ ἐγένετο; εἰ μὲν γὰρ τούτῳ, τῶν ἀπόντων οὐδὲν ἂν μνημονεύομεν· εἰ δ’ ἐκεῖνο, πῶς αἰσθανόμεθα τούτῳ μνημονεύόμεν, οὐ μὴ αἰσθανόμεθα, τὸ ἀπόν; εἰ τ’ ἐστὶν οἷον οὐσία ὑπὸ καὶ ἢ γραφὴ ἐν ἡμῖν, ἢ τούτῳ αὐτοῦ αἰσθητὸς διὰ τί ἂν εἴη μνήμη ἐτέρου, ἀλλ’ οὐκ αὐτοῦ τούτου; ὁ γὰρ ἐνεργῶν τῇ μνήμῃ θεωρεῖ τὸ πάθος τούτῳ καὶ αἰσθάνεται τούτῳ. πῶς οὖν τὸ μὴ παρόν μνημονεύει; εἰ γὰρ ἂν καὶ ὁρᾶν τὸ μὴ παρὸν καὶ ἀκούειν. ἢ ἂν εἴη ὡς ἐνδέχεται καὶ συμβαίνει τούτῳ;

But if in fact this sort of thing is what happens concerning memory [sc. we have an affection that originates from prior experience], does one remember this affection or the object from which it came to be? For, if the former, we would remember none of the things that are absent, but if the latter, how is it that in perceiving this affection we remember that which we are not perceiving, namely the absent object? If it is a likeness—as it were, an imprint or picture in us—why would perception of this itself be a memory of something else but not of this itself? For the one who exercises his memory views this affection and perceives this. How, then, will he remember that which is not present? For it would be possible both to see and to hear that which is not present. Or is there a way in which this is possible and in fact happens? (450b11-20)

Here Aristotle wonders how it is that the affection we have when remembering, which derives from original experience and is a likeness of that experience, is not itself the object remembered but instead constitutes awareness of an absent object.

Aristotle responds to the *aporia* by claiming that one can view an affection before the mind in more than one way. In particular, one can view the affection as it is in itself, or one can view it as “of something else.” To illustrate the point, Aristotle offers the analogy of a picture painted in a board:

οἷον γὰρ τὸ ἐν πίνακι γεγραμμένον ζῷον καὶ ζῷόν ἐστι καὶ εἰκών, καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ἐστὶν ἀμφότερο, τὸ μὲντοί εἶναι οὗ ταῦτα ἀμφότερα, καὶ ἢς ἠθέωρεῖν καὶ ἢς ζῷον καὶ ὡς εἰκόνα, οὕτω καὶ τὸ ἐν ἡμίν φάντασμα δεῖ ύπολαβέων καὶ αὐτὸ τῇ καθ’ αὐτὸ εἶναι καὶ ἄλλου [φάντασμα]. ἢ μὲν οὖν καθ’ αὐτό, θεώρημα ἢ φάντασμα ἢς ἠθέωρεῖν, ἢ δ’ ἄλλου, οἷον εἰκών καὶ μνημόνευμα.

For just as the picture painted in a board is both a picture and an image [εἰκών], such that this one and the same thing is both, though being for both is not the same, and it is possible to view it both as a picture and as an image [εἰκόνα], so also one must suppose that the *phantasma* in us is both itself something in itself and is of something else [ἄλλου]. Thus in so far as it is in itself, it is a thing viewed or a *phantasma*, but in so far as it is of something else [ἄλλου], it is like an image and reminder. (450b20-27)
Aristotle’s solution to the *aporia* is that we remember an object in the past when we view the affection of original experience as “of something else,” namely, as of the past object in question. As I discuss in the next chapter, viewing an affection in this way involves marking out the “before” and “after” in change, such that the affection is of something “before” in change and hence of a past object. The important point for our current purposes, however, is that on Aristotle’s view, an actual memory is importantly distinct from an affection of original experience. While it is numerically one and the same as that affection, it is different in being, since a actual memory is this affection when viewed not in itself but as “of something else.”

This background from chapter 1 allows Aristotle to claim that an actual memory exists only with actual remembering. Since actual remembering, by definition (as we learn in chapter 1 of the *De Memoria*), occurs later than the original experience, Aristotle concludes at the opening of chapter 2 that the proper object of recollection—the affection of original learning or experience—is not an actual memory, since an actual memory “does not come to be alongside the affection coming to be.”

As I mentioned above, Aristotle’s argument at the opening of chapter 2 is meant to support his claim that “recollection is neither the recovery nor taking up of a memory.” The proper objects of recollection, for Aristotle, are the affections of original learning and experience—when we engage in the activity of recollection, we search for and recover these affections. Since recollecting is often undertaken for the sake of remembering, there is a tendency to think that recollection is always for the sake of remembering and hence to think that the proper object of recollection is a memory. The argument at the opening of chapter 2 is meant to refute this position by arguing that the affection of original learning and
experience is neither an actual memory nor even a potential memory. Now that we have examined Aristotle’s argument that the affection of original learning or experience is distinct from an actual memory, let us turn to his second point, which is that this affection is not even a potential memory:

Furthermore, at the indivisible and ultimate moment when the first learning or experience occurs, the affection and the knowledge are already present in the one who experiences (if we should call the having or undergoing knowledge; but nothing prevents us from incidentally also remembering some of the things we know), whereas remembering itself is not present until time has passed. For we remember now what we learned or experienced earlier, we do not remember now what we now experience. (451a25-31)

Here Aristotle claims that at the very moment the initial learning or experience occurs, the corresponding affection is immediately present in the soul, but a potential memory is not yet present. For if a potential memory were present, it would be possible to remember now what we experience now, yet this is impossible.

This part of Aristotle’s argument relies again on the conclusions of chapter 1 of the De Memoria. Having clarified the proper objects and activity of memory, Aristotle there concludes that “there is no memory of the now in the now, but perception is of the present, expectation is of the future, and memory is of the past. Thus every memory occurs with time [τὸν δὲ νῦν ἐν τῷ νῦν οὐκ ἔστι μνήμη … ἀλλὰ τοῦ μὲν παρόντος αἰσθήσεις, τοῦ δὲ μέλλοντος ἐλπίς, οὗ δὲ γενομένου μνήμη· διὸ μετὰ χρόνου πᾶσα μνήμη].”

In Physics 4.10-14, Aristotle refers to the “now” as an instant of time. The “now” is the boundary of past and future time, and as such the “now” is indivisible, like a point on a line. And just as a point on a line is not itself part of the line but instead limits those parts, so

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too the “now” is not a part of time. In so far as we speak of past and future periods of time, we can speak of past and future “nows” as the boundaries of those periods. But when Aristotle refers in chapter 1 to “the now in the now,” he has in mind the primary sense of the “now,” which is the present “now,” namely the instantaneous boundary between past and future time as a whole. In our chapter 2 text, Aristotle reiterates his point from chapter 1, saying that “we do not remember now what we now experience.”

Since the proper objects of memory, on Aristotle’s view, are objects in the past, it is impossible, by definition, to remember a present object when it is present (it is impossible to remember “the now in the now”). What follows from this for Aristotle’s purposes in chapter 2 is that the affection of original learning or experience is not a potential memory. As mentioned above, a potential memory exists only once remembering is itself possible, in which case a potential memory does not exist at the now in the now. By contrast, the affections of original learning and experience do exist at the now in the now, for they come into existence simultaneously with the original activities, which are themselves at the now in the now. Since potential memories, by definition, come into existence after the affections of original experience and learning, Aristotle concludes that the two are not identical.

One might wonder, however, whether a similar line of reasoning could be applied to the proper objects of recollection. That is, isn’t it similarly impossible to recollect now what we learn or experience now? And if so, doesn’t it follow that the affection of original learning or experience is not yet a potential object of recollection?

I take it that Aristotle’s answer to this would be that while it is indeed practically impossible (on Aristotle’s own account of recollection, at any rate) to recollect now what one learns or experiences now, it is not intrinsically impossible to do so. To see this, consider
Plato’s theory of learning as recollection. On that view, original learning is just recollection of the Forms. And while Aristotle, as an empiricist, disputes this account of learning, he makes those arguments on other grounds and needn’t presuppose this theoretical commitment in the account of the proper object of recollection by making it impossible, by definition, to recollect now what we learn or experience now.

Having identified the proper object of recollection as an affection of original learning or experience, and having distinguished this from a potential or actual memory, Aristotle turns to discuss the proper activity of recollection. He begins with the following claim:

ἔτι δὲ φανερὸν ὅτι μνημονεύειν ἔστι μὴ νῦν ἀναμνησθέντα, ἀλλ’ ἐξ ἀρχῆς αἰσθόμενον ἡ παθόντα.

Moreover, it is clear that one can remember even if not having now recollected, if one remembers from the outset of having perceived or experienced. (451a31-b2)

Aristotle once again distinguishes recollection from memory, here on the grounds that they have distinct proper activities. His argument on this point is simple: it’s possible to remember without having first recollected, in which case recollecting is distinct from remembering. As an example of remembering without recollecting, consider the everyday example of talking on the phone with a friend or relative. Once the conversation is over and a brief time has passed, one can remember aspects of the conversation straightaway, without having to first engage in a process of recollection. By contrast, if one is asked to relay that same conversation the next day, a process of recollection is likely necessary.

Aristotle proceeds to offer an initial, positive characterization of recollecting as the recovery of an affection of original experience or learning:

ἀλλ’ ὅταν ἀναλαμβάνῃ ἣν πρότερον ἔχειν ἐπιστήμην ἡ αἰσθήσειν ἡ οὐ ποτὲ τὴν ἐξ ἐλέγομεν μνήμην, τούτ’ ἐστι καὶ τότε τὸ ἀναμιμνήσκεσθαι τῶν εἰρημένων τι, τὸ δὲ μνημονεύειν συμβαίνει καὶ μνήμη ἀκολουθεῖ.

But when one recovers that which he had earlier—the knowledge or perception or whatever it is the having of which we were saying is memory, there is in this way and at this
time recollecting of some one of the things mentioned, whereas remembering and a memory are together and follow. (451b2-6)

This initial characterization of the proper activity of recollection is presented in the context of recollecting for the sake of remembering. It makes sense for Aristotle to give us an example of recollecting for the sake of remembering—he has just said that one can remember without recollecting, and now he illustrates the connection between the two. Despite this specific context, we can cull from this example and the other arguments Aristotle has made a more general account of the proper activity of recollection, one that satisfies the argumentative effort he has taken to distinguish the powers of recollection and memory.

To start, we should note that Aristotle’s brief argument about the distinctness of remembering and recollecting is insufficient to establish that recollection is a separate power from memory. On its own, the mere claim that one can remember without having first recollected leaves open the possibility that recollection is simply a component of memory, one that is exercised in order to recover memories that are not immediately accessible. To fully distinguish the two powers one must in addition argue that the proper objects of recollection are not memories.

This, I take it, is precisely why Aristotle provides that argument. Aristotle aims to offer an expansive account of recollection, one that is not essentially tied to memory. Thus he establishes that recollection is neither the recovery nor taking up of a memory and that the activities of remembering and recollection are distinct. In so doing, he allows for the possibility that recollection serves cognitive powers other than memory. This includes, among other things, recollection undertaken for the sake of thinking theoretically about unqualifiedly intelligible objects. As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, an
important limitation of Aristotle’s account of memory is that it does not satisfy the commonplace idea that we remember unqualifiedly intelligible objects. And while this is as it should be, given the nature of the proper objects of memory, Aristotle must think that these so-called cases of remembering are better accounted for under the theory of recollection.

In the conclusion to this chapter, I illustrate some of the ways in which recollection facilitates various forms of cognition. For now it’s important to see that Aristotle’s account of the proper objects and activity of recollection specifically allows for this variety. According to Aristotle the proper activity of recollection—recollecting—is the activity of recovering prior knowledge or perception or “whatever it is” that we proceed to have in a special way when remembering—recollection is the recovery of this affection; it is not the recovery of a memory, despite the fact that remembering and a memory often follow upon the heels of recollection.

In the remainder of chapter 2, Aristotle’s discussion of recollection mostly concerns the intersection of recollection and memory. He focuses on recollecting for the sake of remembering and aims to demonstrate the way in which dispositional memory intersects with dispositional recollection. We should not take this narrowing of focus, however, to imply that recollection belongs to memory or that recollecting is solely for the purpose of remembering. Aristotle’s remarks on the proper objects and activity of recollection are clearly intended to draw a distinction between these two powers. In what follows, then, I recommend that we not misconstrue the limited context of Aristotle’s discussion of recollection—it is, after all, a treatise on memory—as a limitation on the power of recollection itself.
Section II: Psychic Movements

Having offered his initial characterization of recollecting, Aristotle immediately qualifies these remarks so as to distinguish recollecting from re-learning. Recollecting isn’t *simply* the presence within us again of something that was there before, for such an account would apply to re-learning and re-discovering as well. Rather, the recovery in question proceeds from “a starting point that is more within us”50 than that from which we learn.

Aristotle devotes the next several passages of the text to explaining and defending this distinction between recollecting and re-learning.51 In so doing, he provides helpful insight into the process of recollecting and, importantly, elucidates the way in which dispositional memory intersects with dispositional recollection. His discussion focuses in part on what I shall term “psychic movements,” in which case it will help us to first get a handle on what Aristotle has in mind when speaking of such movements.

According to Aristotle, recollection is possible because of an acquired feature of our psychological constitution. In particular, animals that possess *phantasia* develop, over time, certain highly organized networks of potential psychic movements. These networks connect a given potential psychic movement to a myriad of others, such that when one movement in a network is activated, the others are activated as well, one after the other, in succession. Aristotle distinguishes between connections that are grounded in necessity and those based on habit:

50 “ἐνόυσης πλείονος ἀρχῆς ἢ ἓς ἢς μανθάνουσιν ἀναμνήσκεσθαι” (451b9-10).
51 *De Memoria*, 451b10-452a12.
we will be moved by the other; if not by necessity but by habit, then for the most part we will be moved by the other. And it happens that we are more habituated to some movements when moved only once than we are to other movements when moved many times. This explains why we remember some things we’ve seen only once more than other things we’ve seen many times. (451b10-16)

Aristotle’s main point in this passage is more or less clear—that psychic movements are connected in such a way that allows for their successive activation, and it is this feature of psychic movements that enables recollection. In the next section we will look more closely at what it means for movements to be connected by necessity or habit. First, however, we should get clear on what Aristotle has in mind in the above passage in speaking of “movements” (κινήσεις).

I refer to them as “psychic movements” because Aristotle appears to be discussing a specific subset of movements or changes, namely those that either begin with, culminate in, or constitute some form of awareness (as opposed to, say, movements involved in growth and decay, which do not essentially involve awareness). The classification of certain movements as “psychic” is not explicitly in Aristotle. Nonetheless, it will be helpful to work informally with this classification. A passage from the De Anima suggests a way of differentiating these kinds of movements from others.

In De Anima 1.4, Aristotle argues that the soul itself does not undergo or engage in movement. That is, the soul cannot move itself or be moved; as such, it is not the proper subject of movement. It is, however, moved incidentally in the sense that the soul belongs essentially to a body, and the body itself is a proper subject of movement. In addition, the soul can be said, in a way, to move itself, in so far as it is capable of originating movement in the body, and then in turn being moved incidentally along with it. Aristotle says:

ὅτι μὲν οὔθ’ ἁρμονίαν οἷόν τ’ ἐἶναι τὴν ψυχὴν οὔτε κύκλῳ περιφέρεσθαι, δῆλον ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων. κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς δὲ κινεῖσθαι, καθάπερ εἶπομεν, ἔστι, καὶ κινεῖν ἑαυτήν,
οἷον κινεῖσθαι μὲν ἐν ὧ ἐστι, τοῦτο δὲ κινεῖσθαι ὑπὸ τῆς ψυχῆς· ἄλλως δὲ ὡς οἴον τε κινεῖσθαι κατὰ τόπον αὐτῆς.

That the soul is neither a harmony nor moved in a circle is clear from what has been said. But it is possible for the soul to be moved incidentally, as we said, and even for it to move itself, in as much as that to which is belongs is moved, on the one hand, and moved by it, on the other. Otherwise it is not possible for it to be moved in respect of place. (De Anima 1.4, 408a28-34)

Aristotle goes on to say that though we often speak of the soul as the subject of feelings, sensations, and thoughts, it is more precise to say that these movements originate or terminate with the soul, such that the composite human being undergoes or engages in these activities with the soul:

εἰ γὰρ καὶ ὅτι μάλιστα τὸ λυπεῖσθαι ἢ χαίρειν ἢ διανοεῖσθαι κινήσεις εἰσὶ, καὶ ἐκαστὸν κινεῖσθαι τῷ τοῦτον, τὸ δὲ κινεῖσθαι ἐστίν ὑπὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ... τὸ δὲ λέγειν ὀργίζεσθαι τὴν ψυχὴν ὑμοιὸν κἂν εἴ τις λέγοι τὴν ψυχήν ὑφαίνειν ἢ οἰκοδομεῖν· βέλτιον γὰρ ἴσος μὴ λέγειν τὴν ψυχήν ἐλεείν ἢ μανθάνειν ἢ διανοεῖσθαι, ἀλλὰ τὸν ἀνθρωπὸν τῇ ψυχῆ· τούτο δὲ μὴ ώς ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῆς κινήσεως οὔσῃ, ἀλλ’ ὅτε μὲν μέχρι ἐκείνης, ὁτὲ δ’ ἀπ’ ἐκείνης, οἷον ἢ μὲν αἴσθησις ἢ ἐκείνης ἢ ἐπὶ τάς ἐν τοῖς αἰσθητηρίοις κινήσεις ἢ μονάς.

For being pained or pleased or thinking are undoubtedly movements, and in each of these cases something is moved, but the being moved is by way of the soul [not of the soul]. ... Saying that the soul is angry would be like saying that the soul weaves or builds houses. It is surely better not to say that the soul pities or learns or thinks, but that the human being does this with the soul, where this means not that the movement is in the soul but that sometimes it terminates with the soul and other times it begins with the soul. For example, sense perception begins from without and terminates with the soul, whereas recollection begins with the soul and terminates in the movements and rest of the sense organs. (De Anima 1.4, 408b5-17, lines 9-11 elided)

This passage is helpful for several reasons. In the first place it helps to isolate the kinds of movements that I have sought to designate “psychic” movements. These are just the movements that one might have been tempted to attribute to the soul itself—feelings, thoughts, and sense perceptions, among others. Aristotle makes the point that these movements are no more proper to the soul than activities such as weaving and housebuilding. Rather, in both cases the soul engages in or undergoes movement only incidentally. The soul is better understood, then, as principle or limit of the body’s movements—it is an originating
point and terminus of the body’s movement, rather than the proper subject of such movement.

What it means for the soul to be originator and terminus of movement, at least in the case of psychic movements, would seem to be that the movements essentially constitute, result in, and begin from awareness. The bodily or physical component of psychic movements is overlooked precisely because these movements manifest as an awareness of something other than themselves.

This passage is also helpful because it explicitly includes recollecting among those activities that Aristotle thinks are mistakenly conceived as movements belonging to the soul itself, movements which I have here termed “psychic” movements. In the above passage Aristotle says that recollecting originates with the soul and terminates in the movements and rest of the sense organs. We will see that Aristotle conceives of recollecting as an active search conducted by thought, in which case it begins with awareness. And what Aristotle does not mention above, yet I think is implied, is that the stimulation of the sense organs itself constitutes a form of awareness. Thus recollection begins and ends with awareness, in which case it involves psychic movements as I have described them. Aristotle emphasizes, however, that these movements properly belong to the body and not the soul (except incidentally).

In chapter 2 of the De Memoria, Aristotle emphasizes the bodily aspect of recollection by noting that recollection can be difficult to control:

ὅτι δ’ ἐστὶ σωματικόν τι τὸ πάθος, καὶ ἡ ἀνάμνησις ζήτησις ἐν τοιούτῳ φαντάσματος, σημεῖον τὸ παρενοχλεῖν ἐνίους ἐπειδὰν μὴ δύνωνται ἀναμνησθῆναι καὶ πάνω ἐπέχοντες τὴν διάνοιαν, καὶ οὐκέτ’ ἐπιχειροῦντας ἀναμμηνήσκεσθαι οὐδὲν ἦττον, καὶ μάλιστα τοὺς μελαγχολικοὺς· τοῦτος γὰρ φαντάσματα κινεῖ μάλιστα. αἰτίαν δὲ τοῦ μὴ ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς εἶναι τὸ

52 See De Insomniis, 460b23-26.
ἀναμιμνήσκεσθαι, ὅτι καθάπερ τοῖς βάλλουσιν οὐκέτι ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς τὸ στῆσαι, οὕτως καὶ ὁ ἀναμιμνησκόμενος καὶ θηρεύων σωματικόν τι κινεῖ, ἐν ὧ τὸ πάθος.

And a sign that the affection at issue is bodily and that recollection is a search for a phantasmatos in something corporeal is that some people are annoyed when they are unable to recollect even though they are applying their mind intently, and when they are no longer trying to do so, they recollect nonetheless; and melancholics especially, for phantasmata move them most of all. The reason why recollecting is not up to them is that just as for those throwing a ball, stopping it is no longer up to them, so too someone recollecting and hunting moves something corporeal in which the affection is located. (453a14-23)

Here Aristotle emphasizes the fact that while the soul initiates the movements involved in recollection, the movements themselves reside in something corporeal. Were it otherwise, the mind would not face the difficulty it does at times in initiating a search and then in stopping it once it has begun.

In chapter 1 of the De Memoria, Aristotle explains another feature of psychic movements that enables both remembering and recollecting and that, as we shall see, pertains to dispositional memory and recollection. In the context of addressing an aporia about remembering (the same aporia we discussed Section I), Aristotle introduces the notion of a physical imprint (τύπον), which he says serves as the causal link between past experiences and current remembering:

dῆλον γὰρ ὅτι δεῖ νοῆσαι τοιοῦτον τὸ γιγνόμενον διὰ τῆς αἰσθήσεως ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ καὶ τῷ μορίῳ τοῦ σώματος τῷ ἔχοντι αὐτήν, οἷον ζωγράφημα τι, τὸ πάθος οὗ φαμεν τὸ ἐξίν εἶναι μνήμην· ἡ γὰρ γιγνομένη κίνησις ἐνσημαίνεται οἷον τύπον τινά τοῦ αἰσθήματος, καθάπερ οἱ σφραγίζομενοι τοῖς δακτυλίοις.

For it is clear that it is necessary to think of the sort of thing that comes about through sense perception in the soul and the part of the body that has it—which sort of thing is a picture—as the affection the having of which we say is a memory. For the movement in coming about impresses something like an imprint of the sense impression, just as those who make a mark with their rings. (450a27-32)

As I touched upon in the last section, Aristotle’s claim here is that the affection we have when remembering is linked to the affection of our original experience. These affections are linked by an imprint on our constitution akin to an impression in wax.
According to Aristotle, the psychic movements of original experience impress this imprint on our constitution. The imprint persists within us, preserving the original affection. When we later remember, we have this same affection as a memory, that is, we have it in a particular way that constitutes awareness of a past object.

Given Aristotle’s comments on the corporeal aspect of psychic movements in both *De Anima* 1.4 and chapter 2 of the *De Memoria*, it stands to reason that what Aristotle describes above as an imprint is just the relevant psychic movement in potentiality. When the imprint is activated, the psychic movement is actualized and stimulates the sense organs from within, in the same manner that they were originally stimulated. As such, it brings about the same affection as before. Original experience and remembering, then, involve the same psychic movement, and this movement is preserved in potentiality in the form of an imprint.

**Section III: Necessity and Habit**

Now that we have a clearer sense of the psychic movements Aristotle refers to in his discussion of recollection, we can begin our discussion of the organization and interconnectedness of these movements. As mentioned earlier, Aristotle thinks that, over time, animals with *phantasia* develop certain highly organized networks of potential psychic movements. Each network is such that when one potential movement in the network is activated, the others are activated as well, one after the other, in succession. These patterned relations of activation between potential movements are either necessary or habitual. In the case of necessary relations, if one movement is activated the other always follows, whereas in habitual relations, the other follows for the most part.

Generally speaking, Aristotle’s view is that the organization of the potential psychic movements within us mimics the order of the things in the world to which those movements
correspond. That is, not only do the movements of original learning and experience persist
within us, they do so in a manner that preserves the meta-data, as it were. This meta-data
concerns the necessary and habitual relations of things in the world. It is preserved in the
form of necessary and habitual relations of potential psychic movements.

As mentioned, Aristotle says that any two movements grounded in necessity will
“always” follow one another, whereas those based in habit will follow one another “for the
most part.” The distinction Aristotle makes here between what is necessary and habitual
seems, at first glance, to map on to the distinction he makes elsewhere between nature and
habit. In the Rhetoric, for example, Aristotle says:

ὅμοιον γάρ τι τὸ ἔθος τῇ φύσει· ἐγγὺς γὰρ καί τὸ πολλάκις τῷ ἀεί, ἔστιν δ’ ἢ μὲν
φύσις τοῦ ἀεί, τὸ δὲ ἔθος τοῦ πολλάκις.

For habit is something similar to nature; that is, what happens often is akin to what
happens always, and nature is what happens always, while habit is what happens often.
(Rhetoric, 1370a7-9)

In the De Motu Animalium, however, Aristotle draws a closer analogy between habit
and nature, stating that habit can accomplish the kind of order in cities that nature
accomplishes in the case of animals:

ὑποληπτέον δὲ συνεστάναι τὸ ζῷον ὡσπερ πόλιν εὐνομουμένην. ἐν τε γὰρ τῇ πόλει
ὅταν ἁπάξ συστή ἢ τάξις, οὐδὲν δὲι κεχωρισμένου μονάρχου, ὧν δὲι παρεῖναι παρ’ ἐκαστὸν
τῶν γινομένων, ἀλλ’ αὐτὸς ἐκαστὸς ποιεῖ τὰ αὐτοῦ ὡς τέτακται, καὶ γίνεται τὸδε μετὰ τὸδε
διὰ τὸ ἔθος· ἐν τε τοῖς ζωίσι τὸ αὐτὸ τούτο διὰ τὴν φύσιν γίνεται καὶ τῷ πεφυκέναι ἐκαστὸν
οὕτω συστάντων ποιεῖν τὸ αὐτοῦ ἔργον.

One must regard the animal as being organized just like a well-governed city. For in
the city, once the order is established, there is no need for a separate monarch to preside over
each of the things that happen, but each person does the things as he is ordered, and one thing
follows another on account of habit. And in animals this same thing happens on account of
nature, and each part does its own work as it is so organized by nature. (De Motu, 703a29-
36)
Aristotle’s remarks later in chapter 2 of the De Memoria are in keeping with the similarity he asserts between nature and habit in both the Rhetoric and the De Motu, but they do not align with his claim in the Rhetoric that nature is what happens always:

For habit is already as it were nature. For this reason we recollect quickly the things we think about often. For just as by nature this is after this, so also by activity, and the frequent repetition makes nature. Now, just as in the case of things by nature there comes to be both that which is contrary to nature and that which is from luck, it is all the more so in the case of things that are by way of habit, since nature does not similarly belong to these things, with the effect that one is sometimes moved this way and that way, especially whenever something somehow diverts one from there to there. For this reason when a name must be remembered, we remember a similar name, and we err towards that. (452a27-b6)

Here Aristotle says that some things come to be contrary to nature, meaning that nature is not what happens always, but rather it is what happens for the most part. And while Aristotle maintains a distinction here between nature and habit—stating that the irregularities of nature are found, all the more so, in the case of habit—his statements concerning nature do not fully track what he says earlier about necessity (that movements grounded in necessity always follow one another). What occurs by nature, then, would seem to lie between what is necessary and what is habitual, as being more variable than necessity, but less variable than habit.

(a) Habit-based Networks of Psychic Movements

Aristotle’s comments above are helpful for understanding how psychic movements become connected by habit. For he says, “just as by nature this is after this, so also by activity [ἐνεργεία], and the frequent repetition makes nature.” The suggestion here is that
just as nature exhibits repeated patterns, so too do activities more generally, and the more these patterns are repeated, the more they take on the force of nature within us.

In discussing the networks of psychic movements that enable recollection, we should bear in mind that these networks are primarily established for other purposes. On Aristotle’s view, a central purpose of habitually-based networks, for example, is to guide behavior. Aristotle thinks that non-human animal behavior, and much of human behavior, operates through *phantasia*. The work of *phantasia*, in part, is to establish the habitual associations between psychic movements that will guide behavior. To better understand the functioning of these habitually-based networks of psychic movements, then, it will help us to first consider habitual behavior.

In humans, one sign that a given behavior is habitual is the persistence of that behavior in the absence of reasons for it. Suppose that you regularly have cereal for breakfast in the mornings. One evening, you notice that you are out of milk. The next morning, you nonetheless prepare your cereal as usual. Only when you open the fridge for milk do you recall that you are out of milk. You prepared cereal despite there being no reason to do so, and you did this as result of habit. Were it not for habit, you would have surveyed the fridge before preparing breakfast, to see what was available.

One finds this persistence in non-human animals as well. For example, a dog accustomed to roaming within a fenced area will continue to stay in that area, even once the fence is removed (for a time, at least). If you throw a ball outside the fenced area, the dog will run for the ball but will stop where the fence used to be. Again, this is a matter of habit. As Aristotle says, habits take on the persistence of nature, and though habit, unlike nature, is malleable, it has the force of nature so long as it is in place.
To further understand habitual behavior we should look at what Aristotle says about the role of habit and the way habits are acquired. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle suggests that habit plays the role of completing nature. This is its role, at least, in the case of virtue:

οὔτ' ἀρα φύσει οὐτε παρὰ φύσιν ἐγγίνονται αἱ ἀρεταί, ἀλλὰ πεφυκόσι μὲν ἡμῖν δέξασθαι αὐτὰς, τελειουμένοις δὲ διὰ τοῦ ἔθους.

The virtues arise neither by nature nor against nature, but by our nature we can acquire them, and we complete this through habit. (*NE* 2.1, 1103a23-26)

According to Aristotle, character virtue requires habituation of the non-rational part of the soul. The non-rational faculties of appetite and spirit are constituted by distinct types of desire. More specifically, the desires of the appetite faculty are desires for bodily pleasure, while the desires of the spirited faculty are desires for the social pleasures of honor, victory, and reputation. Acquiring character virtue, according to Aristotle, requires habituating these non-rational desires so that they are minimal, they are directed to good objects and as opposed to bad ones, and they are generally sensitive to the guidance of reason. Appetitive desires and spirited desires exist in us by nature—they cannot be eradicated, however, they can be shaped, through habituation, to operate in ways that are compatible with and supportive of what reason discerns is best. So, while these desires exist by nature, the specific direction they take is not determined by nature; rather, humans are by nature able to mold these desires in accordance with virtue.

The important point here, and it would seem to apply beyond the case of virtue, is that nature allows flexibility in the fulfillment of its purposes. More specifically, in human and non-human animal behavior, nature allows itself to be completed by habit. Nature sets general parameters for animal behavior—by nature we have desires for specific kinds of objects—and it is the role of habit to fill in the blanks, so to speak, and to complete nature by
adapting desires to specific circumstances. In the case of humans, habituation can be specifically used to bring the non-rational parts of the soul in alignment with correct reason.

Let us look now at how Aristotle thinks habits are acquired. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle describes habits as dispositions that are acquired through activity, in particular by repeated activity. He contrasts habits with natural powers, saying that natural powers precede the activities that exercise them, whereas habitual dispositions are acquired through performing the very activities that subsequently constitute an exercise of the disposition.

Furthermore, as much as arises in us by nature we first have the powers for and later display the activities (this is clear in the case of the senses, for we did not acquire the senses from seeing or hearing often; rather, we used them already having them, we did not acquire them by using them). The virtues we acquire through activity, just as with the other crafts; for we learn these crafts by doing the things which those who have learned the craft must do, for example builders come to be by building, and harpists by playing the harp. (*NE* 2.1, 1103a26-35)

Here Aristotle is describing how we acquire skilled dispositions, such as those involved in a craft and the virtues of character. The habituation involved in acquiring skills is an intentional type of habituation that is initiated and guided by the rational part of the soul. This text confirms Aristotle’s claim in the *De Memoria* that “frequent repetition makes nature.” In *NE* 2.3, Aristotle goes on to say that successful habituation involves training the non-rational faculties to pursue good pleasures and avoid bad ones. This is because the non-rational faculties are naturally constituted to desire pleasure and avoid pain. Unless these desires are habituated in accordance with correct reason (i.e., with the correct account of
good pleasures and bad pains), they are liable to do battle with correct reason and cause us to act badly:

διὰ μὲν γὰρ τὴν ἡδονὴν τὰ φαῦλα πράττομεν, διὰ δὲ τὴν λύπην τῶν καλῶν ἀπεχόμεθα. διὸ δὲ ἦχθαί ποὺς εὐθύς ἐκ νέων, ὡς ὁ Πλάτων φησίν, ὡστε χαίρειν τε καὶ λυπεῖσθαι οἷς δεῖ· ἡ γὰρ ὀρθὴ παιδεία αὕτη ἐστίν.

For we do base actions on account of pleasure, and we abstain from fine actions on account of pain. This is why it is necessary to be habituated straight from youth, as Plato says, such that one takes enjoyment and pain in the right things; for this is the correct education. (NE 2.3, 1104b9-13)

Remarks Aristotle makes in chapter 2 of the De Memoria help us in understanding how phantasia facilitates habitual behaviors of desire fulfillment. There, Aristotle says that when a certain psychic movement is immediately inaccessible, one can nonetheless activate that movement by activating one that is similar, opposite, or closely connected to it. This works, I take it, because phantasia is naturally constituted to establish the relations of activation of potential psychic movements along these lines:

ὅταν οὖν ἀναμιμνησκώμεθα, κινούμεθα τῶν προτέρων τινὰ κινήσεων, ἔως ἄν κινηθῶμεν μεθ’ ἣν ἐκείνη εἴοθεν. διὸ καὶ τὸ ἐφεξῆς θηρεύομεν νοῆσαντες ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν ἢ ἄλλου τινός, καὶ ἄφ’ ὀμοίου ἢ ἐναντίου ἢ τοῦ σύνεγγυς. διὰ τοῦτο γίγνεται ἡ ἀνάμνησις· αἱ γὰρ κινήσεις τούτων τῶν μὲν αἱ αὐταί, τῶν δ’ ἁμα, τῶν δὲ μέρος ἔχουσιν, ὡστε τὸ λοιπὸν μικρὸν ὃ κινήθη μετ’ ἐκείνο.

Thus whenever we recollect, we set in motion one of the prior movements, until we are moved by the one after which this one [the one we seek] is customary. And so we search for the next thing, beginning in thought from something present or some other thing, such as something similar, something opposite, or something closely connected. Recollection happens on account of this. For the movements of these things are either the same as the one sought, they are simultaneous with it, or they contain a part of it, such that the remainder by which one is moved after this part is small. (451b16-22)

These texts suggest that habits are acquired through a combination of the natural psychic movements of non-rational desire and the natural associations and relations of activation created by phantasia. A desire for bodily pleasure, for example, is a psychic movement that activates other psychic movements, namely those that are similar, opposite, or
closely connected to it. The experience of hunger, for example, activates the closely connected psychic movements pertaining to past instances of hunger satisfaction. These movements serve to guide desire satisfaction.

The role of repetition in habit formation would seem to be a matter of strengthening certain psychic networks of desire satisfaction over others. *Phantasia* naturally predisposes us to repeat past behaviors. Frequent repetition, however, is generally required to give behavior the strength of habit. This may be because the more times one repeats the same activity, the more imprints one has pertaining to that activity, and the potential force of a given imprint is proportional to the number of movements similar to it. Stronger psychic movements thus present themselves more readily before the mind, overcoming competing psychic movements. Thus, the more often one engages in a certain behavior of desire satisfaction, the more likely it is to acquire the strength of habit.

As Aristotle suggests in the *De Memoria*, however, some habitual networks are established without repetition. For he says, “[I]t happens that we are more habituated to some movements when moved only once than we are to other movements when moved many times. This explains why we remember some things we’ve seen only once more than other things we’ve seen many times.” The best explanation for this, given what I’ve discussed above, is that the strength of desire plays a role in determining the strength of the psychic movements associated with it. Take, for example, someone who becomes violently ill after eating a donut. Despite her love of donuts, the next time this person is hungry the thought of a donut will produce a strong aversion that overcomes any pre-existing habitual networks favoring eating a donut as a method of hunger satisfaction.
Now that we have discussed the role of habit and the way in which habitual networks are established, we are in a better position to understand the relevance of these networks to recollection. For it seems that our everyday experiences are embedded in the habit-based networks built within *phantasia* to facilitate desire satisfaction and guide behavior. When we seek to recollect and remember a particular past event, the psychic movements we wish to activate are embedded in or connected to some habitual network or other. To be successful at recollection one must activate the appropriate habitual network. For example, someone wishing to remember what she did last week, on Thursday afternoon in particular, will begin by thinking about what she usually does on Thursdays. This activates the networks pertaining to her habitual Thursday activities. Supposing that she regularly teaches Thursday afternoons, she will eventually recollect and remember last Thursday’s class in particular, and anything pertaining to that class that she wishes to remember.

(b) Necessity-based Networks of Psychic Movements

Let us now consider the psychic networks that Aristotle says operate according to necessity. Once again we should consider the primary purpose of these networks. In Book 6.3 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle says that science, a form of unqualified knowledge, is concerned with what is necessary in the sense that it cannot be otherwise:

> ἐπιστήμη μὲν οὖν τί ἐστιν, ἐντεῦθεν φανερὸν, εἰ δὲ ἢ ἁκριβολογεῖσθαι καὶ μὴ ἀκολουθεῖν ταῖς ὁμοιότησιν. πάντες γὰρ ὑπολαμβάνομεν, ὃ ἐπιστάμεθα, μηδ’ ἐνδέχεσθαι ἄλλως ἔχειν· τὰ δ’ ἐνδεχόμενα ἄλλως, ὅταν ἔξω τὸν θεωρεῖν γένηται, λανθάνει εἰ ἔστιν ἢ μὴ. ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἄρα ἐστὶ τὸ ἐπιστητὸν. ἀίδιον ἄρα· τὰ γὰρ ἐξ ἀνάγκης ὄντα ἁπλῶς πάντα ἀίδια, τὰ δ’ ἀίδια ἀγένητα καὶ ἀφθαρτα. ἐτί διδακτή ἄπασα ἐπιστήμη δοκεῖ εἶναι, καὶ τὸ ἐπιστητὸν μαθητὸν.

What science is, is evident from the following, if we must speak exactly and not be guided by [mere] similarities. For we all suppose that what we know scientifically does not even admit of being otherwise; and whenever what admits of being otherwise escapes observation, we do not notice whether it is or is not [and hence we do not know about it].
Hence what is known scientifically is by necessity. Hence it is everlasting; for the things that are by unqualified necessity are all everlasting, and everlasting things are ingenerable and indestructible. (1139b18-26)\textsuperscript{53}

In chapter 1, I explained that knowledge, for Aristotle is an acquired potentiality. More specifically, it is a second potentiality acquired through learning and it constitutes the ability to exercise the knowledge one has learned. In the above passage, Aristotle indicates that unqualified scientific knowledge pertains to necessary truths, and he goes on, after this passage, to describe it as a demonstrative state.

It would seem that the psychic movements Aristotle describes in the \textit{De Memoria} as following one another by necessity are precisely the movements that pertain to scientific knowledge, as described above. The process of learning a science involves discovering the necessary relations that ground the demonstrations of that science. These relations are preserved in \textit{phantasia} as necessity-based psychic networks. Once these networks reflect the complexity of the science in question and can be activated by the demonstrator, they constitute the second potentiality of knowledge.

This view of the necessity-based networks helps to makes sense of the fact that Aristotle offers very little discussion in the \textit{De Memoria} of the movements that occur by necessity. After a brief mention early on in chapter 2, Aristotle’s discussion of psychic movements focuses almost entirely on the habit-based networks. This makes sense, however, given that the \textit{De Memoria} is concerned with recollection as it pertains to memory, and memory is not an essential component of theoretical knowledge. That is, while recollection is often used to recover and exercise one’s knowledge (at least when that knowledge is not readily accessible), the exercise of one’s knowledge does not involve (or needn’t involve) remembering. The reason for this difference, as I discussed in chapter 1, is

that the unqualified objects of theoretical reason are not among the proper objects of memory. Indeed, as we will see in the next section, by contrasting recollection and relearning in chapter 2, Aristotle implies that to possess knowledge is to be able to recollect that knowledge.

Section IV: Dispositional Recollection and Dispositional Memory

As I mentioned at the beginning of Section II, Aristotle is careful to distinguish recollecting from relearning. Once he presents his initial characterization of recollecting at the opening of chapter 2, he immediately qualifies it as follows:

οὐδὲ δή ταῦτα ἁπλῶς, ἐὰν ἐμπροσθεὶν ὕπάρξαντα πάλιν ἐγγίγνηται, ἀλλ’ ἔστιν ὡς, ἔστι δ’ ὡς οὔ. δὶς γὰρ μαθεῖν καὶ εὑρεῖν ἐνδέχεται τὸν αὐτὸν τὸ ἀναμιμνήσκεσθαι τούτων, καὶ ἐνούσης πλείονος ἀρχῆς ἢ ἐξ ἧς μανθάνουσιν ἀναμιμνήσκεσθαι.

But these things are surely not recollecting without qualification—if things which, having arisen before, occur within us again—but in a way they are and in a way they are not. For it is possible for the same person to learn or discover the same thing twice. Therefore, recollecting must differ from these cases and must take place from a fuller starting point than that from which we learn. (451b6-10)

Here Aristotle recognizes that for all he has said, having the same affection twice would seem to count as recollection, regardless of how it comes about. Consider, for example, someone who has just moved to a new city. She has not yet committed her new address and phone number to memory. Each time she is asked to provide this information—for purchases online, a library membership, and so on—she consults a piece of paper on which it is written. If we consider only what Aristotle has said so far, this person would seem to count as recollecting, since each time she consults the paper, an affection that she’s had before is present before her mind again.

On Aristotle’s view, however, this is not a case of recollection. Rather, it is an example of relearning or rediscovering. As Aristotle says, recollecting takes place from “a
fuller starting point than that from which we learn.” In order to clarify what this means, Aristotle introduces the notion of dispositional memory and shows how dispositional memory and dispositional recollection intersect.

As I discussed earlier in this chapter, recollection for the sake of remembering takes place when we activate a series of psychic movements in order to retrieve a particular affection, one which, when viewed in the right way, constitutes awareness of a past object. Aristotle emphasizes that the activity of remembering is no different whether it follows upon recollection or takes place without prior recollection. Still, one’s ability to remember a given past object requires not only that the relevant imprint remain present within one’s constitution, but also, this imprint must be accessible, either directly or indirectly through the network of psychic movements. In humans, this means that one must be able to activate the imprint in question through recollection.

Similarly, the disposition to recollect an affection depends upon the presence of the relevant imprint in one’s constitution, and in this sense it intersects with dispositional memory. The two dispositions are not entirely overlapping, however, for two reasons. First, the disposition to recollect a given affection is not sufficient for remembering, since remembering also requires that one view the relevant object as belonging to the past. Indeed, if we grant Aristotle the distinction he wishes to make between the powers of memory and recollection, there will be many affections that we recollect for purposes other than remembering, and these affections may or may not suffice to ground an instance of remembering.

Second, the disposition to recollect an affection is not required for remembering. As I discuss in the next section, Aristotle thinks the power of recollection belongs only to humans,
in which case, strictly speaking, he cannot hold that dispositional recollection overlaps entirely with dispositional memory. Still, the two dispositions intersect in so far as they both rely on the networks of psychic movements within *phantasia*.

In short, if there is no imprint present, or if that imprint is inaccessible through the network of psychic movements, there is no disposition to remember or recollect the object in question, and it must be relearned or rediscovered. In the case of recollection, Aristotle says that the agent must be able to recover the information sought autonomously and through her own internal movements. In so far as she requires outside help, then, she is relearning or rediscovering rather than recollecting.

Aristotle states the matter as follows:

καὶ τούτῳ διαφέρει τὸ ἀναμιμνήσκεσθαι το ῦ πάλιν μανθάνειν, ὅτι δυνήσεται πως δι' αὐτοῦ κινηθῆναι ἐπὶ τὸ μετὰ τὴν ἀρχήν. ὅταν δὲ μὴ, ἄλλα δὲ ἄλλου, οὐκέτι μέμνηται. πολλάκις δ' ἡδή μὲν ἄδυνατεῖ ἀναμηνησθῆναι, ἣτειν δὲ δύναται καὶ εὑρήσκει. τὸντὸ δὲ γίγνεται κινοῦντι πολλά, ἐως ᾧ τοιαύτην κινήση κίνησιν ἢ ἀκολούθησε τὸ πρᾶγμα. τὸ γάρ μεμνήσθαι ἐστι τὸ ἐνεῖναι δύναμιν τὴν κινήσαν· τοῦτο δὲ, ὅστ' ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ ὅν ἔχει κινήσεων κινηθῆναι, ὅσπερ εὑρήται.

And in this way recollecting differs from relearning, since one is able somehow to be moved through oneself to the point after the starting point. But whenever one is not able to be so moved, but is moved through another, one no longer remembers. But often one cannot recollect immediately but one is able to search and one discovers [what is sought]. This happens by way of setting many things into motion until one sets in motion the sort of movement upon which the thing in question will follow. For remembering is this capacity within to set in motion; to be moved from oneself and from the movements which one has, as has been said. (452a4-12)

Here Aristotle discusses the way in which dispositional memory intersects with dispositional recollection. As I mentioned above, however, other dispositions will intersect with dispositional recollection as well. Knowledge of geometry, for example, is a stable disposition to exercise one’s understanding of geometry. Similar to memory, this disposition depends upon one’s ability to access and activate the relevant affections, either directly or indirectly through the network of psychic movements. And the disposition to recollect the
affections in question requires that the corresponding imprints be present in one’s constitution. As such, knowledge of geometry (and other kinds of knowledge) intersects with dispositional recollection in a manner analogous to dispositional memory.

In the above passage, Aristotle makes reference to the starting point of recollection. This, for Aristotle, is an imprint that, once activated, in turn activates a series of psychic movements that lead most quickly and easily to the recovery of the object sought. One way to understand Aristotle’s account of dispositional memory, in the case of humans, is to say that an agent X is able to remember a given past object Y if she is so constituted that there is a starting point of recollection Z through which the Y-imprint can be activated in a manner that constitutes awareness of Y as past.

Section V: The Starting Point (ἀρχή) of Recollection

At the end of chapter 2 of the De Memoria, Aristotle emphasizes that recollecting is a uniquely human activity. It is a deliberate search for information conducted by reasoned inquiry and involving a sort of deduction. As such, recollection requires (and belongs to) the power of practical reason:

Now it has been said earlier in the discussion that the same people are not good at remembering and good at recollecting. Recollecting differs from remembering not on the basis of time alone, but also because many of the other animals partake of remembering whereas we can say that none of the known animals, except humans, partake of recollecting. This is because recollection is like a deduction. For the one who is recollecting figures out whatever he saw or heard or otherwise experienced, and this like an inquiry. But inquiry belongs only to those who have the deliberating faculty, and deliberation is a sort of deduction. (453a4-14)
As with any inquiry, Aristotle says that recollection requires a starting point (ἀρχή):

τῶ γὰρ ἔθει ἀκολουθοῦσιν αἱ κινήσεις ἀλλήλαις, ἥδε μετά τὴνδε, καὶ ὅταν τοῖνυν ἀναμνήσκεσθαι βούληται, τοῦτο ποιήσει· ζητήσει λαβεῖν ἀρχήν κινήσεως, μεθ᾽ ἡν ἐκεῖνη ἔσται. διό τὰχιστα καὶ κάλλιστα γίνονται ἂπ’ ἄρχῆς αἱ ἀναμνήσεις· ὡς γάρ ἔχουσι τὰ πράγματα πρὸς ἀλλήλα τῷ ἐφεξῆς, οὕτω καὶ αἱ κινήσεις. καὶ ἔστιν εὐμνημόνευτα ὅσα τάξιν τινά ἔχει, ὡσπερ τὰ μαθήματα· τὰ δὲ φαύλως καὶ χαλεπῶς.

For the movements follow one another by habit, this after this, and so when one wishes to recollect, one will do the following: one will seek to get hold of a starting point of movement after which this movement will come to be. (451b28-452a)

In *Metaphysics* Δ, Aristotle offers six senses of the term ἀρχή, the first two of which are relevant to Aristotle’s use of this term in the *De Memoria*:

Ἀρχὴ λέγεται ἡ μὲν ὅθεν ἄν τις τοῦ πράγματος κινηθείη πρῶτον, οἶον τοῦ μῆκους καὶ ὁδοῦ ἐντεῦθεν μὲν αὕτη ἄρχη, ἐξ ἐναντίας δὲ ἑτέρα· ἡ δὲ ὅθεν ἄν κάλλιστα ἕκαστο γένοιτο, ὡς γὰρ ἔχουσι τὰ πράγματα πρὸς ἄλληλα τῷ ἐφεξῆς, οὕτω καὶ αἱ κινήσεις.

We call a starting point (1) the part of a thing from which one could first be moved, for example, in the case of a length such as a road, one starting point is from one direction, the other is from the opposite direction; (2) that from which each thing would be best originated, for example, one must sometimes begin not from the first point, that is, from the starting point of the thing one is learning, but rather from the point from which one would learn most easily. (*Metaphysics* Δ, 1012b34-1013a4)

In the *De Memoria*, Aristotle employs the term ἀρχή in both of these senses. On the one hand, the starting point of recollection is an affection that begins the series of psychic movements that lead to the end point of recollection, which is the affection sought. On the other hand, the starting point is not just any such affection, but the one from which the end point of recollection comes about best and most quickly:

διὸ τὰχιστα καὶ κάλλιστα γίνονται ἂπ’ ἄρχης αἱ ἀναμνήσεις· ὡς γάρ ἔχουσι τὰ πράγματα πρὸς ἀλλήλα τῷ ἐφεξῆς, οὕτω καὶ αἱ κινήσεις.

And so recollections come about best and most quickly from a starting point; for as the objects are related to one another by way of the next thing, so are the movements. (451b31-452a2)

Aristotle defends the importance of finding a starting point of recollection by referring to those who recollect from places. The reason they do this, according to Aristotle,
is that places serve as starting points. That is, the use of places allows recollection to proceed quickly and efficiently.

And so people are sometimes reputed to recollect from places. The reason is that they proceed quickly from one thing to another, for example from the milky way to white, and from white to air, and from this to moist, from which autumn is remembered, if one was in search of this season. (452a12-16)

Aristotle’s example in this passage is quite likely an example of the art of memory as practiced in Ancient Greece. Mnemonics were often used by rhetoricians to help recall speeches, and one of the most common mnemonic methods was the place system, said to have been invented by Simonides of Ceos. The earliest textual evidence for the art of memory in Ancient Greece is found in three Latin works: Cicero’s *De oratore*, Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria*, and the anonymous *Ad C. Herennium libri IV*.55

By Cicero’s time, at least, the place system of memory made use not only of earthly locations but celestial places as well. Cicero briefly discusses Metrodorus of Scepsis as a contemporary of his time, and we learn from Quintilian that Metrodorus had a memory system based on the Zodiac. Metrodorus is the earliest Greek on record to have used celestial places, but it cannot be ruled out that the practice began earlier. Indeed, Aristotle’s example in the above passage suggests that it was. The example he gives uses γάλα as the starting point of recollection, and this term can be translated as “milk” or “the milky way.” Given the context of recollecting from places, however, “the milky way” seems a more suitable translation.

55 Ibid., p. 19.  
56 Ibid., pp. 22-24.
Aristotle goes on to describe the sample recollection as proceeding from γάλακτος ("the milky way") to "white," then from "white" to "air" and from "air" to "moist." All of these transitions are plausibly made through the idea of a cloud—that is, "air" that is "white" and turns to "moisture" when it rains. Aristotle then says that "moist" connects to the end point of the recollection, which is "autumn." Aristotle’s comments in the *Meteorologica* help us to understand this last transition, for there he describes autumn as the season in which it begins to grow moist (by which he likely means "humid" or "rainy").

Aristotle completes his discussion of the starting point of recollection with a rather tricky passage in which he argues that the starting point of recollection, generally speaking, will be the "middle [τὸ μέσον].” This is because the middle point has the highest probability of reaching the end point sought, and it will do so with the greatest efficiency.

Aristotle gives us an example of recollecting an ordered series of eight items. To illustrate Aristotle’s example with a more familiar one, consider the twelve months of the calendar year. Aristotle’s claim is that the starting point for recollecting *any* month in the year should be the summer months of June and July. To understand this, consider the following scenario: Suppose one wishes to recollect the month of December. A starting point of January would be inefficient or fruitless. This is because either one can recollect from January to December, in which case starting from the middle months is more efficient, or one cannot—January is not directly accessible to the mind—but in that case one will have a better chance at success by beginning with the middle months (for the same reasoning applied to January can be applied to the months of February through May as well).

Now by assumption, one is unable to directly access the month of December. This is likely because one is unable to directly access November. But if one is unable to directly

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57 "ἐν δὲ τῷ μετοπώρῳ ἤδη ύγραίνεται" (*Meteorologica*, 348b28-29).
access November, this is likely because one is unable to directly access October, and so on.

In short, the further one gets from December, the greater the likelihood that one can *directly* access the month in question. But, as we saw, any starting point earlier than the middle months is less inefficient. The starting point, then, will be the middle months, since these months represent the most optimal combination of probability and efficiency.

Aristotle rightly points out that one cannot always locate the starting point of recollection. In such cases, while successful recollection may still be possible, it will be less efficient. Aristotle describes such cases as follows:

> πολλάκις δ’ ἢδη μὲν ἀδύνατεῖ ἀναμνησθῆναι, ζητεῖν δὲ δύναται καὶ εὑρίσκει. τούτῳ δὲ γίγνεται κινοῦντι πολλά, ἔως ἂν τοιαύτην κινήσην κίνησιν ἢ ἀκολουθήσει τὸ πράγμα.

But often one cannot recollect immediately but one is able to search and one discovers [what is sought]. This happens by way of setting many things into motion until one sets in motion the sort of movement upon which the thing in question will follow. (452a7-10)

Recollection in such cases is haphazard and less efficient due to the lack of a starting point. Nonetheless, often one still manages to recollect the affection sought.

**Conclusion**

One challenge of interpreting chapter 2 of the *De Memoria* lies in Aristotle’s use of varied terminology to describe what would appear to be the same phenomenon. For example, in the beginning of chapter 2, Aristotle uses the Greek term *pathos*, which I translate as “affection,” to describe the proper object of recollection. By the end of the chapter, however, Aristotle refers to this same object as a *phantasma*, which is often translated as, “appearance” or “being appeared to.” Aristotle describes recollection as a “search for a *phantasmatos* in something corporeal [ἡ ἀνάμνησις ζήτησις ἐν τοιούτῳ φαντάσματος]” (453a14-15).
As between pathos and phantasma, the former is the broader term. Indeed, in chapter 1 of the De Memoria, Aristotle describes a phantasma as a kind of pathos, for he says that “the phantasma is an affection belonging to the common sense [καὶ τὸ φάντασμα τῆς κοινῆς αἰσθήσεως πάθος ἐστίν]” (450a10-11). Given that Aristotle thinks recollection is a search for a phantasma, why does he characterize the proper object of recollection using the broader term, pathos?

The answer lies in the fact that Aristotle needs to pinpoint, with exactitude, the moment at which a potential object of recollection exists so as to distinguish this from the moment at which a potential memory exists. In the De Insomniis, Aristotle describes the affection that occurs with original sense perception as follows:

τὰ γὰρ αἰσθητά καθ’ ἕκαστον αἰσθητήριον ἠμῶν ἐμποιοῦσιν αἴσθησιν, καὶ τὸ γινόμενον ὑπ’ αὐτῶν πάθος οὐ μόνον ἐνυπάρχει ἐν τοῖς αἰσθητηρίοις ἐνεργουσῶν τῶν αἰσθήσεων, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀπελθουσῶν.

For the perceptible objects corresponding to each sense organ cause perception within us, and the affection brought about by them is present in the sense organs not only when the perceptions are active but also after they are gone. (459a24-28)

In both the De Anima and the De Insomniis, Aristotle describes phantasia not only as the faculty in virtue of which we undergo the movements of actual sense perception but also as the faculty in virtue of which these movements persist in the sense organs once perceptual activity ceases. It is also the faculty by which phantasmata appear to us. In De Anima 3.8, Aristotle describes phantasmata as follows:

τὰ γὰρ φαντάσματα ὡσπερ αἰσθήματα ἐστι, πλὴν ἄνευ ύλῆς
For phantasmata are just like sense impressions, but without the matter. (432a8-10)

The distinction Aristotle makes here between sense impressions and phantasmata tracks the distinction he makes in the De Insomniis when he describes the affections brought about by perceptible objects. That is, so long as the perceptible objects (matter) are present,
the affections brought about by them are the affections of actual sense perception—they are sense impressions, but once the perceptible objects (matter) are gone, the affections that persist in the sense organs are mere *phantasmata*. Aristotle’s description of *phantasmata* in *De Anima* 3.8 seems, therefore, to specifically designate as *phantasmata* the affections of sense perception that persist in the absence the original perceptible objects.

This distinction between sense impressions and *phantasmata* helps understand Aristotle’s characterization of the proper objects of recollection. For Aristotle specifically designates the affections that are immediately present with original learning or experience as the potential objects of recollection. And it’s the fact that these affections are immediately present that allows Aristotle to distinguish potential objects of recollection from potential memories, since the latter, by definition, exist only after the “now” in which the original experience occurs.

The potential objects of recollection, then, at the moment they come to exist, are not *phantasmata*. Nor, however, are they sense impressions. This is because the affections of original learning or experience persist in the absence of actual learning and experience, whereas sense impressions do not. But also, the broad notion of an affection here is meant to include the affections that occur with learning, and these are not sense impressions per se but rather the specific kinds of qualitative changes that Aristotle thinks are involved in learning. In short, neither the term “sense impression” nor the term “phantasma” fully captures the class of objects that, for Aristotle, are the potential objects of recollection, since neither fully captures the class of affections that occur with original learning or experience.

Moreover, none of this is in tension with Aristotle’s claim later in chapter 2 that recollection is a search for a *phantasma*. Aristotle is not, in that context, attempting to offer a
conceptually precise account of the proper objects of recollection. Nor is he offering a full characterization of the activity of remembering. Rather, he is accurately describing a feature of every instance of recollection, which is that it is a search for a *phantasma*. Indeed, the activity of recollection fully relies upon and makes use of *phantasia*. For as discussed above, *phantasia* preserves the affections of original learning and experience—it preserves *phantasmata*—and these *phantasmata*, when sufficiently connected to the psychic networks within *phantasia*, constitute dispositional recollection. *Phantasia* is also the faculty in virtue of which *phantasmata* are brought before the mind, and recollection involves bringing a sought *phantasma* before the mind. Thus while a conceptually precise account of the proper objects of recollection requires that they be characterized as affections of original learning or experience, this is compatible with the fact that every particular instance of recollection involves a search for a *phantasma*.

Another, related curiosity in Aristotle’s terminology arises in his discussion of psychic movements. To begin with, there is no mention in that context of the affections and *phantasmata* involved in recollection. This initial curiosity can be explained, however, by the fact that, on Aristotle’s view, these affections and *phantasmata* are themselves psychic movements. Much of Aristotle’s account of recollection relies on the fact that they are psychic movements, and so he often speaks of them in these terms. For example, Aristotle’s distinction between recollecting and relearning relies on the fact that relations of activation obtain between potential psychic movements.

Within this discussion, however, Aristotle alternates somewhat between describing recollection as a search for a specific movement and describing it as a search for a specific thing. This is worrisome, since in describing recollection as a search for some specific thing
Aristotle seems to stray from his account of the proper object of recollection as an affection of original learning or experience. The following passage contains one such instance:

πολλάκις δ’ ἤδη μὲν ἄδυνατεῖ ἀναμνησθῆναι, ζητεῖν δὲ δύναται καὶ εὑρίσκει. τούτῳ δὲ γίγνεται κινοῦντι πολλά, ἐώς ἂν τοιαύτῃν κινήσῃ κίνησιν ἃ ἄκολουθήσει τὸ πρᾶγμα.

Often one is not able to recollect immediately, but after searching one is able and one discovers. This happens when one moves many things, until one moves the sort of movement after which the thing follows. (452a7-10)

Aristotle’s use of τὸ πρᾶγμα (“the thing”) in this passage suggests that he takes recollection to end with “the thing”—i.e., the object cognized—in which case it is this thing, not the affection, that we recover in recollection. Furthermore, we cannot defuse this example with the claim that Aristotle uses τὸ πρᾶγμα loosely here to refer to a psychic movement, since this passage comes on the heels of another one in which Aristotle clearly distinguishes between movements and the things to which they correspond:

ὡς γὰρ ἔχουσι τὰ πρᾶγματα πρὸς ἄλλα, τῷ ἔφεξης, οὕτω καὶ αἱ κινήσεις.

For just as the things have a certain order in relation to one another, so do the movements. (452a1-2)

Aristotle’s alternating terminology can be explained, however, by the fact that a certain nuance is required in how we understand the proper object of recollection. This nuance, in turn, highlights the essential nature of recollection as an adjunct power.

On the one hand, Aristotle says that the proper activity of recollection is the search for and recovery of an affection—the proper object of recollection—and he specifies that this recovery occurs through one’s own psychic movements, unlike re-learning and re-discovering. On the other hand, Aristotle describes recollection as a search conducted by thought, and it would be strange to claim that the object one consciously searches for in recollecting, what the search is about, is simply an affection or a phantasma. Rather, in recollecting we seek to become aware of an object in the world, be that an intelligible object,
a perceptible object, an imaginary object, or an object in the past. In other words, what we
consciously search for is not the affection that grounds the awareness but rather the object of
awareness itself.

This nuance in the way recollection is described makes sense, however, once we see
that recollection, for Aristotle, always takes place for the sake of some other cognitive
activity, be that thinking, knowing, perceiving, imagining, or remembering. Consider, for
example, someone telling the story of Rumpelstiltskin. He pauses to recollect an important
detail of the story: that the miller’s daughter promises her first born child to Rumpelstiltskin.
Here, the storyteller undertakes recollection in search of an imaginary object, and successful
recollection results in grasping this object.

From the agent’s perspective, the object searched for in this example is the imaginary
object, not the corresponding affection. Nonetheless, strictly speaking, recollection ends
when the affection is recovered. This is because awareness of an imaginary object is the
proper work of phantasia, not recollection. The proper object of recollection is the affection
and the proper activity of recollection is the search for and recovery of that affection. It does
not follow from this, however, that the agent who recollects consciously searches for an
affection. Rather, since recollection is essentially an adjunct power, it is always initiated for
the sake of some other form of cognition, and so the objects consciously sought will be those
of the form of cognition in question.

To give a different example, we sometimes recollect the incidental objects of
perception. In De Anima 2.6, Aristotle introduces “the son of Diades” as an incidental object
of perception:

κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς δὲ λέγεται αἰσθητόν, οὗ εἰ τὸ λευκὸν εἶη Διάρους υἱός· κατὰ
συμβεβηκὸς γὰρ τούτου αἰσθάνεται, ὅτι τῷ λευκῷ συμβεβήκε τούτο, οὗ αἰσθάνεται· διὸ καὶ
We speak of an incidental perceptible object, for example, if the white thing is the son of Diaries, we perceive this incidentally, since it is incidental to the white thing we perceive. And so we are in no way affected by a perceptible object in so far as it is a thing of this sort.

(418b21-24)

In most cases, we automatically recognize people through the natural workings of perception in conjunction with *phantasia*. We recognize friends, neighbors, family members, students and teachers without difficulty. At times, however, we sense that someone is familiar but we cannot place him or her. This often happens when we see someone out of context. Suppose that you frequent a local coffee shop, and you are regularly served by a certain barista, though you do not know him by name. One day you attend a party, and across the room you see someone who is familiar to you, yet you cannot place him—you know that you have seen him before, yet you cannot recall when or where. Despite your deliberate efforts (you consider all the places where you might have met this person) you still cannot place him. You might say to someone at the party, “It’s driving me crazy, I know that person, but I can’t place him.” Finally, it comes to you: he is the person who regularly serves you coffee at the coffee shop.

In this example, recollection is used to aid in identifying an incidental object of perception, namely the barista from the local coffee shop. And while this incidental object of perception is the conscious goal of recollection, it is the affection enabling this identification that constitutes the proper object of recollection. Once this affection is recovered, perception takes over and allows you to identify the barista as the incidental object of your perception. (Note that recollection is not used, in this context, to remember a past visit to the coffee shop, though one may end up doing so as part of the search). Since this activity of recollection takes place in the context of perceiving and is undertaken for the
sake of perceiving, the recovered affection ultimately serves the power of perception; it results in perceiving, incidentally, the barista from your local coffee shop.

The above examples help to illustrate the essentially adjunctive role of the power of recollection. Every successful recollection results in some other form of cognition, it is undertaken for the sake of that cognition, and it begins in thought with a conscious search for a specific object of that cognition. The proper objects of recollection are not the proper objects of these other forms of cognition but rather the affections, broadly construed, that ground those forms of cognition. The activity of recollection ends where the cognition that it serves begins, which means that it ends with the recovery of the affection in question.
Chapter 3: οἱ βραδεῖς, οἱ ταχεῖς καὶ εὐμαθεῖς (Slow People and Fast and Good Learners)

Introduction

At the outset of De Memoria, Aristotle distinguishes between people who are slow and those who are fast and good learners. He observes that, in general, those who are slow are better at remembering and those who are fast and good learners are better at recollecting. The opening text of De Memoria is as follows:

Περὶ μνήμης καὶ τοῦ μνημονεύειν λεκτέον τί ἐστι καὶ διὰ τίν’ αἰτίαν γίγνεται, καὶ τίνι τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς μορίων συμβαίνει τούτο τὸ πάθος καὶ τὸ ἀναμιμνήσκεσθαι· οὐ γὰρ οἱ αὐτοὶ εἰσι μνημονικοὶ καὶ ἀναμνηστικοὶ, ἀλλ’ ώς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ μνημονικότεροι μὲν οἱ βραδεῖς, ἀναμνηστικότεροι δ’ οἱ ταχεῖς καὶ εὐμαθεῖς.

Concerning memory and remembering we must say what it is and on account of what cause it comes to be and with which of the parts of the soul this affection and recollecting occur. For those good at remembering and those good at recollecting are not the same, but for the most part slow people are better at remembering while those who are quick and good learners are better at recollecting. (449b4-8)

Aristotle’s claim is initially puzzling. For he seems to say that it is not possible (or at least not common) for the same person to excel at both remembering and recollecting (“those good at remembering and those good at recollecting are not the same”). Why should this be the case, and what does it imply about the distinctness of remembering and recollecting? Aristotle supports his claim with the general observation that οἱ βραδεῖς (slow people) are better at remembering while οἱ ταχεῖς καὶ εὐμαθεῖς (fast and good learners) are better at recollecting.

What is it about these types of people that enables them to excel in the one activity but not the other?

In this chapter, I investigate these questions. I argue that a proper understanding of these opening observations of the De Memoria supports my argument from the previous chapter that memory and recollection, for Aristotle, are distinct powers of the soul.
To begin with, it should be noted that Aristotle’s contrast is not simply between slow people (οἱ βραδεῖς) and fast people (οἱ ταχεῖς), nor is it simply between poor learners (δυσμαθεῖς) and good learners (εὐμαθεῖς). His rather specific contrast is between slow people, on the one hand, and those who are fast and good learners on the other. We must bear this specific contrast in mind as we seek to clarify the kinds of people Aristotle is referring to. We can begin our inquiry by examining the opposing terms δυσμαθής and εὐμαθής. The term δυσμαθής (and its cognates) is surprising absent from the extant Aristotelian corpus. It does appear in Plato, however, along with εὐμαθής and its cognates. Six texts, in particular, are helpful to our inquiry. The first is the *Charmides*, where Socrates associates δυσμαθία with slowness in learning and εὐμαθεία with quickness in learning.

In the midst of an inquiry into the nature of σωφροσύνη (often translated as “temperance”), Socrates seeks to convince Charmides that slowness (βρᾰδυτής) and quietness (ἡσύχια) are not features of σωφροσύνη. Quite the contrary, it seems that in all endeavors quickness is an admirable feature, whereas slowness and quietness are unadmirable. Given that σωφροσύνη is clearly an admirable disposition of character, it would be a mistake to characterize it by anything unadmirable. Socrates appeals to a number of examples in support his claim. One of these is the example of learning. He describes the exchange with Charmides as follows:

\[
\text{Tί δὲ; ἦν δ’ ἐγώ, εὐμαθία κάλλιον ἢ δυσμαθία;}
\]
\*
\text{“What then is more admirable,” I said, “facility in learning or difficulty in learning?”}
\*

\[
\text{Εὐμαθία.}
\]
\*

\text{“Facility.”}
\*

\[
\text{’Εστιν δὲ γ’, ἐφην, ἢ μὲν εὐμαθία ταχέως μανθάνειν, ἢ δὲ δυσμαθία ἡσυχῆ καὶ βραδέως;}
\]
“And facility in learning is learning quickly,” I said, “whereas difficulty in learning is learning quietly and slowly?”

Ναί.
“Yes.” (Charmides, 159e1-5)

Here Charmides agrees with Socrates that a poor learner is one who learns slowly, whereas a good learner is one who learns quickly.

Our next text is Republic 6, where Socrates and Glaucon describe the poor learner as someone who finds learning painful and difficult, with few returns. They make this point as part of their characterization of the philosophic nature. Having a philosophic nature, they say, involves being a good learner (εὐμαθής). The poor learner (δυσμαθής) is unable to sustain the love of learning that is central to the philosophic nature because of the pain and difficulty it involves:

Socrates: Εὐμαθής ἢ δυσμαθής. ἢ προσδοκάς ποτὲ τινά τι ἱκανῶς ἂν στέρξαι, ὃ πράττων ἂν ἁλγῶν τε πράττοι καὶ μόγις σμικρὸν ἀνύτων;

[One must say whether the philosophic soul is] a good learner or a poor one. Or do you ever expect anyone to love something when it pains him to do it and when much effort brings only small return?

Glaucon: Οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο
No, it couldn’t happen. (Republic 6, 486c3-6)

Taking this text and the one from the Charmides together, we can see that poor learner is someone who is not only slow at learning but also experiences learning as difficult and painful, so that it is not worth whatever returns may come of it. A good learner by contrast is quick at learning and takes pleasure in it. A short while later in Republic 6, Socrates says that the philosophic nature is a rarity, since the characteristics it requires tend to “grow in separation”58

58 “You must realize that there will probably be few of them, for they must have the nature we described, and most of its parts grow in separation and are seldom disposed to arise together in the same person [Νόησον δὴ ὡς εἰκότως ὀλίγοι ἔσονται σοι· ἥν γὰρ διήλθομεν φύσιν δεῖν ὑπάρχειν αὐτοῖς, εἰς ταῦταν συμφύεσθαι αὐτὴς τὰ μέρη ἀληθικῶς ἐθέλει, τὰ πολλὰ δὲ διεσπασμένη φύεται]” (Republic 6, 503b7-10).
such that they are rarely found in the same person. In particular, those who are intellectually
gifted tend to lack the requisite stability for the pursuit of wisdom, while those who live orderly
and stable lives tend to be lacking in intellectual ability:

Socrates: Εὐμαθεῖς καὶ μνήμονες καὶ ἀγχίνοι καὶ οξεῖς καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα τούτοις ἔπεται οἵθ’
ὅτι οὐκ ἐθέλουσιν ἃμα φύεσθαι καὶ νεανικοὶ τε καὶ μεγαλοπρεπεῖς τὰς διανοίας
ὁι κοσμίως μετὰ ἡσυχίας καὶ βεβαιώτητος ἔθελεν ξὴν, ἀλλ’ οἱ τοιοῦτοι ὕπ’
ὀξύτητος φέρονται ὅπη ἃν τύχωσιν, καὶ τὸ βέβαιον ἄπαν αὐτῶν ἔξωκεται.
You know that those who are good learners, good at remembering, shrewd, keen,
and having as many other characteristics as follow from these, are not willing to
develop the vigor and greatness of mind of the sort that prefers to live with
quietude and stability, but are of such a sort as to be carried by their quick wits
wherever chance leads them and to have no stability at all.

Glaucon: Ἀληθῆ, ἔφη, λέγεις.
That’s true.

Socrates: Οὐκοῦν τὰ βέβαια αὐτὰ ταῦτα ἢθη καὶ οὐκ εὐμετάβολα, οἶς ἃν τις μᾶλλον ὡς
πιστοῖς χρήσατο, καὶ ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ πρὸς τοὺς φόβους δυσκίνητα ὄντα, πρὸς τὰς
μαθήσεις αὐτῷ ποιεῖ ταῦτα· δυσκινήτως ἔχει καὶ δυσμαθῶς ὡσπερ ἀπονεναρκωμένα,
καὶ ὑπνοῦ τε καὶ χάσμης ἐμπίμπλανται, ὅταν τι δέῃ τοιοῦτον
dιαπονεῖν.
On the other hand, people with stable characters, who don’t change easily, who
aren’t easily frightened in battle, and whom one would employ because of their
greater reliability, exhibit similar traits when it comes to learning: They are as
hard to move and teach as people whose brains have become numb, and they are
filled with sleep and yawning whenever they have to learn anything. (Republic 6,
503c2-d5)

In this text, Socrates portrays those who are δυσμαθεῖς as difficult to “move,” as though
their brains are numb. This text is helpful in that it gives us some idea of why some people are
good at learning and others are not. It has something to do with the ability to be “moved” (what
exactly that means is something we will have to consider). The text also clarifies that being
εὐμαθῆς is not sufficient for having a philosophic nature—many other characteristics are
required, among them good memory and a certain stability.

Our final three texts are from the Laws. In book 10, Clinias agues that legislators must
take the time and effort required to persuade the citizenry to obey laws of the city, even if this
involves making long addresses that not everyone will understand. Poor learners, he argues, since they do not grasp everything by listening alone, can later examine the written laws as often as needed:

Clinias: … καὶ μὴν καὶ νομοθεσίᾳ γέ ἐστίν που τῇ μετὰ φρονήσεως μεγίστη βοήθεια, διότι τὰ περὶ νόμους προστάγματα ἐν γράμμασι τεθέντα, ὡς δώσοντα εἰς πάντα χρόνον ἔλεγχον, πάντως ἔμεξι, ὅστε οὔτ' εἰ γαλεπὰ κατ' ἀρχὰς ἀκούειν ἐστίν φοβητέον, ἀ γ' ἐσται καὶ τῷ δυσμαθεῖ πολλάκις ἐπανιόντι σκοπεῖν … … And it is in fact the greatest help to intelligent legislation, since once the legislative instructions are placed in writing, they remain there always, available to be scrutinized for all time; so one need not fear if listening is difficult in the beginning, for it will be possible for the poor learner to go back and examine them often … (Laws 10, 890e6-91a4)

This text suggests that the poor learner not only fails to remember what he hears, and so needs to be reminded of it in written form, he also does not understand it on first hearing and so cannot be persuaded of it until he is able to review the material many times over.

The next text from the Laws gives us a sense of what things are hard to learn and thus can cause difficulty in learning. In book 7, the Athenian stresses to Clinias the importance of avoiding unnecessary complexity in teaching music to the young. Students who have much to learn in a short time must be taught efficiently and without added confusions:

Athenian: τὰ γὰρ ἐναντία ἄλληλα ταράττοντα δυσμάθειαν παρέχει, δεῖ δὲ ὅτι μάλιστα εὐμαθεῖς εἰναι τοὺς νέους:
For the opposites obscure one another and bring about difficulty in learning, whereas the young must above all be good learners … (Laws 7, 812e5-7)

The Athenian specifically says that the juxtaposition of opposites should be avoided when teaching music: the combination of long and short intervals, high and low notes, and fast and slow tempos makes the subject harder to learn. Theses remarks suggest that the poor learner, who finds most things hard to learn, is specifically troubled by the complexity that arises with juxtaposed opposition.
In our last text from the *Laws*, the Athenian stresses the importance of mathematics in early education, not only because of its many uses, but because it can actually help students move beyond their natural abilities:

**Athenian:** τὸ δὲ μέγιστον, ὅτι τὸν νυστάζοντα καὶ ἀμαθῆ φύσει ἐγείρει καὶ εὐμαθῆ καὶ μνήμονα καὶ ἀγχίνουν ἀπεργάζεται, παρὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν ἐπιδιδόντα θείᾳ τέχνῃ. But most importantly, mathematics awakens the sleepy and ignorant student and makes him a good learner, good at remembering, and sharp-witted, and by this divine science he advances beyond his own nature. (*Laws* 5, 747b3-6)

As we will see, this interesting claim about the power of mathematics finds confirmation in Aristotle’s theory of recollection.

Having now examined the central Platonic instances of δυσμαθής and εὐμαθής (and their cognates), we can summarize the contrast between good learners and poor learners as follows: The good learner, in contrast to the poor learner, is (1) quick at learning, (2) finds learning easy and pleasant on the whole (or at least not painful), (3) is easily “moved,” (4) listens well and does not require that arguments be written down in order to remember and understand them, and (5) is not troubled by complexity, for example the juxtaposition of contraries and opposites.

Much of what we discover about the good learner in Plato is confirmed and further explained by Aristotle, albeit indirectly, through his discussions in the *Rhetoric*. The adjective εὐμαθής has both an active and passive meaning. While we find the active use in Plato, Aristotle also uses εὐμαθής in its passive sense, according to which something is “easy to follow,” “easy to understand,” or “accessible.” Aside from an appearance of εὐμάθεια in the *Magna Moralia* (this instance is not particularly helpful for our purposes), the *Rhetoric* is the only text outside the *De Memoria* in which the term εὐμαθής or its cognates appears.

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59 Aristotle lists virtues of the rational part of the soul as “prudence, sharp-wittedness, wisdom, ease of learning, remembering, and these sorts of things [ἐν μὲν δὴ τῷ λόγῳ ἔχοντι ἐγγίνεται φρόνησις ἀγχίνουσα σοφία εὐμάθεια μνήμη καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα]” (1185b5-7).
In book 3, c. 9 of the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle advocates in favor of the compact style of prose because it is “pleasant and easy to follow [ἡδεῖα δ’ ἡ τοιαύτη καὶ εὐμαθής]” (1409b1). He contrasts the compact style of prose to the free-running style, which is prose that has no natural stopping points between the beginning and end. The compact style of prose, since it is divided up into short portions with a beginning and end, gives the reader a sense of accomplishment as she listens. It is also easy to follow (εὐμαθής), since “it can easily be remembered [εὐμαθής δὲ ὅτι εὐμνημόνευτος]” (1409b4-5). The reason for this, in turn, is that its sections can be numbered, and “number is the easiest of all things to remember [τοῦτο δὲ ὅτι ἀριθμὸν ἔχει ἡ ἐν περιόδοις λέξις, ὅ πάντων εὐμνημονευτότατον]” (1409b5-6).

This text is particularly interesting for our purposes, since it makes an explicit connection between memory and learning. It suggests that at least some things are easy to learn in part because they are easy to remember. It may be that the good learner, who, we may assume, finds all things easy to learn (not just the things that are specifically crafted for ease of learning), does so at least in part, because she finds all things easy to remember. As I will argue in Section III, however, Aristotle’s use here of εὐμνημόνευτος (“easy to remember”) is best understood as a reference to dispositional memory, which intersects with dispositional recollection. When Aristotle says that number is easiest of all things to remember, he means, in this context at least, that it is the easiest of all things to recollect (for Aristotle is focused on cases where we recollect a speech in order to give the speech or think about the speech—not where we recollect the speech in order to remember the past speech as past). Hence the benefit of compact prose described above is more specifically that it is easier to recollect.
In the De Memoria, Aristotle further generalizes this point, saying that it is the presence of order that makes things easy to remember (number being a paradigmatic example of something that exhibits order):

καὶ ἔστιν εὔμνημόνευτα ὅσα τάξιν τινὰ ἔχει, ὥσπερ τὰ μαθήματα· τὰ δὲ φαύλως καὶ χαλεπῶς.

And things that have a certain order, just as mathematical objects, are easily remembered, while other things are remembered poorly and with difficulty. (452a1-4)

As I will point out in Section III, this passage appears in chapter 2 of the De Memoria, which discusses recollection, and it appears in the context of a discussion of dispositional memory, which Aristotle explains intersects with dispositional recollection. The use of εὔμνημόνευτα in the De Memoria is thus again best understood as a reference to ease of recollection. The important point for the moment, however, is that these passages in the Rhetoric and the De Memoria, taken together, suggest that good learners have an exceptional ability to find order in what they learn, and that this somehow enables them to succeed at learning.

Later in book 3, c. 14 of the Rhetoric, Aristotle gives advice on how to gain the attention of one’s audience when giving a speech (whether in the courts or in political oratory). He describes the speaker’s aim here as to raise the listener to εὐμάθεια and says that there are many ways to do this: “εἰς δὲ εὐμάθειαν ἀπαντα ἀνάξει, ἑὰν τις βούληται καὶ τὸ ἐπιεικῆ φαίνεσθαι· προσέχουσι γὰρ μᾶλλον τούτοις [but if he so chooses, he will raise them to attentiveness by every means, in particular by appearing of good character, since they pay more attention to these things]” (1415a38). To raise the audience to εὐμάθεια, once must preface the speech or the portion of the speech in question with words that will draw the attention of the listeners. Such words are not strictly speaking part of the speech. Aristotle stresses that they are not addressed to the listener as such, but to the poor listener: “πρὸς φαύλον γὰρ ἀκροατήν καὶ τὰ ἔξω τοῦ
πράγματος ἀκούοντα [they pertain to the bad listener, that is, the one who listens to things that are beside the point]” (1415b5-6).

This text confirms something that we already suspected from the Platonic texts, which is that the good learner is also a good listener. In particular, she does not require prefaces in order to draw her attention to the point at issue, because she is already in a state of attentiveness to the speaker. This suggests that she does not require some special motivation for sustaining her attention, perhaps because it requires no special pain or effort on her part to do so. By contrast, poor listeners (those who, we may infer, are also poor learners) require assurances that the words to come are “great,” “surprising,” or “pleasant” in order that it be worth the effort to listen: “προσεκτικοὶ δὲ τοῖς μεγάλοις, τοῖς ἰδίοις, τοῖς θαυμαστοῖς, τοῖς ἡδέσιν [they attend to the things that affect them and to anything great, surprising, or pleasant]” (1415b1-2).

A final point from the Rhetoric deserves mention, as it lines up with what Plato says in the Laws about the need for repetition on the part of those who are δυσμαθεῖς. Aristotle endorses the view that when ending one’s speech, one must repeat one’s point frequently so that it is easily understood: “ἵνα γὰρ εὐμαθὴς ἄριστος εἶπεῖν [they urge that you repeat your point often so that it is easily understood]” (1419b30). The text suggests that the good learner does not require frequent repetition of the points at issue in order to grasp them (for we may again assume that the good learner is someone for whom all things are εὐμαθῆ —i.e., “easily followed,” or “easily understood”).

Section II: οἱ βραδεῖς

Let us now return to the De Memoria and see how these considerations help us in understanding Aristotle’s contrast between οἱ βραδεῖς and οἱ ταχεῖς καὶ εὐμαθεῖς. In the next few sections, I will argue that Aristotle views these contrasting types of people as falling on a
spectrum between excessively slow people, at one end, and excessively fast people at the other.

The table below illustrates the spectrum I have in mind.

**Table 1: Aristotle’s spectrum of constitutions and corresponding characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of person</th>
<th>Constitution</th>
<th>Corresponding characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>oĩ λίαν βραδεῖς /οὶ δυσμαθεῖς</td>
<td>Too Hard</td>
<td>Can barely learn or remember or recollect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oĩ βραδεῖς</td>
<td>Hard</td>
<td>Good at remembering; not good at learning/recollecting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>εὐμαθῆς και μνήμων</td>
<td>Just the Right Consistency</td>
<td>Good at both learning/recollecting and remembering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oĩ ταχεῖς και εὐμαθεῖς</td>
<td>Soft</td>
<td>Good at learning/recollecting; not good at remembering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oĩ λίαν ταχεῖς</td>
<td>Too Soft</td>
<td>Can barely learn or remember or recollect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I will argue that on Aristotle’s view, one’s ability to learn or remember or recollect is affected in large part by one’s physical constitution. Those with hard constitutions are better at remembering and worse at learning and recollecting, while those with soft constitutions are better at learning and recollecting but worse at remembering. At the extreme ends of the spectrum we find the types of people who perform poorly in all of these activities. At the center is the philosopher, whose constitution is ideal for the pursuit of wisdom, since it enables excellence in all three activities.

As we have seen, in the *Republic* Plato describes the philosophic nature as a rarity because it requires characteristics that seldom arise in the same person. Specifically, the philosopher must be good at learning, have a good memory, be sharp-witted, and “as many things as accompany these [δσα ἄλλα τούτοις ἐπεταί]”—we can refer to these characteristics collectively as “intelligence”—and these rarely accompany the quietness and stability of character that is also required. In passages from the *Theaetetus*, Plato, like Aristotle, links differences in aptitude to differences in one’s constitution. As we will see, however, Aristotle’s
account in the *De Memoria* reframes what is rare about the philosophical constitution. For Aristotle, the appropriate contrast is not between intelligence and stability but rather between goodness at recollecting and goodness at remembering. These are the specific characteristics that rarely occur in the same person yet are required for the philosophic nature.

The differing explanations offered by Plato and Aristotle for what makes the philosophic constitution unique can be explained by the fact that Plato does not fully distinguish between the powers of memory and recollection. Aristotle’s arguments in chapter 2 of the *De Memoria* aim to establish that the two powers are distinct; and this in turn implies that recollection is not always for the sake of remembering. We often recollect for the purpose of thinking or knowing, and these activities are distinct from remembering. Aristotle thinks the good learner, as such, is one who is good at recollecting but not necessarily good at remembering. Thus, while Plato attributes goodness at remembering and recollecting to all those who are intelligent, Aristotle thinks that many intelligent people are not good at remembering, though they are good at recollecting. Conversely, many people are good at remembering who would not qualify as intelligent because they are poor learners and bad at recollecting. The rare philosophical constitution, for Aristotle, is the one that is good at both recollecting and remembering. Aristotle’s more refined view allows him to distinguish five different types of constitution, which in turn allows him to explain the more subtle variations in aptitude that differentiate types of people.

Aristotle is not primarily concerned with the philosophic nature in the *De Memoria*—he is more concerned to defend the distinction between memory and recollection. As I hope to show, however, once we consider Aristotle’s views in the *De Memoria* against the Platonic background, especially the *Theaetetus*, it’s clear that Aristotle is taking up and refining Plato’s
account of the different constitutions in the *Theaetetus*, and that such refinements have implications for how Aristotle understands the philosophic nature.

We will begin in this section by examining the types of people that Aristotle says are good at remembering, namely οἱ βραδεῖς. It will help to start with the discussion of physical constitutions that occurs later in chapter 1 of the *De Memoria*. At first glance, Aristotle’s observations there seem to conflict with the distinction he makes at the outset of chapter 1 between οἱ βραδεῖς and οἱ ταχεῖς καὶ εὐμαθεῖς.

Aristotle thinks that differences in physical constitution explain why some people are better than others at remembering. Those with constitutions that are “flowing,” “soft,” or “hard” have difficulty remembering. The young and old, for example, are poor at remembering because they have “flowing” constitutions. Similarly, “neither the excessively fast [οἱ λίαν ταχεῖς] nor the excessively slow [οἱ λίαν βραδεῖς] appear to be good at remembering [μνήμονες], for the former are softer [ὑγρότεροι] than is necessary and the others are harder [σκληρότεροι].”

At first glance, Aristotle’s claim about excessively slow people seems at odds with his observation at the outset of chapter 1 that οἱ βραδεῖς are good at remembering. For what could be so different between slow people and excessively slow people that would make the former good at remembering but not the latter?

An answer emerges once we consider the *De Memoria* passage in full and compare it to a passage from the *Theaetetus*. The full *De Memoria* passage reads as follows:

δῆλον γὰρ ὅτι δεῖ νοῆσαι τοιοῦτον τὸ γιγνόμενον διὰ τῆς αἰσθήσεως ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ καὶ τῷ μορίῳ τοῦ σώματος τῷ ἐχοντι αὐτήν, οἷον ἐνγράφημα τι, τὸ πάθος οὐ φαμεν τὴν ἐξιν εἴναι μνήμην· ὡς γὰρ γιγνομένῃ κίνησιν ἐνσημαίνεται οἷον τύπον τινά τοῦ αἰσθήματος, καθάπερ οἱ σφραγιζόμενοι τοῖς δακτυλίοις.

διὸ καὶ τοῖς μέν ἐν κινήσει πολλῇ διὰ πάθος ἢ δι᾽ ἡλικίαν οὕσιν οὐ γίγνεται μνήμη, καθάπερ ἄν εἰς ὑδωρ ἐπεξεργαζόμενος τῆς κινήσεως καὶ τῆς σφραγίδος· τοῖς δὲ διὰ τὸ ψήξεσθαι, καθάπερ τὰ παλαιὰ τῶν οἰκοδομημάτων, καὶ διὰ σκληρότητα τοῦ δεχομένου τὸ πάθος οὐκ ἐγγίγνεται οὕτωσι. διόπερ οὗ τε σφόδρα νέοι καὶ οἳ γέροντες ἄμνημονες εἰσίν· ὑποθεῦε γὰρ οὗ.
μὲν διὰ τὴν αὔξησιν, οἱ δὲ διὰ τὴν φθίσιν. ὡμοίως δὲ καὶ οἱ λίαν ταχεῖς καὶ οἱ λίαν βραδεῖς οὐδέτεροι φαίνονται μνήμονες· οἱ μὲν γὰρ εἰσίν ὑγρότεροι τοῦ δέοντος, οἱ δὲ σκληρότεροι· τοῖς μὲν οὖν οὐ μένει τὸ φάντασμα ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ, τῶν δ’ οὐχ ἀπτεῖται.

For it is clear that we must deem the sort of thing that comes about through sense perception in the soul and in the part of the body that has it—which sort of thing is a picture—to be the affection the having of which we say is memory. For the movement in coming about impresses something like an imprint of the sense impression, just as those who make a mark with their rings.

And so memory does not in fact come to be for those who are in much movement because of a condition or because of age—just as if the movement and seal were falling into flowing water. And the imprint does not arise in others on account of being worn away, just as the old walls of buildings, and on account of the hardness of that which receives the affection. Thus both the very young and the very old have poor memories: the former are flowing on account of their growth, the latter on account of their decay. And likewise, neither the excessively quick nor the excessively slow appear to be good at remembering, for the former are softer than is necessary and the others are harder. Thus, for some people the phantasma does not remain in the soul, while for others it does not affect them. (450a27-b11)

Here Aristotle discusses the τύπος (“imprint”) that results from original experience. The τύπος is Aristotle’s response to the aporia of how it is that in remembering we are aware of an absent object. As I discussed in the last chapter, the τύπος is a potential psychic movement that, once activated, stimulates the sense organs from within in a manner similar to the original affection. As I also discussed in the last chapter, Aristotle uses various terminology (e.g., πάθος, αἴσθημα, τύπος, κίνησις, φάντασμα) to refer to different aspects of the same psychic movement. For it is numerically the same psychic movement that (1) constitutes an original experience, (2) is preserved in one’s constitution in potentiality, and (3) is subsequently re-activated through recollecting and remembering. In this context, Aristotle seems to use the terms πάθος and κίνησις to refer somewhat generically to any phase or aspect of a psychic movement, whereas φάντασμα refers to the continued presence of a psychic movement (in potentiality or actuality) once the objects of original experience are absent. Aristotle uses αἴσθημα (in contrast with φάντασμα) to refer specifically to the psychic movement of sense perception in so far as the object is present. And in the above passage, Aristotle uses τύπος to refer specifically to the
imprint by which the psychic movement of original experience is preserved, in potentiality, in one’s constitution.

By introducing and explaining the role of the τύπος, Aristotle not only answers the aporia of how we cognize past objects, he also acquires the theoretical resources to explain why some people are bad at remembering. As he says above, some physical constitutions are poorly suited for receiving and preserving the τύπος. In particular, excessively quick people have such soft constitutions that the imprints do not last—one imagines trying to make an imprint in honey or syrup. Conversely, excessively slow people have such hard constitutions that they are not even affected by psychic movements. Here one imagines trying to make an imprint in rock or steel.

The people Aristotle describes as excessively slow (οἱ λίαν βραδεῖς) seem to be the same as those Socrates describes in the Republic as δυσμαθεῖς. Socrates suggests that people are δυσμαθεῖς on account of being difficult to “move.” Given Aristotle’s remarks above in the De Memoria, δυσμαθεῖς are likely difficult to move, and thus poor learners, for the same reasons that οἱ λίαν βραδεῖς are bad at remembering—their constitutions are too hard to be affected by psychic movements.

Certain passages from the Theaetetus further confirm the view that οἱ λίαν βραδεῖς are δυσμαθεῖς and give us a background against which to understand Aristotle’s distinction between οἱ λίαν βραδεῖς and οἱ βραδεῖς. The Theaetetus passages appear in the second half of the dialogue in the final attempt by Socrates and Theaetetus to give an account of false judgment. The account of false judgment will not concern us here. Instead, what is important for our purposes is the agreed upon assumption of the argument, which is that every soul contains something analogous to a wax block that it uses for making impressions of its own thoughts and perceptions:
Socrates: Δῶρον τοίνυν αὐτὸ φῶμεν ἐίναι τῆς τῶν Μουσῶν μητρὸς Μνημοσύνης, καὶ εἰς τούτο ὅτι ἂν βουληθῶμεν μνημονεύσαι ὅπως ἂν ἰδόμεθα ἢ ἀκούσωμεν ἢ αὐτοὶ ἐννοήσωμεν, ὑπέχοντας αὐτὸ τοῖς αἰσθήσεσι καὶ ἐννοίαις, ἀποτυποῦσθαι, ὅσπερ δακτυλίων σημεία ἐνσημαινομένους· καὶ ὅ μὲν ἂν ἐκμαγη, μνημονεύειν το καὶ ἐπίστασθαι ὅπος ἂν ἐνή το εἴδωλον αὐτοῦ· ὃ δὲ ἂν ἐξαλειφθῇ ἡ μὴ οἷόν τε γένηται ἐκμαγήναι, ἐπιλελησθαί τε καὶ μὴ ἐπίστασθαι.

We may look upon it, then, as a gift of Memory, the mother of the Muses. We make impressions upon this of everything we wish to remember among the things we have seen or heard or thought of ourselves; we hold the wax under our perceptions and thoughts and take an imprint from them, in the way in which we take the marks of signet rings. Whatever is impressed upon the wax we remember and know so long as the image remains in the wax; whatever is obliterated or cannot be impressed, we forget and do not know. (Theaetetus, 191d3-e2)

As one can see, this passage bears some striking resemblances to what Aristotle says about the τύπος in De Memoria. Aristotle does not speak of the soul as containing something analogous to a wax block, but he nonetheless thinks that the physical constitution of the individual plays a significant role in memory, in that the motions resulting from sense perception impress upon it what he refers to as "οἶον τύπον τινὰ τοῦ αἰσθήματος, καθάπερ οἱ σφραγιζόμενοι τοῖς δακτυλίοις [something like an imprint of the sense impression, just as those who make a mark with their rings]" (450a30-31). Remembering is impossible on Aristotle’s account unless such an imprint is formed and retained in the constitution of the individual.

Socrates goes on to explain how the quality of the wax affects one’s aptitude for learning and remembering. These remarks are not only echoed by Aristotle in the De Memoria, they also help to resolve the apparent tension we noted earlier in Aristotle’s disparate treatment of oi βραδεῖς and oi λίαν βραδεῖς:

Socrates: Ταῦτα τοίνυν φασὶν ἐνθένδε γίγνεσθαι. ὅταν μὲν ὁ κηρός του ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ βαθύς τε καὶ πολύς καὶ λεῖος καὶ μετρίως ὑγρασμένος ἢ, τα ἑστα τα διὰ τῶν αἰσθήσεων, ἐνσημαινόμενα εἰς τοῦτο τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς "κέαρ," ὃ ἐφη Ὅμηρος αἰνητόμενος τὴν τοῦ κηροῦ ὠμοιότητα, τότε μὲν καὶ τούτοις καθαρὰ τὰ σημεῖα ἐγγιγνόμενα καὶ ἰκανῶς τοῦ βάθους ἔχοντα πολυχρόνα τε γίγνεται καὶ εἰσὶν οἱ τοιοῦτοι πρῶτον μὲν εὔμαθες, ἔπειτα μνήμονες, … Ὅταν τοίνυν λάσιόν του τὸ κέαρ ἢ, ὃ δὴ ἐπήνευσεν ὁ πάσσοφος ποιητής, ἢ ὃταν καθαροὶ καὶ μὴ καθαροῦ του κηροῦ, ἢ
Well, this, then, they say, is why the two things occur. In some men, the wax in the soul is deep and abundant, smooth and worked to the proper consistency; and when the things that come through the sense are imprinted upon this ‘heart’ of the soul—as Homer calls it, hinting at the likeness to wax—the signs that are made in it are lasting, because they are clear and have sufficient depth. Men with such souls are good learners and good at remembering what they learn … But it is a different matter when a man’s ‘heart’ is ‘shaggy’ (the kind of heart our marvelously knowing poet praises), or when it is dirty or of impure wax; or when it is very soft or hard. Persons in whom the wax is soft are good learners but quick to forget; when the wax is hard, the opposite happens. (Theaetetus, 194c4-e4)

The first kind of constitution described here by Socrates is one with wax that is “deep and abundant, smooth and worked to the proper consistency.” This constitution belongs to someone who is both εὐμαθὴς and μνήμων—Socrates explicitly describes this person as a good learner and good at remembering. This is likely the constitution of the philosopher, described in the Republic as a rarity, and it lies in the middle of the spectrum that I presented earlier. While Aristotle is not primarily concerned with this constitution in the De Memoria, he arguably has this constitution in mind at the outset of the De Memoria when he says that his observations about those good at remembering and those good at recollecting hold “for the most part [ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ]” (449b7).

The next constitutions described by Socrates line up closely with Aristotle’s comparison between οἱ βραδεῖς and οἱ ταχεῖς καὶ εὐμαθεῖς, though Aristotle will make an important revision to the Platonic account. Socrates describes those with very soft constitutions as “good learners but quick to forget [εὐμαθεῖς μὲν, ἐπιλήσμονες δὲ γίγνονται].” By contrast, those with very hard constitutions are poor learners but slow to forget. Though Socrates doesn’t specifically mention δυσμαθεῖς here, it seems clear that they are the intended contrast. As we learned from the Platonic texts examined in Section I, the poor learner is difficult to “move,” is pained at learning,
and must review arguments in writing several times before they are remembered and understood. The poor learner also has difficulty grasping complex subject matters that involve the juxtaposition of opposites. This text from the *Theaetetus* explains the root of these problems, which is that the very hard constitution of δυσμαθεῖς makes it difficult to form the τύπος that is required for any learning or remembering. Should it be formed, however, it is solidly retained. Like an engraving in stone or steel, it does not wear away easily.

On Aristotle’s view, however, this account fails to distinguish between two very different kinds of δυσμαθεῖς. The first are those Aristotle refers to as οἱ λίαν βραδεῖς. Their constitutions are so hard that they are regularly unable to form a τύπος, and this makes it near impossible for them to remember or learn anything. The second kind of δυσμαθεῖς are those Aristotle refers to as οἱ βραδεῖς. In contrast with οἱ λίαν βραδεῖς, these people are good at remembering, in that their constitution, while hard, is not so hard as to be unable to receive a τύπος. The firmness of their constitution in turn makes their imprints lasting and explains their superior ability to remember. The reason they are not good learners, however, is that they are bad at recollecting. As we will see in the next section, successful learning requires being able to recollect imprints quickly and efficiently. Hard constitutions impede recollection, making it slow and difficult.

Thus in the *De Memoria*, Aristotle revises Plato’s account of δυσμαθεῖς by distinguishing between οἱ βραδεῖς and οἱ λίαν βραδεῖς. In doing so, he recognizes a subtlety that Plato seems to have overlooked, which is that being a good learner requires being good at recollecting, and this is conceptually distinct from being good at remembering. οἱ βραδεῖς are good at remembering but not good at recollecting. As such, οἱ βραδεῖς lie on the spectrum between οἱ λίαν βραδεῖς, on one side, and the philosopher on the other (the philosopher, as we’ve seen, is good at both learning/recollecting and remembering). Plato’s oversight reflects a deeper problem in his
account of memory, which is that he fails to see memory and recollection as distinct powers of the soul.

We have seen that Plato, like Aristotle, recognizes that being εὐμαθής (good at learning) does not entail being μνήμων (good at remembering). Indeed, in the above passage from the *Theaetetus*, those with soft constitutions are described as good learners yet bad at remembering (they are “quick to forget”). Plato fails to see, however, that those who are εὐμαθής but not μνήμων are nonetheless good at recollecting, in which case it’s possible to be good at recollecting without being good at remembering. Plato’s failure to see the distinct nature of memory and recollection problematizes his otherwise correct distinction between εὐμαθής and μνήμων. For if being εὐμαθής in fact requires being good a recollecting but it does not require being μνήμων, and Plato thinks being μνήμων includes being good at recollecting, then, contra Plato’s own account in the *Theaetetus*, there can be no one who is εὐμαθής but not μνήμων. The same failure leads Plato overlook the category of οἱ βραδεῖς, a kind of δυσμαθεῖς who are good at remembering but bad at recollecting.

In the next section, I examine οἱ ταχεῖς καὶ εὐμαθεῖς, and assess the connection Aristotle makes between being a good learner and good at recollecting.

**Section III: οἱ ταχεῖς καὶ εὐμαθεῖς as ἀναμνηστικότεροι**

As I mentioned at the beginning of Section I, Aristotle’s contrast between οἱ βραδεῖς and οἱ ταχεῖς καὶ εὐμαθεῖς is peculiar in being neither a simple contrast between δυσμαθεῖς and εὐμαθεῖς nor a simple contrast between οἱ βραδεῖς and οἱ ταχεῖς. Given my arguments in the last section, we can now see why it would not do for Aristotle to offer a simple contrast between δυσμαθεῖς and εὐμαθεῖς, since on Aristotle’s account there are two kinds of δυσμαθεῖς, and only one of those kinds, οἱ βραδεῖς, is good at remembering.
One might wonder, however, why Aristotle does not use the simple contrast between οἱ βραδεῖς and οἱ ταχεῖς, especially given the association we have seen in Plato between good learners and quickness. In other words, why did Aristotle feel the need to include the further specification of εὐμαθεῖς? Perhaps quickness alone is not sufficient for being good at recollecting. In that case, in what way does the additional specification of εὐμαθεῖς serve to explain why οἱ ταχεῖς καὶ εὐμαθεῖς are good at recollecting? And why wouldn’t it suffice in that case to contrast οἱ βραδεῖς and οἱ εὐμαθεῖς? There is the further question of whether Aristotle intends an important distinction between οἱ ταχεῖς and οἱ λίαν ταχεῖς in the way he clearly did between οἱ βραδεῖς and οἱ λίαν βραδεῖς.

On this last question, it seems that Aristotle must intend an important distinction between οἱ ταχεῖς and οἱ λίαν ταχεῖς. For Aristotle gives οἱ λίαν ταχεῖς as an example of people who are bad at remembering. Just as οἱ λίαν βραδεῖς do not form the τύπος because their constitutions are too hard, οἱ λίαν ταχεῖς have constitutions that are too soft, such that any τύπος that forms quickly dissipates. As I discussed in chapter 2, dispositional recollection intersects with dispositional memory in that both require the presence of a τύπος. Without this imprint, there is nothing to recollect. We saw in the last section that, up to a point, one’s ability to remember increases proportionately with the hardness of one’s constitution, and this is because a hard constitution (again, up to a point) is better at preserving the τύπος. Since Aristotle characterizes οἱ ταχεῖς καὶ εὐμαθεῖς as good at recollecting, it must be that their constitutions are soft, but not so soft as to prevent the formation of a proper τύπος (unlike οἱ λίαν ταχεῖς). Since we also know, however, that they are not good at remembering, we can infer that the τύπος is not particularly lasting.
In short, Aristotle’s specific formulation “οἱ ταχεῖς καὶ εὐμαθεῖς” appears carefully crafted to situate these types of people on a spectrum between the philosopher, on the one hand, and οἱ λίαν ταχεῖς, on the other. That is, “οἱ ταχεῖς” indicates that such people, like οἱ λίαν ταχεῖς (but unlike the philosopher), are bad at remembering, whereas “οἱ εὐμαθεῖς” indicates that they are like the philosopher (but unlike οἱ λίαν ταχεῖς) in being good at learning and recollecting. The εὐμαθεῖς specification thus appears to do the main work of explaining their superiority in recollection. We should consider, then, the connection that Aristotle sees between learning and recollecting and how excellence in these activities increases (up to a point) in proportion to the softness of one’s constitution.

In the last chapter, we saw that recollection, for Aristotle, occurs when thought activates one psychic movement in search of another. Each imprint bears relations of activation to other potential psychic movements, and so the activation of one imprint results in the activation of a series of psychic movements, ending in the movement sought. Recollection is goal-oriented in that one seeks to bring a specific πάθος before the mind, and it is adjunctive in that it is employed for the sake of cognitive activities other than recollection itself, such as thinking, imagining, knowing, and remembering. The person who recollects employs the power of thought to capitalize on the highly organized psychic networks of phantasia. Specifically, one uses the power of thought to locate the starting point (ἀρχὴ) of recollection, which Aristotle describes normatively as the point from which the movement sought will follow most quickly and easily.

As we saw in Section I of this chapter, a good learner is someone who learns quickly, and this would seem to require being able to recollect, quickly, the things that one has learned. Given Aristotle’s account of recollection, a soft constitution will certainly facilitate the quick
recollection of things learned. This is because the psychic movements involved in recollection
are corporeal. A soft constitution thus allows one to quickly activate psychic movements and to
proceed quickly through a succession of such movements so as to bring a particular object of
thought before the mind.

But we have also seen that there is more to being a good learner than simply being able to
quickly recollect what one has learned. In particular, the good learner is has a special ability to
detect the order in the things that she learns. This points to the two-sided nature of learning and
of being a good learner. For to be a good learner one must, in the first place, be good at grasping
the material one learns. As I discussed in chapter 2, acquiring knowledge involves grasping the
necessary connections between the propositions that form the demonstrations of a science. In
grasping these connections, the learner establishes networks of psychic movements that are
grounded in necessity. It seems, then, that the ability of the good learner to detect order in things
includes the ability to grasp the necessary relations between things, in particular, the relations of
necessity that pertain to the demonstrations of a science. What we must to consider, then, is how
does the softness of the good learner’s constitution facilitate detecting the order in the things that
she learns? The answer to this question lies in recognizing, as Aristotle does, the phenomenon of
“passive” recollection.

Given the essential role of the power of thought in recollection, Aristotle naturally
concludes that the power of recollection, so understood, belongs only to rational animals. It is
important to note, however, that Aristotle also recognizes what we might call “passive”
recolleciton. Indeed, to fully understand the power of recollection, we should recognize, as
Aristotle does, that instances of recollection involve the active, deliberate employment of what is
otherwise the natural working of phantasia.
Aristotle seems to have such “passive” forms of recollection in mind in the *De Memoria* when he indicates that psychic movements can be activated in succession even without a search:

“Thus, in this way they search, and even if they are not searching, in this way they recollect, whenever this movement comes to be after another movement [ζητοῦσι μὲν οὖν οὐτω, καὶ μὴ ζητούντες δ’ οὕτως ἀναμιμνήσκονται, ὅταν μεθ’ ἑτέραν κίνησιν ἐκείνῃ γίγνηται]” (451b22-24).

Strictly speaking, Aristotle considers recollection to be an active search guided by thought, but he acknowledges that the same processes occur regularly without an active search.

Some of Aristotle’s remarks in chapter 2 of the *De Memoria* suggest that the sophisticated networks of *phantasia* stem from a more basic associative capacity.

διό καὶ τὸ ἐφεξῆς θηρεύομεν νοήσαντες ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν ἢ ἄλλου τινός, καὶ ἂρ’ ὁμοίον ἢ ἕναντίον ἢ τοῦ σύνεγγυς. διὰ τοῦτο γίγνεται ἡ ἀνάμνησις· αἱ γὰρ κινήσεις τούτων τῶν μὲν αἱ αὐταί, τῶν δὲ ἅμα, τῶν δὲ μέρος ἔχουσιν, ὡσεὶ τὸ λοιπὸν μικρὸν ὃ ἐκινήθη μετ’ ἑκείνῳ. And so we search for the next thing, beginning in thought from something present or some other thing, such as something similar, something opposite, or something closely connected. Recollection happens on account of this. For the movements of these things are either the same as the one sought, they are simultaneous with it, or they contain a part of it, such that the remainder by which one is moved after this part is small. (*De Memoria*, 451b18-22).

These remarks suggest that the relations of activation supported by *phantasia* include similarity, opposition, and proximity. Thus, what is present to the mind will often naturally activate other psychic movements associated with it by similarity, opposition, or proximity. On Aristotle’s view, these are cases of “passive” recollection, since they do not arise as part of a deliberate, goal-oriented search initiated by thought. Instances of remembering, for example, often take place without any intention, such as when perceptual activity causes us to remember an event from the past. Consider, for example, an elderly woman browsing an antique shop. She spots a rotary phone that looks just like the one used in her childhood home. This experience activates similar psychic movements and she finds herself remembering a past event such as the day the family replaced the rotary phone with a push-button phone. In cases like this, the
associative capacity of phantasia causes us to passively recollect certain affections, and this in turn can lead to remembering a past object.

Plato seems to have exactly this kind of passive recollection in mind in the Phaedo when he explains to Simmias and Cebes (more specifically, he helps them to “recollect”)\(^{60}\) that learning is recollection:

Socrates: Οὐκοῦν οἴσθα ὅτι οἱ ἐρασταί, ὅταν ἴδωσιν λύραν ἢ ἰμάτιον ἢ ἄλλο τι οἷς τὰ παιδικά αὐτῶν εἴωθε χρῆσθαι, πάσχουσι τοῦτο· ἔγνωσάν τε τὴν λύραν καὶ ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ ἔλαβον τὸ εἶδος τοῦ παιδὸς οὗ ἦν ἡ λύρα; τοῦτο δὲ ἐστὶν ἀνάμνησις· ὡσπερ γε καὶ Σιμμίαν τις ἰδὼν πολλάκις Κέβητος ἀνεμνήσθη, καὶ ἄλλα ποι μυρία τοιαύτα ἂν εἴη.

Well then, you know that lovers experience this, whenever they see a lyre or cloak or any of the things that their beloveds tend to use, they know the lyre, and the image of the boy to whom it belongs comes to mind. This is recollection, just as someone who sees Simmias often recollects Cebes, and there are countless other examples of this sort. (Phaedo, 73d5-10)\(^{61}\)

Socrates begins his explanation with an example that aligns with what I have described above as “passive” recollection. This is where we perceive one thing and this brings to mind an affection pertaining to something different. Socrates extends this agreed upon case of recollection to an example that is less obvious but that will be more suited to the Forms: we perceive one thing and this brings to mind something similar (here Socrates gives the example of a picture of Simmias bringing to mind Simmias himself). Ultimately, Socrates argues that perceiving the many manifestations of the Forms in the perceptible world brings to mind the Forms themselves. Since these Forms are far more perfect than anything we have access to through the senses alone, Socrates reasons that we must somehow have prior knowledge of the Forms. Our souls forget this knowledge at birth, and when we perceive the imperfect manifestations of the Forms in the perceptible world this causes us to recollect the Forms

\(^{60}\) Phaedo, 73b6-10.

\(^{61}\) This is G.M.A. Grube’s translation, with modifications.
themselves and enables us to remember the forgotten knowledge. Socrates concludes that so-called learning is just recollection of the Forms.\textsuperscript{62}

Aristotle of course disagrees with this account of learning on many levels, not the least of which is its invocation of the Forms. And we have seen that Aristotle’s account of recollection does not encompass such cases of “passive” recollection, since for Aristotle, recollection is properly understood as an active search guided by the power of thought. Nonetheless, the examples of so-called recollection in the \textit{Phaedo} capture what Aristotle would describe as “passive” recollection, and this phenomenon of passive recollection is helpful for making sense of the connection Aristotle draws between recollection and learning.

Recall that being a good learner requires not only being able to quickly recollect what one has learned, it also involves, in the first place, being able to quickly grasp the objects of learning. I stated above that this feature of the good learner relates to her superior ability to detect the order in things. This left us with the question of why Aristotle thinks that someone with a soft constitution will excel not only at recollection proper but will also possess this superior ability to detect order.

Once we recognize the phenomenon of passive recollection, however, an answer presents itself. For it seems that effectively grasping the order in things requires the ability to hold several affections before the mind at once, and this in turn requires quickness at passive recollection. It stands to reason that a soft constitution facilitates passive recollection, just as it facilitates recollection proper, in which case those with soft constitutions will excel at both recollection and learning.

\textsuperscript{62} \textit{Phaedo}, 73b4-77a5.
To see the role of passive recollection in detecting order, consider the following rather simplified example of the relations of necessity obtaining between the propositions of a basic syllogism.

P1. All cows are spotted things.

P2. All spotted things display more than one color.

C. Therefore, All cows display more than one color.

Imagine now a good learner who hears this syllogism for the first time. She hears Premise 1, and then Premise 2. As she hears Premise 2, Premise 1 may linger before her mind, but if not, or if it is not clearly present to her mind, the linguistic similarities between Premises 1 and 2 (“All”, “spotted things”), as well as their proximity, will cause the good learner to passively recollect Premise 1 as she hears Premise 2. With both premises before the mind, she is able to grasp the logical necessity that obtains between them (i.e., that they necessitate a certain conclusion). Hearing the Conclusion similarly causes her to recollect the premises, and with all three affections before the mind, she has the sustained attention required to fully grasp the logical necessity that exists between the premises and the conclusion and to recognize the argument as logically valid.

This simple example shows how the associative capacity of phantasia, through which similar, opposite, and proximate affections are passively brought before the mind, enables learning by enabling the sort of sustained attention required for detecting order (in this case, the order of logical necessity). Those with soft constitutions detect order more quickly than most because they are more quickly and easily moved by the associative capacity of phantasia (they engage in quick passive recollection) in a way that creates the sustained attention required for detecting order.
This ability of the good learner to have several affections before the mind also explains why she is described as a good listener. For unlike the poor learner, she does not need things to be written down in order to have sustained attention required for detecting order. Poor learners, since they have harder constitutions and are thus slower at both passive recollection and recollection proper, require things in written form. This is because the written text compensates for their slower internal movements and provides an external aid to reaching the sustained attention required in detecting order.

We can now make sense of Aristotle’s at first rather peculiar characterization of οἱ ταχεῖς καὶ εὐμαθεῖς as good at recollecting. For as we have seen, the same features that make these people good at learning also make them good at recollecting. As we discussed, learning is two-faceted in the sense that it involves both grasping the objects of learning and being able to demonstrate those objects to others. Both facets of learning require a soft constitution. The initial phase of learning requires a soft constitution, since this enables the sustained attention needed for detecting order. The demonstration phase of learning also requires a soft constitution, since this allows for quick recollection of the things one has learned.

One should note that those with soft constitutions are not only easily moved, and so they pass quickly through a succession of psychic movements, they are also more adept at locating the starting point of recollection. Aristotle thinks the starting point of recollection is the midpoint, as this is the point from which recollection generally occurs most quickly and easily. Those with soft constitutions, since they are good at detecting order, will also be good at locating the relevant midpoint from which to begin recollection.

In sum, learning requires the same sort of softness in one’s constitution that is required for being good a recollecting. This explains why Aristotle thinks those who are good at
recollecting are also good learners, and vice versa. Importantly, however, οἱ ταχεῖς καὶ εὐμαθεῖς are not good at remembering. This means that, unlike the philosopher, they lack the sort of constitution required for the steady acquisition of knowledge. As I discussed in the last chapter, the process of learning a science involves discovering the necessary relations that ground the demonstrations of that science. These relations are preserved in phantasia as necessity-based psychic networks. To constitute knowledge, however, these networks must attain a significant degree of stability and complexity. In the case of οἱ ταχεῖς καὶ εὐμαθεῖς, while they easily discover necessary relations, they are unable to retain the relevant imprints long enough to build complex networks. They regularly forget what they have learned and are thus unable to steadily build the networks of psychic movements that ground the second potentiality of knowledge.

Before closing this section I want to briefly address a possible objection to the conclusions I have drawn regarding οἱ ταχεῖς καὶ εὐμαθεῖς. In Section I of this chapter, I presented two texts in support of the claim that, for Aristotle, good learners have a special ability to detect the order in things. In both texts, Aristotle appears to make a connection between order and remembering, yet I claim we should take this as an assertion about order and recollecting. Let me take a moment to explain this move.

In chapter 2 of the De Memoria, Aristotle says that the organization of psychic movements reflects the order of things in the world. He further says that things with order are more easily remembered that things without order:

διὸ τάχιστα καὶ κάλλιστα γίγνονται ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς αἱ ἀναμνήσεις· ὡς γὰρ ἔχουσι τὰ πράγματα πρὸς ἄλληλα τὸ ἔφεξης, οὕτω καὶ αἱ κινήσεις. καὶ ἔστιν εὐμνημόνευτα ὅσα τάξιν τιν ἔχει, ὥσπερ τὰ μαθήματα· τὰ δὲ φαύλως καὶ χαλέπως.

And so recollections come about best and most quickly from a starting point; for as the objects are related to one another by way of the next thing, so are the movements. And things that have a certain order, just as mathematical objects, are easily remembered, while other things are remembered poorly and with difficulty. (De Memoria, 451b31-452a4)
What I wish to point out here is that Aristotle’s comments relate primarily to the power of recollection and only derivatively to memory. To begin with, Aristotle’s characterization of things with order as “easier to remember” is a reference to dispositional memory, for the discussion arises in the context of Aristotle’s account of dispositional memory. In the last chapter, I discussed the intersection of dispositional memory and dispositional recollection. There I noted that the ability to remember a given past object depends upon the presence within phantasia of a network of potential psychic movements through which the relevant imprint can be accessed and activated. This is just to say that dispositional memory depends, in this important respect, on dispositional recollection. Aristotle’s comments above apply primarily to dispositional recollection, since it is recollection that makes use of the networks within phantasia. In other words, things that have a certain order are easier to remember precisely because they are easier to recollect.

Similar considerations apply to the text from Rhetoric 3.9 that I discussed in Section I. In that text, Aristotle endorses the compact style of prose as easy to follow because “it can easily be remembered [ἐὐμαθὴς δὲ ὅτι εὐμνημόνευτος]” (1409b4-5). He then says, more specifically, that it is easy to follow because its sections can be numbered, and “number is the easiest of all things to remember [τοῦτο δὲ ὅτι ἄριθμὸν ἔχει ἡ ἐν περιόδοις λέξις, ὃ πάντων εὐμνημονευτότατον]” (1409b5-6). Here we have Aristotle claiming once again that things with order are more easily remembered. As in the De Memoria, it is important to recognize that on Aristotle’s view, number is easier to remember precisely because it is easier to recollect. And as I hope to have shown this section, the connect Aristotle makes here between remembering and learning is more precisely a connection between recollection and learning.
Aristotle’s reference to remembering is somewhat more troubling here in the *Rhetoric*, however, since on Aristotle’s considered view of memory, the so-called remembering of a speech is more precisely an instance of recollecting a speech in order to deliver it or think about. In other words, speech giving does not generally involve remembering in Aristotle’s conceptually rigorous sense of being aware of past objects as past. Given that the *Rhetoric* is a more popular work, however, it is likely that Aristotle is not inclined in this context to adhere closely to terminology that relies upon his arguments elsewhere and that constitutes a revision of common usage. In light of this, I believe Aristotle’s comments in this part of the *Rhetoric* can be safely taken to support the interpretation I have offered.

**Section IV: What does it mean to be good at remembering?**

One important point remains to be discussed in this chapter. In Section II, I argued that οἱ βραδεῖς are good at remembering because they have hard constitutions. More specifically, I argued that unlike οἱ λίαν βραδεῖς, their constitutions are not too hard to receive the imprints of perception, yet they are hard enough to ensure that these imprints resist degradation over time and are lasting. One question I did not address, however, is why Aristotle thinks that having lasting imprints suffices to make one good at remembering.

Surely, Aristotle thinks that someone who is good at remembering not only has lasting imprints but also excels at the distinguishing feature of remembering, which is the perception of time. Yet it’s not clear how the hard constitutions of οἱ βραδεῖς make them exceptional in this regard. In this section, I discuss what I referred to in chapter 1 as the “mechanics” of remembering, after which I suggest how the hard constitutions of οἱ βραδεῖς give them an exceptional ability to satisfy the time component of remembering.
In terms of the internal processes or “mechanics” involved in remembering, it seems clear that Aristotle thinks remembering involves some of the same processes that are involved in having a phantasma. For in chapter 1 of the De Memoria, Aristotle indicates that an actual memory is just like a phantasma except that it is viewed in a particular way, namely as “of something else” (450b23-27). Some remarks in the De Insomniis suggest that certain phantasmata are simulations of sense perception. This is because they involve stimulating the sense organs in a manner that approximates their activation by an external object:

The cause of our being deceived is that not only does anything whatsoever appear when the object moves the sense, but also when the sense itself is moved, if it is moved in the same way as it is moved by the object itself. I mean for example, the land seems to sailors to be moving when sight is being moved by something else. (De Insomniis, 460b22-27)

In a text from the De Anima that I discussed in chapter 2, Aristotle makes a brief remark about recollection that is particularly helpful in understanding the internal processes involved in remembering. There he contrasts the psychic movements of sense perception and recollection, saying that “sense perception begins from without and terminates with the soul, whereas recollection begins with the soul and terminates in the movements and rest of the sense organs [ἡ μὲν αἴσθησις ἀπὸ τῶν διὰ, η δ’ ἀνάμνησις ἀπ’ ἑκείνης ἐπὶ τὰς ἐν τοῖς αἰσθητηρίοις κινήσεις ἦ μονάς]” (De Anima 1.4, 408b16-17). This text suggests that remembering, which often follows upon recollecting, requires the internal stimulation of the sense organs. In the case of remembering in particular, the internal stimulation of the sense organs is directly linked to a past perception, since it is caused by activated imprints derived from that perception. The activation of these psychic movements creates a simulation of the past experience in question.
As Aristotle notes in chapter 2, however, in order to recognize a past perception as such, that is, in order to view the phantasma as of something else, one must in addition perceive the time. Aristotle describes perceiving the time as a separate psychic movement that occurs simultaneously with the simulation of perception:

ὅταν οὖν ἂμα ἢ τε τοῦ πράγματος γίγνηται κίνησις καὶ ἢ τοῦ χρόνου, τότε τῇ μνήμῃ ἐνεργεῖ.

Whenever, then, the movement of the thing and the movement of the time occur simultaneously, at that time one is actively remembering. (452b23-24)

What does Aristotle mean here by “the movement of the time”? Just prior to this passage, Aristotle draws an analogy between discerning different sizes and distances and discerning “the longer and the shorter time:”

τὸ δὲ μέγιστον, γνωρίζειν δεὶ τὸν χρόνον, ἢ μέτρῳ ἢ ἀορίστως. ἔστω δὲ τι ὁ κρίνει τὸν πλείον καὶ ἐλάττων εὐλογον ὁ δὲ ὅπερ τὰ μεγέθη· νοεῖ γὰρ τὰ μεγάλα καὶ πόρρω οὐ τὸ ἀποτείνειν ἐκεῖ τὴν διάνοιαν, ὅπερ τὴν ὅπιον φασίν τινες (καὶ γὰρ μὴ ὄντων ὁμόιως νοῆσει, ἀλλὰ τῇ ἀνάλογου κινήσει· ἔστι γὰρ ἐν αὐτῇ τὰ ὁμοία σχῆμα καὶ κινήσει, τίνι ὁ ὄν διοίσει, ὅταν τὰ μείζω νοῆ, ὅτι ἐκεῖνα νοεῖ ἢ τὰ ἐλάττων; πάντα γὰρ τὰ ἐντός ἐλάττω, καὶ ἀνάλογον καὶ τὰ ἐκτός.

But most importantly, one must grasp the time, either by means of a measure or indeterminately. But let there be something by means of which one discerns the longer and the shorter time; it is reasonable that this discernment takes place just as it does with magnitudes. For one thinks the large things and far off things not by means of thought stretching out to there, just as some say is the case with sight (for even if the objects do not exist, one will think them similarly), but by means of the proportionate movements. For there are similar shapes and movements in thought. In what way, then, will it differ, when one thinks the larger things, that one thinks these things or the smaller things? For all the internal things are smaller, and the internal things and the external things are proportionate. (452b6-15)

Aristotle’s claim here is that we distinguish longer and shorter intervals of time similar to the way in which we distinguish differences in magnitude, such as larger and smaller objects or objects at a distance and those close at hand. In the case of magnitudes, we cognize the size and distance of things by way of proportionate psychic movements. According to Aristotle, this is most obvious with large objects and objects at a distance. That is, the largeness of an object, or its greater distance, is registered internally by way of a proportionate psychic movement.
reasons that it is no different for smaller objects and those close at hand. The point here seems to be that larger and smaller objects are both cognized by smaller, but proportionate, psychic movements.

Aristotle goes on in the next passage to illustrate how we use proportionate psychic movements to discern intervals. Aristotle’s meaning in this passage is rather unclear, and the matter is further complicated by the likelihood of corruption in the manuscripts. The passage reads as follows:

ἔστι δ’ ἴσως ὡσπερ καὶ τοῖς εἴδεσιν ἀνάλογον λαβεῖν ἄλλο ἐν αὐτῷ, οὕτω καὶ τοῖς ἀποστήμασιν. ὡσπερ οὖν εἰ τὴν ΑΒ BE κινεῖται, ποιεῖ τὴν ΓΔ· ἀνάλογον γὰρ ἡ ΑΓ καὶ ἡ ΓΔ. τί οὖν μᾶλλον τὴν ΓΔ ἢ τὴν ΖΗ ποιεῖ; ἢ ὡς ἡ ΑΓ πρὸς τὴν ΑΒ ἐχει, οὕτως ἡ Ἡ πρὸς τὴν Ι ἐχει. τὰ τάς οὖν ἄμα κινεῖται. ἂν δὲ τὴν ΖΗ τοιούταυ νοῆσαι, τὴν μὲν ΒΕ ὁμοίως νοεῖ, ἀντὶ δὲ τῶν ΘΗ τὰς ΚΛ νοεῖ· αὕται γὰρ ἐχουσιν ὡς ΖΑ πρὸς ΒΑ.

But surely it is possible that just as one takes another thing in oneself proportionate to the things seen, so also one does this proportionate to the intervals. Just as if, then, one is moved by AB, BE, one produces CD, for AC and CD are proportionate. Why then does one make CD rather than FG? Surely as AC is to AB, so is H to I. Thus one is moved simultaneously with respect to these movements. But if he should wish to think about FG, then he similarly thinks about BE, but instead of HI he thinks about JK, for these are as FA to BA. (452b15-22)

Most likely, the letters that Aristotle refers to here are points on a diagram. Without the diagram itself, however, it is very difficult to interpret this passage. It seems that Aristotle uses the term “interval” to refer generally to the discernment of relative quantities, be they differences in size, distance, or time. There is little in the passage to indicate that Aristotle is speaking of time intervals in particular. It may be that Aristotle uses the diagram to illustrate the cognition of size intervals, and this is meant to apply analogously to distance and time.

Another reason to think that the passage is not specifically about time is that Aristotle has not yet explained how we cognize differences in size and distance, much less longer and shorter intervals of time. For his comments in the passage prior to this one merely establish the preliminary point that differences of magnitude in the world are somehow preserved in psychic
movements; it does not answer the question of how we cognize those differences as such. We may suppose, for example, that large objects cause more forceful psychic movements than small objects. The question that remains, however, is how we further cognize the two objects as “larger” and “smaller” relative to one another. This seems to be what Aristotle wishes to explain in his discussion of intervals.

If we assume for the moment that Aristotle’s example focuses on the discernment of relative size, the lettering satisfies a hypothesis on which Aristotle’s diagrams are triangles: AB, BE refers to the two sides of the triangle ABE, and CD is a line parallel to BE that creates a smaller but proportionate triangle ACD. HI is the ratio of triangle ACD to triangle ABE. FG is a line between BE and CD that creates triangle AFG, which is slightly larger than ACD but smaller than ABE. JK is the ratio of triangle ABE to triangle AFG. Aristotle seems to think that HI and JK are the psychic movements that indicate the comparative size of the first and second set of triangles, respectively, and these movements occur simultaneously with the movements of the triangles themselves. Aristotle goes on to apply these results to remembering, stating that if the movement of the time does not occur simultaneously with the movement of the thing, one does not remember. He further specifies that the movement of the time need not occur by means of a measure:

> ἡ δὲ τοῦ χρόνου διττή ἐστιν· ὅτε μὲν γὰρ μέτρῳ οὐ μέμνηται αὐτὸν, οἶον ὅτι τρίτη ἡμέραν ὁδήποτε ἐποίησεν, ὅτε δὲ καὶ μέτρῳ· οὐκ ἱσασιν, ὅταν μὴ γνωρίζωσι τοῦτο [πότε] τὸ ποσὸν μέτρῳ.

> But the movement of the time is two-fold; for sometimes one does not remember it by means of a measure, for example that he did so and so the day before yesterday, but other times he also remembers it by means of a measure; but he remembers even if not by means of a measure; and people usually say that they remember, although they do not know at what time, whenever they do not grasp this quantity by means of a measure. (452b29-453a4)
The very least we can gather from Aristotle’s discussion of time and remembering in chapter 2 of the De Memoria is that cases of successful remembering involve being moved simultaneously with respect to the thing and the time, where being moved with respect to the time involves the grasp of some quantity, either by way of a measure or without a measure. This quantity is an interval and can be compared to other intervals in terms of longer and shorter time. Presumably, longer and shorter intervals correspond to things in the more distant and more recent past, respectively.

One important question that remains from Aristotle’s discussion of time in the De Memoria is how we are ever able to cognize an object in the past to begin with. For his discussion of intervals assumes that to cognize an object in the past requires placing it at a given interval from the present; his focus is then on explaining how we distinguish longer and shorter intervals. Yet one might rightly wonder how, on Aristotle’s view, one manages to cognize an object in the past to begin with.

In chapter 1 of the De Memoria, Aristotle says that when we remember, we view an affection as “of something else,” where this “something else” is a past object. He explains cases of false remembering as those where one falsely views an affection as of something else when it is not in fact of something else. As an example, he points to Antipheron of Oreus and people like him who “referred to their phantasmata as things that happened and they claimed to remember them. But this happens whenever someone views that which is not an image as an image [τὰ γὰρ φαντάσματα ἔλεγον ὡς γενόμενα καὶ ὡς μνημονεύοντες. τοῦτο δὲ γίγνεται ὅταν τίς τὴν μὴ εἰκόνα ὡς εἰκόνα θεωρή]” (451a10-12). While it’s clear from this example that we often mis-cognize objects as past, it is unclear why these mistakes occur and what the requirements are for success.
In the *Physics*, Aristotle provides some indication of how he would account for the cognition of past objects. For there he proposes an explanatory relation between time and change (and between change and magnitude). He says that time follows change, in the sense that the continuity of change explains the continuity of time, and the “before” and “after” in change explains the “before” and “after” in time. He also says that the perception of change entails the perception of time, and vice versa.63

While Aristotle says that perception of time and change are mutually entailing, the explanatory relation that he posits between time and change suggests that the perception of time occurs in virtue of the perception of change. In particular, we perceive time by marking out the before and after in change.

As applied to remembering, this suggests that we become aware of a past object as past when we situate it along a continuum of change leading up to the present. More specifically, a past object is viewed as past in virtue of being marked “before” in a change that is continuous with the objects of current perception, which objects are marked as “after.” A given affection before the mind constitutes remembering when its object can be linked in this way to the present objects of perception.

If this account is along the right lines, then it seems that the more imprints one retains of past experience, the more likely one is able to locate past objects on a continuum of change that extends to the present. In the case of οἱ βραδεῖς, their imprints are plentiful and lasting, in which case these imprints track their experience with few gaps. This allows οἱ βραδεῖς to more readily grasp the continuity of change between past and present objects. As such, they are reliably and correctly able to view their affections as memories, both at long and short intervals from the present.

63 *Physics* 4.11, 219a-b.
Conclusion

In this chapter I have offered a detailed analysis of Aristotle’s observation at the opening of the *De Memoria* that “those good at remembering and those good at recollecting are not the same, but for the most part slow people are better at remembering while those who are quick and good learners are better at recollecting” (449b6-8). I have argued that a careful examination of Aristotle’s distinction between slow people, on the one hand, and fast and good learners, on the other, reveals that Aristotle not only revises Plato’s account of good and bad learners in the *Theaetetus*, but that this revision constitutes a criticism of Plato’s failure to fully distinguish between the powers of memory and recollection.

In particular, Plato fails to realize the full implications of his remarks in the *Theaetetus* that those with soft constitutions are good at learning but quick to forget. For even on Plato’s account, learning involves recollection. By his own lights, then, those with soft constitutions (but not too soft) provide evidence that it’s possible to be good at recollecting without being good at remembering. In addition, Plato fails to distinguish between two different kinds of poor learners. Some poor learners are bad at both remembering and recollecting, whereas others are good at remembering but bad at recollecting. The latter have hard constitutions that prevent them from recollecting (and learning) with ease, but their constitutions are not so hard as to prevent the formation of imprints. Since their imprints are plentiful and lasting, they are good at remembering.

These considerations support my argument in chapter 2 that Aristotle views memory and recollection as distinct powers of the soul. For if it’s possible to be good at recollecting without being good at remembering, this suggests that recollection is not essentially tied to remembering.
Rather, it is an adjunct power that serves different forms of cognition, only one of which is memory.
Conclusory Remarks

In this dissertation I have argued for a renewed understanding of Aristotle's account of memory and recollection in the *De Memoria*. While I hope to have moved in the right direction, more work remains to be done, in particular in regards to the ways in which memory intersects, for Aristotle, with the other powers of the soul.

For example, one theme that emerges from a consideration of the necessity-based networks of *phantasia* is that it may be *phantasia* rather than memory that supports knowledge. The process of acquiring knowledge involves creating the specific kinds of necessity-based links between *phantasmata* that in turn support the exercise of that knowledge. This may help to make sense of Aristotle's view that unqualifiedly intelligible objects are merely incidental objects of memory, though much remains to be considered both on this issue and on the relationship between knowledge and memory more generally.

Another theme that emerges is the extent to which questions about memory are intertwined with, and dependent upon, questions about sense perception. For if, as I have argued, remembering involves the simulation of perception through the internal stimulation of the sense organs, questions as to the representationalist or realist status of memory will ultimately depend upon the representationalist or realist status of perception. For example, if Aristotle is a direct realist about perception, we can conclude, on my account at least, that he is a direct realist about memory as well. The precise nature of perception is therefore important to fully understanding memory. In addition, I have only gestured towards an account of time perception, suggesting that the perception of greater and lesser intervals of time involves the subconscious perceptual processes involved in the perception of change. Much work remains to be done here.
A larger and more general question concerns how the renewed account of memory and recollection that I have argued for affects existing scholarship on Aristotle. In other words, how much work on Aristotle currently depends upon the wrong conception of remembering and recollecting, and what impact does this have on the larger arguments at stake? This is an unruly question that might not work well as a program of specific study, but it is nonetheless worth bearing in mind.

Finally, if I am correct that Aristotle's account of memory and recollection have been widely misunderstood, it is worth considering the impact this may have had on generations of philosophical and psychological inquiry. As I mentioned in my Introductory Remarks, memory today is an umbrella concept for a wide range of rather disparate cognitive activities. To the extent that conceptual precision is important in contemporary theories of memory, it would be worthwhile to study contemporary notions against the background of Aristotle's thought, to see if Aristotle's more conceptually rigorous account of memory, and its distinction from recollection, is helpful.
Appendix: Text and Translation of Aristotle’s De Memoria

Below I offer a slightly modified version of David Bloch's critical edition of the Greek text of Aristotle's *De Memoria*.\(^{64}\) Bloch's edition is the most comprehensive and reliable to date. Prior editions have tended to use only seven or eight manuscripts and have unwarrantedly relied most heavily on manuscript E.\(^{65}\) One important exception is Siwek's critical edition of the *Parva Naturalia*, which is collated from all the extant manuscripts.\(^{66}\) As Bloch explains, however, Siwek's stemmatic reconstruction is problematic in that it is almost never able to reach an archetypal reading when the manuscripts disagree. In addition, Siwek lacks a principled approach to reporting variant readings in the apparatus, and this makes his apparatus less reliable.\(^{67}\)

Bloch's edition is based on 18 manuscripts of the *Parva Naturalia*, which were written between the 10th and 14th century. These manuscripts bear evidence to three independent traditions, α, β, and γ (with some uncertainty, however, as to the degree of independence of γ, which has only the P manuscript).\(^{68}\) The reading of the α tradition is established through the E manuscript, which is the clear ancestor of the tradition. The reading of the β tradition must take into account the fact that one of its branches, θ, has suffered contamination from the α tradition, more so, at any rate, than its other branch, ρ. Thus, when the two branches of the β tradition disagree, agreements between ρ and the α tradition are strong evidence of β (and give the archetypal reading) whereas

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\(^{65}\) E. Par. gr. 1853. s. x.; Bloch, p. 1-3.


\(^{67}\) Bloch, p. 3-4.

\(^{68}\) P. Vat. gr. 1339. s. xiv.
agreements between $\theta$ and $\alpha$ are not. When $\rho$ and $\theta$ agree, this gives the $\beta$ reading. The use of the $P$ manuscript of the $\gamma$ tradition is a delicate matter, since its independence is uncertain. Bloch thinks that $P$ is part of the $\beta$ tradition but is contaminated by $\alpha$. Still, in certain specific cases of disagreement within the $\beta$ tradition $P$ can strengthen or determine a reading of $\beta$ that agrees with $\alpha$, and thus gives an archetypal reading.\(^{69}\) Once the archetypal reading is established, Bloch follows this reading so long as "nothing tells against it."\(^{70}\) Where the archetypal reading is uncertain, Bloch defaults to the $\beta$ tradition, with some exceptions that he justifies in his notes to the text.

Bloch has delivered a principled text and a clear apparatus. My comments are provided in the footnotes to the text. For the most part, I limit my comments to cases where the archetypal reading is unclear and Bloch has chosen to depart from his principle of defaulting to $\beta$. In the footnotes I explain his reasoning and state whether or not I follow suit. I further limit myself, however, to cases where the choice of $\alpha$ over $\beta$ has the potential to change the meaning of the text.

My strongest disagreements with Bloch concern cases where the archetypal reading is clear and yet Bloch rejects it. Generally speaking, Bloch has a culpable tendency to choose readings that favor his own understanding of Aristotle's account of memory, even where this is unsupported by the manuscripts. In addition, he is too ready, in my view, to excise portions of the text as corrupt or incoherent. I dare say that he is even at times reckless with the text, potentially obscuring Aristotle's meaning. The most egregious example of this is his decision to excise μόνον at 453a6. I address this, and other matters, in the footnotes.

\(^{69}\) Bloch, p. 12.
\(^{70}\) Ibid., p. 16.
W.D. Ross' text is inferior to Bloch's in that he collates only one manuscript himself, X, and otherwise relies on the collations Bekker and Förster, whose collations rely on only seven manuscripts. Ross also has the unfortunate tendency mentioned above of relying heavily on the E manuscript, often without sufficient justification. I do not address Ross' text in the footnotes, except in the specific cases where his differences from Bloch potentially alter Aristotle's meaning.

The translation that accompanies the text is my own.

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Concerning memory and remembering we must say what it is and on account of what cause it comes to be and with which of the parts of the soul this affection and recollecting occur. For those good at remembering and those good at recollecting are not the same, but for the most part slow people are better at remembering while those who are quick and good learners are better at recollecting.

First, then, we must consider what kinds of things are the objects of memory, for this is often a source of confusion. For it is not possible to remember the future, but the future is an object opinion and expectation (and there might even be some science of expectation, as some say divination is), nor is there memory of the present, but this is the object of sense perception; for with sense perception we grasp neither the future nor the past, but only the present. Memory is of what is in the past. No one would say that he remembers what is in the present when it is present, for example this white thing while he sees it, nor even the object of thought while he attends to it theoretically and has it in mind, but in the first case he says only that he perceives it and in the second case that he understands it. But whenever he has knowledge and perception without the activities [just mentioned], then he remembers, in the first case that he learned or attended theoretically, and in the second case that he heard or saw or something of this sort. For always, whenever one is active on the basis of remembering, in this way he says in his soul that he previously heard or perceived or had this in mind.

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72 For τὰ μνημονευτά, the article is omitted in the β tradition. I follow Bloch in adopting the reading of the α tradition.
73 The β manuscripts read νοῶν, but I follow Bloch in adopting the α reading of ἐννοῶν. As Bloch explains, “even some of the α manuscripts have been corrupted into νοῶν” (Bloch, 229).
74 I follow Bloch (who follows Ross and Freudenthal) in excising this text. It seems best explained as a gloss that found its way into the text (a gloss on “τὸ μὲν ὅτι ἔμαθεν ἢ ἐθεώρησεν”). See Bloch, 230.
Thus memory is neither sense perception nor supposition, but a having or undergoing of one of these, whenever time has passed. As we have said, there is no memory of the now in the now. For sense perception is of the present, expectation is of the future, and memory is of the past. Thus every memory happens with time. As a result, only the animals that sense time remember, and they do so by means of that with which they perceive time.

Now, as we said concerning phantasia in the earlier discussion on the soul, thinking is not possible without a phantasmatos—for the same affection takes place in thinking as in drawing diagrams: for there, although we make no use of the fact that a determinate quantity belongs to the triangle, we nevertheless draw one with a determinate quantity. And similarly with the one who thinks: even if he does not think about something with a quantity, he sets something with a quantity before his eyes, but he does not think of it as having a quantity. And if its nature is such as to be a quantity, but indeterminate, he assumes a determinate quantity, but thinks of it as a quantity only. The reason why it is not possible to think anything without continuity, nor without time things that are not in time, is for another discussion; but it must be the case that we grasp magnitude and change with that with which we also grasp time, and the phantasma is an affection belonging to the common sense, so that clearly the grasp of these things is by way of the primary perceptual capacity; but memory, even memory of the objects of thought, is not without a phantasmatos, so that memory belongs incidentally to thought and in itself to the primary perceptual capacity.

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75 Note that the α tradition has the accusative χρόνον, which would give us “after time” rather than “with time.”
76 Ross follows Freudenthal in transposing this phrase to line 13 (which then reads: “… οὐκ ἁνὲυ φαντάσματος ἐστιν, καὶ τὸ φάντασμα τῆς κοινῆς ἀισθήσεως πάθος ἑστιν, ὡστε …”) (Ross, 237-38). I think this transposition is unnecessary.
77 I follow Bloch in adopting the reading of the Ce, M, and i manuscripts (“τοῦ νοῦ μὲν”). The archetypal reading is “τοῦ νοουμένου,” which Bloch rejects as lacking correspondence with the parallel phrase “τοῦ πρώτου αἰσθητικοῦ” (Bloch, 230). Ross has the same reading as Bloch but offers no explanation. Note, however, that on Aristotle’s view, the archetypal reading says something correct. At 450a23-25, Aristotle claims that objects of thought are the incidental objects of memory (“‘καὶ ἑστι μνημονευτά καθ’ αὐτά μὲν ὧν ἑστι φαντασία, κατά συμβεβηκός δὲ ὧσα μὴ ἁνὲυ φαντασίας”—I take “ὁσα μὴ ἁνὲυ φαντασίας” to refer to objects of thought). Since Aristotle gives no special reasoning for this claim, he must think it follows from the prior conclusion that memory belongs incidentally to thought.
Hence it is also possessed by some of the other animals, and not only by humans and those with opinion or practical reason. If it belonged to one of the parts responsible for thought, it would not be possessed by many of the other animals (and perhaps by none of the other mortal ones), since even now it is not possessed by all animals because they do not all have perception of time. For as we said earlier, when someone actively remembers that she saw or heard or learned this, she always perceives in addition that it was earlier. And the earlier and the later are in time.

To which of the parts of the soul memory belongs is clear, it is the part of the soul to which phantasía also belongs. And the objects of memory are in themselves the things of which there is phantasía, and incidentally as many things as are not without phantasía.

Someone might raise the aporia how in the world one remembers that which is not present, even though the affection is present but the object is absent. For it is clear that we must deem the sort of thing that comes about through sense perception in the soul and in the part of the body that has it—which sort of thing is a picture—to be the affection the having of which we say is memory. For the movement in coming about impresses something like an imprint of the sense impression, just as those who make a mark with their rings.

And so memory in fact does not come to be for those who are in much movement because of a condition or because of age—just as if the movement and seal were falling into flowing water. And the imprint does not arise in others on account of being worn away, just as the old walls of buildings, and on account of the hardness of that which receives the affection. Wherefore both the very young and the very old have poor memories: the former are flowing on...
account of their growth, the latter on account of their decay. And likewise, neither the excessively quick nor the excessively slow appear to be good at remembering, for the former are softer than is necessary and the others are harder. Thus, for some people the phantasma does not remain in the soul, while for others it does not affect them.

But if in fact this sort of thing is what happens concerning memory, does one remember this affection or the object from which it came to be? For, if the former, we would remember none of the things that are absent, but if the latter, how is it that in perceiving this affection we remember what we are not perceiving, namely the absent object? If it is a likeness in us—as it were, an imprint or picture—why would perception of this itself be a memory of something else but not of this itself? For the one who exercises his memory views this affection and perceives this. How, then, will he remember that which is not present? For it would be possible both to see and to hear that which is not present. Or is there a way in which this is possible and in fact happens?

For just as the picture painted in a board is both a picture and an image, such that this one and the same thing is both, though having being for both is not the same, and it is possible to view it both as a picture and as an image, so also one must suppose that the phantasma in us is both itself something in itself and is of something else. Thus in so far as it is in itself, it is a thing viewed or a phantasma, but in so far as it is of something else, it is like an image and

80 “καὶ οἱ λίαν ταχεῖς καὶ οἱ λίαν βραδεῖς” is the reading of the α tradition. The β tradition has only “καὶ οἱ λίαν ταχεῖς καὶ βραδεῖς.” I follow Bloch in adopting the α reading, but for different reasons. Bloch adopts it for purely grammatical reasons, whereas I think we have strong philosophical reasons to prefer the α reading. I discuss this issue in chapter 3. Simply put, the α reading clearly distinguishes the types of people discussed here from those discussed at the opening of the De Memoria (449b7-8).

81 Bloch and Ross excise αὐτοῦ, though it is found in all of the manuscripts, as they suppose it to a scribal insertion (Ross, 238; Bloch 232). I see no reason to excise αὐτοῦ, especially as I think it is important to Aristotle’s meaning. Consider the example of someone who picks up a childhood toy and says, “I remember this!” The referent of perception in such a case appears to be the same as the referent of memory. Aristotle wonders, then, why this is not also the case for someone presented with a phantasma of past perception. Indeed, he has just said that the same phantasma comes to be present in us again when we remember. He must explain, then, why it is that despite perceiving this past phantasma itself, we do not remember the phantasma itself (we do not say, “I remember this phantasma!”) but instead remember something else.
(450b26) μὲν οὖν καθ᾽ αὐτό, θεώρημα ἢ φάντασμα ἔστιν, ἢ δ᾽ ἄλλου,
(27) οἷον εἰκών καὶ μνημόνευμα. ὡς τε καὶ ὅταν ἑνεργῇ ἡ κίνησις
(28) αὐτοῦ, ἂν μὲν ή καθ′ αὐτό ἐστι ταύτη αἰσθάνηται ἡ ψυχή
(29) αὐτοῦ, οἷον νόημα τι ή φάντασμα φαίνεται ἐπελεύθερον ἡ ἄλλος
(30) ἄλλου καὶ ὡσπερ ἐν τῇ γραφῇ ὡς εἰκόνα τοιούτω, καὶ μὴ
(31) ἐιρωνεύως τὸν Κορίσκον, ὡς Κορίσκου, ἐνταῦθα τὸ ἄλλο τὸ
(32) πάθος τῆς θεωρίας ταύτης καὶ ὅταν ὃς ἦν γεγραμμένον

(451a1) θεωρῇ, ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ τὸ μὲν γίγνεται ὡσπερ πόρμα μόνον,
(2) τὸ δ᾽ ὡς ἐκεῖ ὅτι εἰκών, μνημόνευμα. καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐνίοτ᾽
(3) οὐκ ἴσμεν, ἐγγυνημένους ἤμιν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ τοιούτων κινήσεων
(4) ἅπα τι αἰσθάνεται πρότερον εἰ ἐν καθ᾽ αὑτῶν ἡ μνήμη μὲν ἔστιν ἢ
(5) νεώτερον, καὶ εἰ ἔστιν μνήμη ἢ ὡς διστάζομεν ἐνίοτε;83 ὅτε δὲ συμβαίνει
(6) ἐννοθεῖ καὶ ἀναμνησθῆναι ἢ ἔστιν Ἀντιφέρου καὶ ἄλλοις ἐξισταμένοις
(7) συμβαίνει, ὡστε καὶ ὅταν ἑωρακὼς τὸν Κορίσκον ὡς Κορίσκου, ἐνταῦθα τε ἄλλο τὸ
(8) πάθος τῆς θεωρίας ταύτης καὶ ὅταν ὡς ζῷο γεγραμμένον
(9) ἔν τε τῇ ψυχῇ τὸ μὲν γίγνεται ὥσπερ νόημα μόνον,
(10) τὸ δ᾽ ὡς ἐκεῖ ὅτι εἰκών, μνημόνευμα. καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐνίοτ᾽
(11) οὐκ ἴσμεν, ἐγγυνημένους ἤμιν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ τοιούτων κινήσεων
(12) ἅπα τι αἰσθάνεται πρότερον εἰ ἐν καθ᾽ αὑτῶν ἡ μνήμη μὲν ἔστιν ἢ
(13) νεώτερον, καὶ εἰ ἔστιν μνήμη ἢ ὡς διστάζομεν ἐνίοτε;83 ὅτε δὲ συμβαίνει
(14) ἐννοθεῖ καὶ ἀναμνησθῆναι ἢ ἔστιν Ἀντιφέρου καὶ ἄλλοις ἐξισταμένοις
(15) συμβαίνει, ὡστε καὶ ὅταν ἑωρακὼς τὸν Κορίσκον ὡς Κορίσκου, ἐνταῦθα τε ἄλλο τὸ
(16) πάθος τῆς θεωρίας ταύτης καὶ ὅταν ὡς ζῷο γεγραμμένον
(17) ἔν τε τῇ ψυχῇ τὸ μὲν γίγνεται ὥσπερ νόημα μόνον,
(18) τὸ δ᾽ ὡς ἐκεῖ ὅτι εἰκών, μνημόνευμα. καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐνίοτ᾽
(19) οὐκ ἴσμεν, ἐγγυνημένους ἤμιν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ τοιούτων κινήσεων
(20) ἅπα τι αἰσθάνεται πρότερον εἰ ἐν καθ᾽ αὑτῶν ἡ μνήμη μὲν ἔστιν ἢ
(21) νεώτερον, καὶ εἰ ἔστιν μνήμη ἢ ὡς διστάζομεν ἐνίοτε;83 ὅτε δὲ συμβαίνει
(22) ἐννοθεῖ καὶ ἀναμνησθῆναι ἢ ἔστιν Ἀντιφέρου καὶ ἄλλοις ἐξισταμένοις
(23) συμβαίνει, ὡστε καὶ ὅταν ἑωρακὼς τὸν Κορίσκον ὡς Κορίσκου, ἐνταῦθα τε ἄλλο τὸ
(24) πάθος τῆς θεωρίας ταύτης καὶ ὅταν ὡς ζῷο γεγραμμένον
(25) ἔν τε τῇ ψυχῇ τὸ μὲν γίγνεται ὥσπερ νόημα μόνον,
(26) τὸ δ᾽ ὡς ἐκεῖ ὅτι εἰκών, μνημόνευμα. καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐνίοτ᾽
(27) οὐκ ἴσμεν, ἐγγυνημένους ἤμιν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ τοιούτων κινήσεων
(28) ἅπα τι αἰσθάνεται πρότερον εἰ ἐν καθ᾽ αὑτῶν ἡ μνήμη μὲν ἔστιν ἢ
(29) νεώτερον, καὶ εἰ ἔστιν μνήμη ἢ ὡς διστάζομεν ἐνίοτε;83 ὅτε δὲ συμβαίνει
(30) ἐννοθεῖ καὶ ἀναμνησθὴν ἢ ἔστιν Ἀντιφέρου καὶ ἄλλοις ἐξισταμένοις
(31) συμβαίνει, ὡστε καὶ ὅταν ἑωρακὼς τὸν Κορίσκον ὡς Κορίσκου, ἐνταῦθα τε ἄλλο τὸ
(32) πάθος τῆς θεωρίας ταύτης καὶ ὅταν ὡς ζῷο γεγραμμένον

82 Bloch and Ross, following Freudenthal, excise φάντασμα at 450b25 (Ross, 238; Bloch, 232). The word is found in all of the manuscripts. Whether or not we retain this word makes no difference, I think, to Aristotle’s meaning; but deleting it does make Aristotle’s meaning more readily accessible. With some hesitation, then, I follow suit.

83 The α tradition omits ἐνιότε in line 5. As Bloch reasons, however, the διστάζομεν-clause is parallel to the ἴσμεν-clause, and so the ἐνιότε in line 5 is not redundant (Bloch, 233).
To begin with, we must take as our foundation only so much as is true in the attempted arguments. For recollection is neither a recovery nor taking hold of a memory. For when we first learn or experience something, we neither recover any memory (for there was none before) nor do we take hold of one from the outset. For whenever the having or undergoing comes to be, there is a memory, so that it does not come to be alongside the affection coming to be. Furthermore, at the indivisible and ultimate moment when the first learning or experience occurs, the affection and the knowledge are already present in the one who experiences (if we should call the having or undergoing knowledge—but nothing prevents us from incidentally also remembering some of the things we know), whereas remembering itself is not present until time has passed. For we remember now what we learned or experienced earlier, we do not remember now what we now experience.

Moreover, it is clear that one can remember even if not having now recollected, if one remembers from the outset of having perceived or experienced. But when one recovers that which he had earlier—the knowledge or perception or whatever it is the having of which we were saying is a memory—there is in this way and at this time recollecting of some one of the things mentioned, whereas remembering and a

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84 Note that ὅσα can have a limiting connotation, hence my translation: “only so much as is true …” I take Aristotle to be referring to the prior attempts of philosophers to give an account of recollection. In the Philebus, Plato describes recollection as the recovery of a memory: “And furthermore, whenever, having lost a memory of either perception or knowledge, the soul calls up this memory again by itself, we call all these events recollections [Καὶ μὴν καὶ ὅταν ἀπολέσασα μνήμην εἴτ’ αἰσθήσεως εἴτ’ αὖ μαθήματος αὖθις ταύτην ἀναπολήσῃ πάλιν αὐτὴ ἐν ἑαυτῇ, καὶ ταῦτα σύμπαντα ἀναμνήσεις [καὶ μνήμας] που λέγομεν]” (Plato, Philebus, 34b10-c2).

85 Here Bloch has δ’ ἐγγένηται, as opposed to my γὰρ ἐγγένηται. The only manuscript that reads δ’ is N. Bloch argues that corruptions between the δὲ and γὰρ are common, and so if there is a superior reading, that should be taken over the archetypal reading. Bloch thinks that Aristotle wants the ὅταν clause at 451a23-24 to parallel the ὅταν clause beginning at 21-22, rather than the γὰρ clause at 22-23, in which case δ’ is the superior reading (Bloch, 234). I don’t see why the choice of γὰρ precludes the structure Bloch favors or makes it a strained reading, in which case I stay with the archetypal reading.

86 Bloch has a grave accent on the ultima of ποτε, but given the rules for enclitics I follow Ross in omitting the accent.
memory are together and follow. But these things are surely not recollecting without qualification—if things which, having arisen before, occur again—but in a way they are and in a way they are not. For it is possible for the same person to learn or discover the same thing twice. Therefore, recollecting must differ from these cases and must take place from a fuller starting point than that from which we learn.

Recollections take place because movement, by nature, comes to be one after another—if this occurs by necessity, then it is clear that whenever we are moved by the one, we will be moved by the other; if not by necessity but by habit, then for the most part we will be moved by the other. But it happens that we are more habituated to some movements when moved only once than we are to others when moved many times. This explains why we remember some things we’ve seen only once more than others we’ve seen many times.

87 Ross’ text reads: “τὸ δὲ μνημονεύειν συμβαίνει καὶ μνήμην ἀκολουθεῖν.” This reading as a whole seems only to have the support of m, and as Bloch claims, “nothing should be based on (the support of) this manuscript alone” (Bloch, 8). I take the archetypal reading: “τὸ δὲ μνημονεύειν συμβαίνει καὶ μνήμη ἀκολουθεῖ.” Bloch has this text in obeli, indicating that he suspects it to be corrupt. The reasons he gives for this suspicion are that (1) on Aristotle’s account of memory, remembering does not necessarily follow upon recollection, in which case the suspected text makes a claim that is “not strictly speaking true;” and (2) “μνήμη ἀκολουθεῖ” seems no more than a gloss on “τὸ δὲ μνημονεύειν συμβαίνει” (Bloch, 234-35). I disagree with Bloch on both counts. (1) The text, strictly speaking, does not claim that remembering necessarily follows upon recollection. Nor should we construe it that way given the context—Aristotle, on my interpretation, has been arguing for the distinctness of recollection and remembering, despite the fact that remembering often follows upon recollecting. (2) If we understand “μνήμη” as denoting “a memory” rather than “the power of memory,” then the passage expresses the other central point Aristotle has made, which is that “a memory” is not the proper object of recollection. Rather, it only comes to be with the activity of remembering. It would be a disservice, I think, to place this text in obeli.

88 According to Bloch (235) “ἐπειδὴ πέφυκεν ἡ κίνησις ἥδε γενέσθαι μετὰ τήνδε.” Bloch states in his apparatus that the E and Y manuscripts read only as follows: “γενέσθαι μετὰ τήνδε.” My inspection of E and Y, however, shows that both read “ἡδε γενέσθαι μετὰ τήνδε.” I agree with the combined α and β reading here; I only want to point out a misreporting of E and Y.

89 Bloch notes a problem with the manuscript reading at 451b14-16. The manuscripts contrast people (ἐνίους/ ἑτέρους) at lines 14-15 “ἐνίους ἅπαξ ἐθισθῆναι μᾶλλον ἢ ἑτέρους πολλάκις κινουμένους [some people are more habituated when moved only once than other people are when moved many times], whereas they contrast things (ἐνία/ἑτέρα) at lines 15-16. Lines 14-15 connect with and are meant to explain (διὸ) the lines 15-16. But it’s not immediately obvious how the differences between people discussed at 451b14-15 (some people are quickly habituated to all things) could explain the similarities in people discussed in 451b15-16 (all people remember some things quickly) (“διὸ ἐνία ἅπαξ ἰδόντες μᾶλλον
Thus whenever we recollect, we set in motion one of the prior movements, until we are moved by the one after which this one [the one we seek] is customary. And so we search for the next thing, beginning in thought from something present or some other thing, such as something following, something opposite, or something closely connected. Recollection happens on account of this. For the movements of these things are either the same as the one sought, they are simultaneous with it, or they contain a part of it, such that the remainder by which one is moved after this part is small.

Thus, in this way they search, and even if they are not searching, in this way they recollect [are caused to recollect], whenever this movement comes to be after another movement; but for the most part this other movement occurred because yet other movements of the sort we mentioned occurred. And it is not at all necessary to investigate how we remember distant things, rather, we need only investigate how we remember the nearby things, for it is clear that the manner is somehow the same, but one says the next thing, not having searched or even recollected. For the movements follow one another by habit, this after this, and thus when one wishes to recollect, one will do the following: one will seek to get hold of a starting point...
of movement after which this movement will come to be. And so recollections come about best and most quickly from a starting point; for as the objects are related to one another by way of the next thing, so are the movements. And things that have a certain order, just as mathematical objects, are easily remembered, while other things are remembered poorly and with difficulty.

And in this way recollecting differs from re-learning, since one is able somehow to be moved through oneself to the point after the starting point. But whenever one is not able to be so moved, but is moved through another, one no longer remembers. But often one cannot recollect immediately but one is able to search and one discovers [what is sought]. This happens by way of setting many things into motion until one sets in motion the sort of movement upon which the thing in question will follow. For, remembering is this capacity within to set in motion; to be moved from oneself and from the movements that one has, as has been said.

But one must take hold of a starting point. And so people are sometimes reputed to recollect from places. The reason is that they proceed quickly from one thing to another, for example from the milky way to white, and from white to air, and from this to moist, from which autumn is remembered, if one was in search of this season.

It seems in general and for all things that the middle is a starting point. For if one does not do so earlier, one will remember when one proceeds to this, or one does remember any more from any point; for example, if someone should think about things represented by ABCDEFGH—if indeed they did not remember GH; for from there [i.e. from the mid-point] it is possible to be moved to both directions, that is to D and to E. But if one does not search for one of these (i.e., for D or E), one will remember at C, if one searches for G or H. But if one does not remember at C, one will remember at D, and so it is always. But from the same thing one sometimes remembers and other times does not. The reason is that it is possible to be moved from the same starting point to more than one thing, for example from C to F or D.
Recollecting, then, happens in this way. But most importantly, one must grasp the time, either by means of a measure or indeterminately. But let there be something by means of which one discerns the longer and the shorter time; it is reasonable that this discernment takes place just as it does with magnitudes. For, one thinks the large things and far off things not by means of thought stretching out to there, just as some say is the case with sight (for even if the objects do not exist, one will think them similarly), but by means of the proportionate movements. For there are similar shapes and movements in thought. In what way, then, will it differ, when one thinks the larger things, that one thinks these things or the smaller things? For all the internal things are smaller, and the internal things and the external things are proportionate.
But surely it is possible that just as one takes another thing in oneself proportionate to the things seen, so also one does this proportionate to the intervals. Just as if, then, one is moved by AB, BE, one produces CD, for AC and CD are proportionate. Why then does one make CD rather than FG? Surely as AC is to AB, so is H to I. Thus one is moved simultaneously with respect to these movements. But if he should wish to think about FG, then he similarly thinks about BE, but instead of HI he thinks about JK, for these are as FA to BA.

Whenever, then, the movement of the thing and the movement of the time occur simultaneously, at that time one is actively remembering. But if he thinks that he does this despite not doing this, he thinks that he remembers; for nothing prevents someone being deceived and thinking that he remembers when he does not in fact remember; but it is not possible for the one who is actively remembering not to think so but for remembering to escape his notice; for this was remembering itself. But if the movement of the thing comes about separately from the movement of the time, or the latter separately from the former, he is not remembering.

But the movement of the time is two-fold; for sometimes one does not remember it by means of a measure, for example that he did so and so the day before yesterday, but other times he also remembers it by means of a measure; but he remembers even if not by means of a measure; and people usually say that they remember, although they do not know at what time, whenever they do not grasp this quantity by means of a measure.

Now, it has been said already in the earlier discussion that the same people are not good at remembering and good at recollecting. Now, recollecting differs from remembering not on the basis of time alone, but also because many of the other

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94 Bloch has from ὥσπερ in line 17 to BA in line 22 in obeli, stating that all interpretations of this passage are highly conjectural such that no satisfactory emendation is currently available. The archetypal reading is provided (Bloch, 240).

95 Here I accept Bloch’s emendation. The alternative among editors has been to rely on the reading of CcMi, which Bloch suspects is itself an attempted emendation (Bloch, 240-241).

96 Bloch makes the unhappy move of excising μόνον from the text, essentially on the grounds that it does not fit with his understanding of Aristotle’s account of memory. Bloch says that “[t]here is not really a time difference between memory and recollection as regards their area, that is, the past” (Bloch, 241). This, on my view, demonstrates just how woefully Bloch has misunderstood Aristotle’s account of recollection. At the outset of chapter 2, Aristotle specifically distinguishes the proper objects of memory and recollection on the basis of time (451a29-31), and later in
animals also have a share of remembering, whereas we may say that none of the known animals have a share of recollecting except man. The reason is that recollecting is like a deduction of some sort. For the one who is recollecting figures out whatever she earlier saw or heard or otherwise experienced, and this is like some sort of inquiry. And this occurs by nature only for those to whom the capacity for practical rationality also belongs. For deliberating is also some sort of deduction.

And a sign that the affection is something corporeal and that recollecting is a search for a phantasmatos in this sort of thing is that some people are annoyed when they are unable to recollect despite actually directing their mind to it, and when they are no longer trying to do so, they recollect nonetheless; and melancholics especially, for phantasmata move them most of all. The reason why recollecting is not up to them is that just as for those throwing a ball, stopping it is no longer up to them, so too someone recollecting and hunting moves something corporeal in which the affection is located. But those who happen to have moisture around their perceptive region are most annoyed. For once this moisture is moved it is not easily stopped, and the movement holds its course until the thing sought comes to mind. For this reason, both angers and fears, whenever they move something, do not stop despite the counter-movements against them, but initiate counter movements to the same point. And the affection is similar to names and songs and speeches, when one of these has come to be very much on our lips. Despite our having stopped and not wishing to continue, the singing or speaking comes upon us again.

chapter 2 Aristotle says that remembering follows upon recollection only if the movement of the thing and the time occur together (452b23-25). Arguably, this means that successful remembering requires perception of time, whereas successful recollection does not. All of the manuscripts contain μόνον. Given that there are two instances in chapter 2 where Aristotle differentiates memory from recollection on the basis of time, deleting μόνον potentially flips the entire argument of chapter 2 on its head, since it leaves us with the opposite claim, that recollecting does not differ from remembering on the basis of time.

97 I follow Bloch in taking the β reading of “ἐπέλθῃ.” The α tradition reads “ἐπανέλθῃ.” I think the former makes better sense of Aristotle’s meaning, and as Bloch mentions, the latter could be a corruption due to the proximity of άν (Bloch, 242).
Also, those who are greater in their upper bodies and those who are dwarfish are worse at remembering than their opposites because they have a heavy weight on their faculty of sense perception, such that the movements neither remain from the outset but are dispersed, nor do they take a straight course easily in recollecting. But the very young and excessively old are poor at remembering on account of their movement (the latter being in decay, the former in much growth). Moreover, children are, as it were, dwarfish, at least until they are further along in age.

We have spoken then concerning memory and remembering, what their nature is and with which of the parts of the soul animals remember, and also concerning recollecting, what it is, how it comes to be, and on account of what cause it arises.

98 Bloch inserts “οἱ” here after καὶ. One manuscript supports this, Zᵃ (Bloch, 242). I don’t see sufficient grounds to interfere with the text. Bloch says this insertion is “almost exactly parallel” to 450b8, which is “accepted by all modern editors,” but it is not at all the same, since the text there is supported by the E, Y, b and V manuscripts (which comprise the α tradition, except Cᵉ, M, and i).
Bibliography


