

Recognition and Identity: Memory as Part of the Logical Structure of the World

Resumo

O objetivo deste artigo é explorar três papéis atribuídos por Wittgenstein à memória, no período intermediário. Em uma perspectiva ontológica, a memória será a fonte do tempo e uma parte da estrutura lógica do mundo fenomênico. Em uma perspectiva epistemológica, a memória será a fonte do conhecimento e o fazedor-de-verdade das proposições sobre o passado. Em uma perspectiva semântica, ela será a fonte da identidade. Tentarei mostrar como essas três perspectivas estão conectadas e como os papéis epistemológico e semântico podem ser retraçados ao papel ontológico. Também pretendo contrastar o sentido fenomenológico de memória com o fisicalista (no qual a memória é uma representação bipolar de um evento físico passado). Para compreender essa diferença, é crucial notar como o tempo fenomenológico e o tempo físico atribuem diferentes estatutos ontológicos ao passado, presente e ao futuro. É a ainda existência do evento passado no modo de representação fisicalista do tempo que permite a separação entre a memória de um evento físico e o seu fazedor-de-verdade. Concluirei este artigo mostrando brevemente a importância dos tópicos aqui discutidos para o entendimento de algumas das ideias tardias de Wittgenstein.

Palavras-chave: Período intermediário . tempo . fenomenologia . argumento da linguagem privada.

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explore three roles ascribed by Wittgenstein to memory in the middle period. Ontologically speaking, memory is regarded as the source of time and as part of the logical structure of the phenomenal world; epistemologically speaking, as the source of our knowledge, that is, as the truth-maker of our phenomenological propositions about the past; and semantically speaking, as the

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source of identity. I try to show how these three perspectives are interwoven, tracing the epistemological and semantic roles of memory back to its ontological role. I also contrast the phenomenological concept of memory with the physical one (on which memory is a bipolar representation of a past physical event). To understand this contrast, it is crucial to notice that phenomenological time and physical time grant different ontological statuses to present, past, and future. It is the continued existence of the past event in the physicalistic mode of representation of time that makes room for the distinction between the memory of a physical event and its truth-maker. I conclude this paper by showing briefly the importance of the topics discussed for gaining a proper understanding of some of Wittgenstein's later ideas.

Keywords: Middle period . time . phenomenology . private language argument

Introduction

My aim in this paper is to explore three roles ascribed by Wittgenstein to memory as part of the primary system (the phenomenological world), memory being regarded within this system as the *source* (*Quelle*) of the concept of time. We can identify roughly speaking three roles played by memory within the primary system: i) ontological ii) epistemological and iii) semantical. Ontologically speaking, memory is the *source of time* and is regarded as "(...) a particular part of the logical structure of our world".¹ Epistemologically speaking, it is taken to be "(...) the source of our knowledge, the verification of our propositions".² Semantically speaking, it is the *source of identity*.³ In the latter case, the key concept is that of *recognition* (to the extent that it can be treated as an aspect of memory). These roles should not be confused with the physical concept of memory, that is with memory, thought of as a bipolar representation of the past.

My aim is not to consider those distinctions historically (showing when Wittgenstein adopted them and when he gave them up), but to clarify the meaning of the concepts they involve and to explore some of their consequences.

The importance of those concepts should not be underestimated. The concept of *recognition* as the *source of identity* is exactly what Wittgenstein rejects in some of the passages about the impossibility of a private language

1 BT §102, p. 351.

2 MS 108, p. 33 / PR, §49. ("(...) Quelle unserer Erkenntnis, als Verifikation unserer Sätze").

3 Cf. PR, §19.

in the *Philosophical Investigations* (PI). In the middle period, the impossibility of being mistaken when one regards a phenomenon as the same as before is precisely what determines the identity of the phenomenon.

Our starting point is the ontological role ascribed by Wittgenstein to primary memory as the source of time. I then move on to the ontological exclusivity of the present in the phenomenological/primary world explained by the collapse between memory and the past. It is this collapse which is at play in the idea of memory as the *source of knowledge*. And once it is realized that the physical/secondary temporal order is just a synchronic representation of the events in time (in such a way that the future is treated as a pre-formed and the past as still existent, as well as the present), one is in a position to see that the memory of physical events is a bipolar representation of the past.⁴

In the last part of the paper I point out that those ideas regarding the phenomenological concept of memory as the *source* can be used to grasp Wittgenstein's concept of *recognition* as the *source of identity*. The same collapse between memory and the past, which is at play in the idea of *memory* as the *source of knowledge* is present in the idea of *recognition* as the *source of identity*.

1. The Broader Senses of Memory and the Temporal Order of the Phenomenological World

One important starting point to understand Wittgenstein's middle period is his equating the phenomena with the reality in a much more radical way than the so-called "phenomenalism". For Wittgenstein, the phenomenon does not stand halfway between the subject's mind and the thing in itself. It is the pure phenomenon resulting from the radicalization of solipsism.

The origin of this concept can be traced back to the way idealism coincides with pure realism in the *Tractatus*:

The self of solipsism shrinks to a point without extension, and there remains the reality co-ordinated with it.⁵

4 To make the distinction between the different statuses of memory sharper I will use a terminology that is not Wittgenstein's. I will call memory in the phenomenological sense "primary memory" – using William James' (1918, p. 643) phrase without committing myself to James's use – and memory in the physicalistic sense "secondary memory". The reason for this distinction will be conspicuous later on.

5 TLP, 5.64.

The idealistic feature of this concept lies in the equation of the world with *my* world. Nevertheless, if we radicalize this solipsist standpoint, the reality that appears to *me* becomes the sole reality and the self turns into a point without extension outside the limits of the world (to which the world as idea appears as full reality). In the same manner, in the middle period (taking the visual field as a paradigmatic example), the world is conceived as a pure *phenomenon* without a subject, since “[t]here isn’t an eye belonging to me and eyes belonging to others in visual space” – there is only the data immediately given, without a subject as its perceiver.⁶ The main novelty in this parallel between the *Tractatus* and ideas from the middle period is that Wittgenstein acknowledges in early 1929 that time is *not* an “appendix” (“*Anhängsel*”) of the phenomenological world, but an essential aspect of reality; “(...) for a visual image *can only exist in time*”⁷ – and the same could be said of any phenomenon. It is the pure phenomenon that *can only exist in time* that Wittgenstein aims to describe in early 1929, constructing a completely analyzed language (called in 1929-1930 “phenomenological language”) that would show, through its perspicuous symbolism, the logical multiplicity of the phenomenological reality.⁸

The important point for the purpose of this paper is that tractarian solipsism, with the introduction of temporality as an essential aspect of it, turns in 1929-1930 into a solipsism of the *present moment*:

The proposition that only the present experience has reality appears to contain the last consequence of solipsism. And in a sense that is so; only what it is able to say amounts to just as little as can be said by solipsism.--For what belongs to the essence of the world simply cannot be said.⁹

The solipsism of the present moment stems from the ontological reduction of what exists to what is temporally *immediately given*. This ontological exclusivity of the present (that belongs to the essence of the world) is so radical that, according to Wittgenstein, it even forbids us to treat the phenomena as

6 Cf. PR, §73. The determination of the subject’s position would only be possible, for example, through a *hypothetical* coordination of visual space with tactile space.

7 MS 106, p. 55 / PR, §88. (The italics are the author’s).

8 Cf. SRLF.

9 MS 108, p. 2 / PR, §54.

“present” – since it “(...) would illegitimately be called present, since ‘present’ would not be used here to distinguish it from past and future”.¹⁰

The first important role assigned by Wittgenstein to memory can be found in his treatment of it as a necessary condition of time, freeing us from a paradoxical conclusion that the ontological exclusivity of the present seemingly forces on us. Since the present phenomenological experience cannot even be called “present”, we are supposedly forced to accept that the phenomenological world is *timeless* (“*Zeitlos*”).¹¹ But if this phenomenological world is timeless: “[i]n which experience lays the foundation of the concept of time, the assumption of a time?”¹² In other words: if reality is the phenomenon and all physicalistic languages are constructions from the possibilities determined by the phenomenon, and the phenomenon is *timeless*, where does the concept of time come from?

Wittgenstein’s answer to this question (construed as the rejection of the timelessness of the phenomenon) can be taken as the starting point of an explanation of his concept of memory as the *source of time*. The experience that lays the foundation of the concept of time

(...) is a continuous perception from which the present is the final point and which can also be called in a broader sense memory.¹³

Without this broader sense of memory, the phenomenological reality would shrink to a point-like present (“*punktartige Gegenwart*”), temporally detached from other moments in time, where no idea of a *temporal flux* or *temporal order* would be conceivable.¹⁴ This concept of memory as a continuous perception is illustrated by Wittgenstein in the way he addresses the temporality of immediate experience using William James’s expression “specious

10 MS 108, p. 4 / PR, §54.

11 Cf. MS 105, p. 96 / PR, §48.

12 Cf. MS 105, p. 98. (“Welches Erlebnis liegt dem Zeitbegriff, der Annahme einer Zeit, zu Grunde?”).

13 Cf. MS 105, p. 98: “(...) eine kontinuierliche Wahrnehmung deren einer Endpunkt die Gegenwart ist und die man in einem weiteren Sinne auch Erinnerung nennen kann”.

14 Cf. MS 105, p. 98.

present”.¹⁵ The crucial point of confluence between memory and time is that this broader sense of memory will be the experience that lays the foundation of the concept of time since it is from the continuity of perception that the *order of before* and *after* originates. And it is this order of our memories that Wittgenstein calls “*primary time*” (the time of the phenomenological world):

The data of our memory are ordered; we call this order memory-time, as opposed to physical time, the order of events in the physical world.¹⁶

In the conversations with the Vienna Circle Wittgenstein expresses this idea in even stronger terms:

My memories are ordered. *Time is the way memories are ordered*. Thus time is given in immediate connection with memories. Time is, as it were, the form in which I have memories.¹⁷

Unfortunately, we will not find in Wittgenstein a careful treatment of the different phenomenological categories imbricated in his idea that “*time is the way memories are ordered*”. But we can at least pinpoint two different roles played by memory in this case. The continuity of perception (that is, the *broader sense of memory*) is a necessary condition for the ordering, since I can only say that a phenomenon was before or after another phenomenon if I know that the two phenomena are *contiguous*. So the continuity of perception (the broader sense of memory) can be taken as the condition of possibility of the order of memory and this order is what Wittgenstein calls “time” (and that

15 Cf. MS 105, p. 114 / PR, §69, MS 113, p. 123 / BT, §102, p. 351. However, there is one important point of departure between Wittgenstein’s and James’s use of specious present. For Wittgenstein the idea that the “present” of immediate experience would be measurable as it is in James (cf. 1918, p. 613) stems from a confusion between things that are in time and time as the logical form of motion (cf. PR, §52). According to Wittgenstein, the specious present contains time, but is not in time – in other words: “Its form is time, but it has no place in time” (PR, §69). Therefore, the specious present cannot be a (measurable) “*temporal space*” since it is not something extended in time (cf. BT, §105, p. 363, MS 113, p. 123 / BT, §102, p. 351, MS 106, p. 35 / PR, §140, MS 106, p. 238).

16 BT, §105, p. 364. (“Die Daten unseres Gedächtnisses sind geordnet; diese Ordnung nennen wir Gedächtniszeit, im Gegensatz zur physikalischen Zeit, der Ordnung der Ereignisse in der physikalischen Welt”).

17 WVC, p. 98.

is the reason why he addresses the time of the phenomenological world as “memory-time” (“*Gedächtniszeit* “).¹⁸

This role assigned by Wittgenstein to memory as the *source* of the phenomenological time can be seen as the ontological role played by memory, since memory now becomes “(...) a particular part of the logical structure of our world”.¹⁹ There is no room for a difference between the order of our memories and the order of phenomenological events in the primary world. We will see later on why there is this *collapse* between temporal structure of our memories and the temporal structure of reality. But in a nutshell, the idea is that the past has no positive ontological status in the phenomenological world (since only the present experience has reality), so the order of memory, So the order of memory does not stand halfway between the subject’s mind and the past in *itself*. It is the sole temporal form that constitutes the temporal order of the given – we shall come back to this point later on.

2. The Construction of Physical Time

We turn now to the distinction between phenomenological and physical time. This *order* of our memories that springs from the continuity of perception is not only what Wittgenstein calls time in the phenomenological sense, but it is the condition of possibility of *any* temporal system, since physical temporal systems are just *hypothetical modes of representation* (*Darstellungsweise*) of the temporal order of the phenomenological world. *Grosso modo*, there is only one time (memory-time) and any other temporal system is just a *hypothetical mode of representation* of this time.

To understand this it is important to note that physical time can be regarded as constructed from the primary temporal order. This will allow us to understand how different are the ontological statuses granted to temporal determinations in the two temporal systems and how different are the statuses granted to memory in each of those systems.

A similar hierarchical relation between physics and phenomenology present in the idea, expressed in the first paragraph of PR, that phenomenology is “(...) the grammar of the description of those facts on which physics builds

18 Cf. MS 112, p. 131r / TS 211, p. 535 / TS 212, p. 1362 / BT, §105, p. 364.

19 BT §102, p. 351.

its theories”²⁰ is present in Wittgenstein’s account of the relation between physical and phenomenological time:

(...) that from these present data a 2nd temporal system can be constructed says something about the 1st temporal system and what it says can be expressed in those words: the 1st system is temporally ordered.²¹

According to this passage, the secondary/physical temporal system is a *construction* from the temporal order of the first/phenomenological system. But how can a physical time be build up from a time that is the temporal order of our memories?

In the §102 of the BT, Wittgenstein writes that in physical time we “(...) translate the temporal relationships into spatial ones”.²² The only temporal relationships that are *given* to us in immediate experience are the succession of phenomena, which is the order of our memories. And it is this order of *before* and *after* (the way memories are ordered) that we initially translate into spatial ones in the construction of physical time. The same concept is also present (with minor differences) in Ramsey’s manuscript on time, written around 1928-9.²³ The main idea is that in physical time we translate the *temporal* transitive, asymmetrical, non-reflexive relations of *before* and *after* (which, according to Wittgenstein, is the order of our memories) into spatial transitive, asymmetrical, non-reflexive relations of “to the left of” or “to the right of”.²⁴

The crucial point to be noticed for the purpose of this paper is that the translation of the temporal relationships into spatial ones represents the temporal *succession* of the phenomenological data *simultaneously*. In other words, in physical time we represent in a *synchronic* way what was given to us *successively* in experience. One outcome of this *synchronicity* is the topological treat-

20 PR, §1.

21 MS 105, p. 86-8. (“Man kann aber auch sagen daß ich aus diesen gegenwärtigen Data ein zeitliches 2. System konstruieren kann sagt etwas über das 1. System aus und was es aussagt drücke ich in den Worten aus: Das erste System ist zeitlich geordnet. — Nur darf man nicht vergessen daß diese zeitliche Ordnung ganz anders aussieht als die im 2. System”).

22 Cf. BT, §102, p. 353.

23 Ramsey 2006.

24 Cf. Ramsey 2006, p.158.

ment in the secondary system of time as a “time line”, in which all moments of time are represented as an order given *at the same time*.

The simultaneous ordering of the events in physical time, as opposed to the successive order of the phenomena in memory-time, sets a profound asymmetry between the time in the 1st and 2nd systems, that can be attested through the *Laterna Magica* simile:

If I compare the facts of immediate experience with the pictures on the screen and the facts of physics with pictures in the film strip, on the film strip there is a present picture and past and future pictures. But on the screen, there is only the present. What is characteristic about this image is that in using it I regard the future as preformed.²⁵

In the phenomenological time there is only the “present”, just as on the cinema screen there are only images “presently” given (we do not see the future in the cinema screen and the past can only be *remembered*).²⁶ The main distinction is that in physical time we conceive time as a *time line*, in which all events are represented *at the same time*, bearing to each other non-transient *spatial* relations. This *omnitemporal* structure of the physical time is presented in the metaphor as the film that comprises *at the same time* all the photographs of the past, present and future – the ones that are already projected, the one in front of the lens and the ones to be projected.²⁷

The crucial point to be noticed is that although this asymmetry between the physical and phenomenological time is not a strong ontological asymmetry (since the physical time is just a *mode of representation*), from the *simultaneity* of all events, we regard the future as *pre-formed* and the past as *still existent* in physical time.²⁸

25 MS 105, p. 84-86 / PR, §51.

26 Wittgenstein writes in the BT: “In this time [memory-time] there is no future” (BT, §105, p. 365).

27 As Ramsey writes in his manuscript, in what Wittgenstein calls “physical time”: “(...) we are apt to imagine each of the events spread out before us being lit up in turn by the bull’s eye lantern of presentness”(2006, p.157).

28 A few years later, Wittgenstein caricatures this conception in the following terms: “We could, of course, imagine a realm of the unborn, future events, whence they come into reality and pass into the realm of the past” (BrB, p.109).

One way to approach the difference in logical status granted by Wittgenstein to memory in physical time and in the phenomenological time is to notice that this “semi-ontological” asymmetry (or, in Wittgenstein’s late terminology, this “grammatical” asymmetry) has bearings on the relation between memory and verification.

3. Memory as Representation and Memory as Truth-Maker

In physical time a positive ontological status is granted to the past, since the physical events are regarded as existing sempiternally, occupying in a *non-transient* way their positions in the spatialized temporal series. In short, in physical time the past is regarded as still existing after being present. It is this conferral of an ontological positivity on the past, when we speak of past *physical events*, which makes room for the distinction between past events and their representation. And the same applies to memory in the physical sense (on which memory is the memory of a physical event). In physical time, memory is a bipolar (picture-like) representation of a past, thought of as *existing independently of our memories* (of any representation of it). However, in phenomenological time the statuses of past and memory are altogether different. There is no past memory can or cannot correspond to (on the “screen”, the sole reality is the present experience). So, memory cannot be thought of as a *representation* of the past, because there is nothing to be represented by memory. The past has no positive ontological status that would allow room for the divide between “being past” and “being given by memory”. (And necessarily we must have memories of phenomena, since without them we would not have the concept of time).

Before turning to the epistemological and semantical consequences of this status granted to primary memory, let us consider a passage wherein Wittgenstein deals with the difference between memory in physical and phenomenological time at length:

For ‘time’ has one meaning when we regard memory as the source of time, and another when we regard it as a picture preserved from a past event.

If we take memory as a picture, then it’s a picture of a physical event. The picture fades, and I notice how it has faded when I compare it with other evidence of what happened. In this case, memory is not the source of time, but a more or less reliable custodian of what ‘ac-

tually' happened; and this is something we can know about in other ways, a physical event.

It's quite different if we now take memory to be the source of time. Here it isn't a picture, and cannot fade either--not in the sense in which a picture fades, becoming an ever less faithful representation of its object. Both ways of talking are in order, and are equally legitimate, but cannot be mixed together.²⁹

In the case of the memory of a physical event, memory is just a more or less reliable custodian of what happened. And the accuracy of memory can be judged by comparing memory with other evidences of what happened. This secondary memory is like a *picture* of a past, which is *independent* of the very fact of remembering it. By contrast, if memory is taken to be the *source of time* (as it is in phenomenological time), it is no picture and cannot fade. It cannot become an ever less faithful representation of its object since *it is not a representation of anything* (it is no *picture*).

Here it is worth emphasizing a very important idea – for it is this idea that will put us in a position to understand the epistemological role assigned by Wittgenstein to primary memory. Primary memories cannot fade (or become less accurate) because memory is the sole criterion of what has been given in immediate experience. There is no past this memory does or does not correspond to. The idea alluded here is that primary memory is always reliable and accurate since “being past” means “being given by memory”. Memory being the sole criterion of what has been given, it makes no sense, then, to say that something was given in the primary world although one is unable to remember it – or that one cannot remember it *in all its details*. In short, in the phenomenological world there is a total collapse between past and memory.

To understand this, it is crucial to give up the idea of memory as a faculty of representation (this role can be attributed exclusively to memories of physical events) and accept the full force of the consequences of Wittgenstein's idea that primary memory is “(...) a particular part of the logical structure of our world”.³⁰ This concept has important epistemological consequences as can be seen in a conversation with the Vienna Circle during which Wittgenstein addresses the topic in a section entitled “Time”:

29 PR, §49.

30 BT §102, p. 351.

If I can verify a temporal specification - e.g. such and such was earlier than so and so - only by means of memory, “time” must have a different meaning from the case where I can verify such a specification by other means, e.g. by reading a document, or by asking someone, and so forth. (...)

Memory as the *source* and memories that can be verified in a different way must equally be kept apart.³¹

A first important point to be noticed (that can dispel a common misunderstanding regarding Wittgenstein’s middle period) is that a distinction is drawn here between two meanings of “time” while in both cases the possibility of propositions *about the past* is granted. The misunderstanding to be dispelled is the idea that in phenomenological time there are only propositions about the “present”. In the passage quoted above Wittgenstein clearly grants that in phenomenological time (that is, the time memory is the source of) propositions about the past can be *verified*.

The main difference between the two meanings of “memory” lies in the fact that, when memory is the *source*, memory is the *truth-maker* of the propositions about the past, whereas in physical time memory “can be verified in a different way”. So, while secondary memory plays the role of a physicalistic representation of the past, primary memory can be used to determine the truth-value of the phenomenological propositions about the past. And the reason for this shift from representation to truth-maker is the collapse between past and memory in phenomenological time.

However, there are tensions within the physical concept of memory, which should not be overlooked since they pertain to the way we verify the truth or falsity of secondary memories – tension shared in fact by any physicalistic representation of a past physical event as the passages about Julius Caesar seem to suggest (cf. PR, §56). I cannot access a past physical event to verify my representations of it. The only way to verify it is *indirectly*. This *indirectness* is expressed by Wittgenstein in the passage previously quoted by the idea that I can verify the memory of a physical event “reading a document, or by asking someone, and so forth”. These ways of verifying are interrelated in a very important manner. Since the various representations of the past physical event are representations of the *same event* (that *supposedly* exists independently

31 WVC, p. 53

of any representation), there is a “Truth-Maker Connection” between them all.³² What makes a proposition about this event true is also what makes the memory of this event true. That is why I can verify this memory “by reading a document, or by asking someone, and so forth”.

Another tension that is worth mentioning here is that in this passage (as well as in PR §56 about Julius Caesar) Wittgenstein speaks of *verifying* a proposition, which is physicalistic (in the sense that it is about things in physical time). The tension is that *au pied de la lettre* we do not *verify* physicalistic propositions, but only phenomenological ones. So it is not very clear how we can verify a representation of a physical event by “reading a document, or by asking someone, and so forth”.

Leaving those tensions aside, the crucial point to be emphasized is that not only is the order of primary memories the order of phenomenological time, but the very *content* of those memories is the single criterion of what has been given in immediate experience. There is no other way the past may be given to us in immediate experience except through primary memory. Wittgenstein highlights the epistemological role assigned to primary memory (as the truth-maker of phenomenological propositions about the past) by treating it as a “*perception into the past*”:

Yet it contradicts every concept of physical time that I should have *perception into the past*, and that again seems to mean nothing else than that the concept of time in the first system must be radically different from that in physics.³³

Here we can see that Wittgenstein’s position is a giant leap away from a well established tradition because, in a Cartesian/idealist perspective, memory could never grant us *knowledge*, for it would always be liable to falsity (or to the Evil Genius misdeeds).³⁴ For the Wittgenstein of the late 1920s and the early 1930s primary memory is not open to falsity because it is *no* representation of the past; it is a “*perception into the past*”. And since it gives us immediate access to the past, this memory can be regarded as the truth-maker of

32 The idea of a “Truth-Maker Connection” is taken from Le Poidevin (2007, p. 62).

33 MS 105, p. 96 / PB, §50. (“Nun widerstreitet es aber allen Begriffen der physikalischen Zeit, daß ich in die Vergangenheit wahrnehmen sollte, und das scheint wieder nichts anderes zu bedeuten, als daß der Zeitbegriff im ersten System von dem in der Physik radikal verschieden sein muß“).

34 This point was suggested to me by my colleague André Porto.

a proposition about the past phenomena just as the immediate access to the phenomena provides us with a way to verify the phenomenological propositions about the present. So, in contrast with the case where the representation is about a past physical event (the verification being in this case temporally *indirect*), phenomenological propositions about the past can be directly verified for the past itself is *perceived*.

This idea of a “perception into the past” is not altogether strange since, in Russellian terms, we could say that what Wittgenstein is doing in 1929-1930 is to accept the idea that memory in the phenomenological sense would *acquaint* us with the past (similarly to what Russell did from 1912 to 1914).³⁵

Up to now we have investigated the ontological role of primary memory, thought of as “(...) a particular part of the logical structure of our world”.³⁶ We have also seen its epistemological role as “(...) the source of our knowledge, the verification of our propositions”.³⁷ It is time now to turn to its semantical role as the “source of identity”. But instead of taking memory as our direct subject of study, we shall deal with the twin notion of recognition.

4. Semantic Consequences

The exclusiveness of primary memory (as the sole criterion of what has been given to us in immediate experience) also has consequences for the way Wittgenstein conceives identity. Since in the primary world the past is nothing but what is given to us by memory, memory is the sole criterion for the identity of a phenomenon through time. This leads Wittgenstein to produce an important inversion in the relationship between identity and recognition. Contrary to what happens in the physical world, a phenomenon is the same as one given before *if and only if* it is recognized as the same as before.

I can only recognize something wrongly if there is some criterion of identity that determines that the thing is the same as before *independently* of my memory of it. And this divide between identity and recognition is only possible in physical time, where we grant independence to the past event in

35 A great discussion about this topic in Russell can be found in Paulo Faria's paper from 2010.

36 BT §102, p. 351.

37 MS 108, p. 33 / PR, §49. (“(...) Quelle unserer Erkenntnis, als Verifikation unserer Sätze”).

relation to our memories of it. In short, phenomenologically speaking, “recognition is what is primary and identity what is secondary”, while, physically speaking, recognition is parasitic on identity.³⁸

To understand how Wittgenstein connects identity with recognition and draws the distinction between its role in the phenomenological and the physical worlds, let us begin with the former. According to Wittgenstein:

(...) we can look at recognition, like memory, in two different ways: as source of the concepts of the past and of identity, or as a way of checking [*Kontrolle*] what happened in the past, and on identity.³⁹

Here we can see how Wittgenstein’s two-tiered philosophy of the middle period explains the role of recognition. Just as memory can be either the *source* or just a way of checking what happened in the past, recognition is also two-tiered, having a different status in the primary and secondary systems. In the phenomenological realm, recognition is the *source of the concept of identity*, whereas in the physical world identity is determined by physicalistic means and recognition is but a way of checking on something (the identity of which is guaranteed by other means than memory and recognition). This double-sided treatment of identity sets the realms of phenomenology and of physics apart:

(...) the ‘colour’ I can recognize immediately and the one I establish by chemical investigation are two different things.
One source only yields one thing.⁴⁰

A point to be noticed here is that we do not have *one thing* and two ways of determining its identity. For Wittgenstein, different ways of determining the identity implies different things. So, the physical colour whose identity can be determined by means of a chemical investigation is not the same thing as the colour as phenomenon whose identity is determined by recognition *alone*.

38 Cf. PR, §19. It is worth noting that the distinction between primary and secondary as used here does not overlap with the distinction between primary and secondary (that is, phenomenological and physicalistic) systems. It is just a way of expressing the logical priority of recognition over identity.

39 PR, §19.

40 PR, §16.

The motivation for treating recognition as the *source of identity* is expressed in the §16 of PR:

How do I know that the colour of this paper, which I call ‘white’, is the same as the one I saw here yesterday? By recognizing it again; and recognizing it again is my only source of knowledge here. In that case, ‘That it is the same’ means that I recognize it again.
Then of course you also can’t ask whether it really is the same and whether I might not perhaps be mistaken; (whether it is the same and doesn’t just seem to be.)

Here Wittgenstein is dealing with recognition and identity in phenomenological terms (distinguishing, in the same paragraph, that identity from the identity of the colour determined by means of a chemical investigation). In the phenomenological sense, *recognizing* the colour is taken as the only *source of knowledge* available to determine its identity. This primacy of recognition over identity leads him to claim that “it is the same” means “I recognize it again”.

On our previous analysis, the impossibility of being mistaken (as to whether it really is or is not the same) was accounted for by the collapse between past and memory in the phenomenological world and by the epistemological role assigned to memory. I cannot mistakenly recognize a phenomenon since my memory is the sole criterion that determines what has been given to me in immediate experience. So, immediate recognition (through memory alone) is the only way for us to say if a phenomenon previously given is the same as the present one.

Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind Wittgenstein’s treatment of primary memory as “perception into the past” to avoid a misapprehension of the way he regards recognition as the source of identity. If, like Russell in AoM, we conceive of memory as a *present image* (accompanied by the feeling of pastness)⁴¹, we might regard the way recognition is treated as the source of identity as involving a comparison between two present images – the present mnemonic image and the visual image (for example). Wittgenstein emphasizes instead the importance of differentiating the recognition of phenomena simultaneously and successively:

41 Cf. Russell, 1995, p. 96.

If I can see two patches of colour alongside one another and say that they have the same colour, and if I say that this patch has the same colour as one I saw earlier, the identity assertion means something different in the two cases, since it is differently verified.

To know that it was the same colour is something different from knowing that it is the same colour.⁴²

According to what we have previously seen, the difference between the identity assertion of phenomena which are simultaneous and phenomena which are successive is that the verification of the identity assertion over time will have only memory as the source of this knowledge, since it is the only truth-maker which can verify the assertion. But if memory is treated as a *present image* (like in Russell), the distinction drawn by Wittgenstein in §19 (between knowing that it *was* the same and knowing that it *is* the same) becomes useless. This shows that recognition as the source of identity must be taken as an immediate relation between the past and the present, just like through memory I have an immediate access from the present to the past (but with a reverse temporal direction).

The extent of our analyses shows how important is the role ascribed by Wittgenstein to memory in the primary world, around 1929-1930. Not only is *phenomenological time* equated with the way memories are ordered and memory identified as the *truth-maker* of phenomenological propositions about the past, but the *identity* of the phenomena is also determined by memory. A phenomenon is the same as one given before *if and only if* it is recognized as the same.

42 PR, §19.

Conclusion

To conclude this paper I want to point out briefly the importance of some of the ideas discussed here. The most obvious source of relevance is the underlying continuity from the role ascribed by Wittgenstein to recognition as the source of identity in the middle period to a strong critique of the same notion in some of the passages of the so called “private language argument” in his late philosophy (mostly, in PI and LSD). In PI §258, as he deals with the idea of the use of a diary to mark the recurrence of a certain sensation, the author comes to the following conclusion:

But “I impress it on myself” can only mean: this process brings it about that I remember the connection right in the future. But in the present case I have no criterion of correctness. One would like to say: whatever is going to seem right to me is right. And that only means that here we can't talk about 'right'.

A striking resemblance between this passage and the ones commented above on recognition as the *source of identity* is that Wittgenstein uses here the very the same argument as was used before (in January 1930) to support the opposite conclusion. As to the determination of the identity of a certain phenomenon he writes in PR §16:

(...) recognizing it again is my only source of knowledge here. In that case, ‘That it is the same’ means that I recognize it again. Then of course you also can't ask whether it really is the same and whether I might not perhaps be mistaken; (whether it is the same and doesn't just seem to be.)

The main difference between the two passages is that the impossibility of mistakes in the way I regard a phenomenon as the same as before (the non existence of a criterion of correctness, in the terms of PI) is *precisely* what makes my recognition the source of identity in PR. Thus, from this brief parallel between PI and the middle period, we can conclude that this part of the so called “private language argument” can be understood as the direct rebuttal of the role ascribed to recognition in the middle period as the source of identity.

A less obvious, albeit just as important aspect of the ideas discussed here is that, at the time the status of *source* was conferred on memory (in its ontologi-

cal, epistemological, and semantical guises), Wittgenstein would regard the phenomenological reality as something whose content and form were immediately given (turning the phenomena into ideal candidates for the role of what determines the logical multiplicity of the complete analyzed language).⁴³ This too was to have bearings on the development of Wittgenstein's philosophy.

Although immediate experience, in 1929, had the form of a flux⁴⁴, the content of what was given to us could never fade away since primary memory was explicitly thought of as *perception into the past*. This possibility of a perception into the past was a key foundational element in the search for an ideal language supposedly apt to describe immediate experience in *all its details*. The crucial role played by memory at that time is attested by the way Wittgenstein conceives of the "most immediate description we can possibly imagine" (the phenomenological language *par excellence* of PR §67), namely as a language that describes all the *remembered* sense impressions. And it is this role which is criticized in the text dictated to Waismann entitled: "Phenomenal Language".⁴⁵ In this text, Wittgenstein traces the search for an ideal language back to a false analogy on which the past of immediate experience is treated as a "physical image" ("*materiellen Bild*").⁴⁶ The idea that one would be able to revisit this image (that we could "perceive" once again the past) gives rise to the illusion that we are able construct an ideal language using this past image as a criterion of exactness for the phenomenological description.

Another important aspect is that, since the identity of the phenomena was a point beyond dispute at the time Wittgenstein regarded memory as the *source* of identity, one of the central issues of his later philosophy – that of rule-following – could not arise (at least as far as the phenomena were concerned). When faced with the question: "what guarantees that I will be able to apply the word 'red' in the future?" Wittgenstein would probably have answered in 1929-1930: "By recognizing it again".⁴⁷

43 Cf. SRLF.

44 Cf. MS 107, p. 159.

45 Cf. Wittgenstein, 2003, pp. 313-321.

46 PS, p. 316.

47 Cf. PR, §16.

Abbreviations

AoM	Russell, B., <i>The Analysis of Mind</i>
BrB	<i>The Brown Book</i>
BT	<i>The Big Typescript</i>
MS	Manuscripts from <i>Nachlass</i>
PR	<i>Philosophical Remarks</i>
SRLF	Some Remarks on Logical Form
TS	Typescripts from <i>Nachlass</i>
WVC	Waismann, F., <i>Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle</i>

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