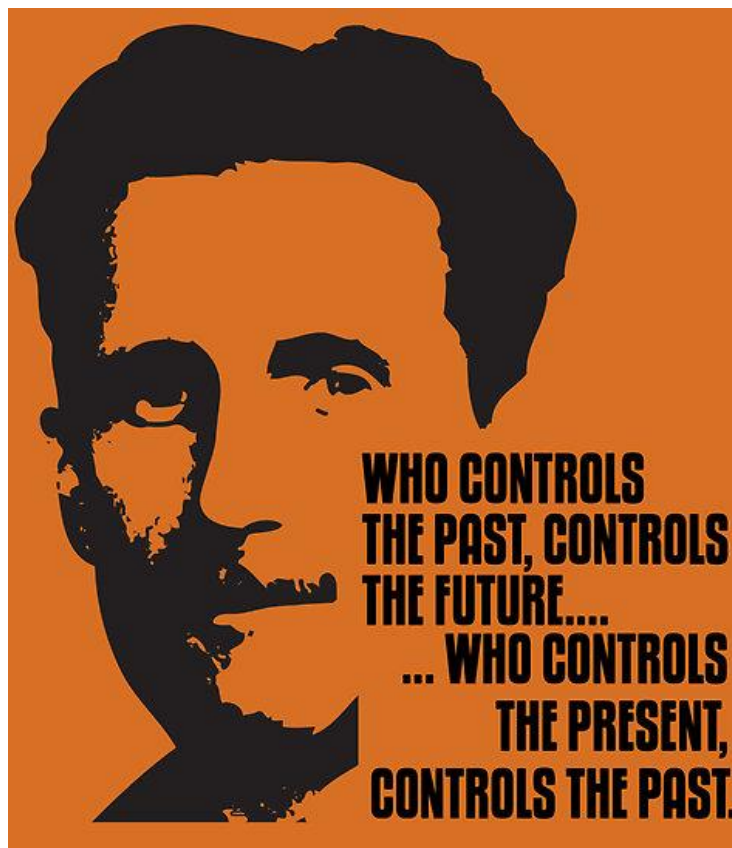


# Memory, “Alternative Facts,” and the Political Philosophy of Cognition

*Robert Hanna*



“I am taking trouble with you, Winston,” he said, “because you are worth trouble. You know perfectly well what is the matter with you. You have known it for years, though you have fought against the knowledge. You are mentally deranged. You suffer from a defective memory. You are unable to remember real events and you persuade yourself that you remember other events which never happened. Fortunately it is curable. You have never cured yourself of it, because you did not choose to. There was a small effort of the will that you were not ready to make. Even now, I am well aware, you are clinging to your disease under the impression that it is a virtue. Now we will take an example. At this moment, which power is Oceania at war with?”

“When I was arrested, Oceania was at war with Eastasia.”

"With Eastasia. Good. And Oceania has always been at war with Eastasia, has it not?"

Winston drew in his breath. He opened his mouth to speak and then did not speak. He could not take his eyes away from the dial.

"The truth, please, Winston. YOUR truth. Tell me what you think you remember."  
....

O'Brien was looking down at him speculatively. More than ever he had the air of a teacher taking pains with a wayward but promising child.

"There is a Party slogan dealing with the control of the past," he said. "Repeat it, if you please."

"'Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past'," repeated Winston obediently.

"'Who controls the present controls the past'," said O'Brien, nodding his head with slow approval. "Is it your opinion, Winston, that the past has real existence?"

Again the feeling of helplessness descended upon Winston. His eyes flitted towards the dial. He not only did not know whether "yes" or "no" was the answer that would save him from pain; he did not even know which answer he believed to be the true one.

--G. Orwell<sup>1</sup>

In an interview on NBC's "Meet the Press,"<sup>2</sup> host Chuck Todd pressed Trump senior adviser Kellyanne Conway about why the White House on Saturday had sent Spicer to the briefing podium for the first time to claim that "this was the largest audience to ever witness an inauguration, period."

"You're saying it's a falsehood. And they're giving—Sean Spicer, our press secretary—gave alternative facts," she said.

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<sup>1</sup> G. Orwell, 1984, part 3, ch. 2, available online at URL = <<http://www.george-orwell.org/1984>>.

<sup>2</sup> Available online at URL = <<http://www.nbcnews.com/meet-the-press/video/conway-press-secretary-gave-alternative-facts-860142147643..>>.

Todd responded: “Alternative facts aren't facts, they are falsehoods.”

Conway then tried to pivot to policy points. But later in the interview, Todd pressed Conway again on why the White House sent Spicer out to make false claims about crowd size, asking:

“What was the motive to have this ridiculous litigation of crowd size?”

“Your job is not to call things ridiculous that are said by our press secretary and our president. That’s not your job,” Conway said.

Todd followed up: “Can you please answer the question? Why did he do this? You have not answered it—it's only one question.”

Conway said: “I'll answer it this way: Think about what you just said to your viewers. That's why we feel compelled to go out and clear the air and put alternative facts out there.”<sup>3</sup>

## 1. Introduction

In George Orwell’s brilliant and famous dystopian science-fiction critique of totalitarianism, *1984*, Winston Smith is tortured and then made to “remember” all sorts of things about himself and the larger social and political world that never really happened, but that “Big Brother” and the authoritarian, totalitarian government of Oceania want him to remember.




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<sup>3</sup> E. Bradner, “Conway: Trump White House Offered ‘Alternative Facts’ on Crowd Size,” *CNN Politics* 23 January 2017, available online at URL = <http://www.cnn.com/2017/01/22/politics/kellyanne-conway-alternative-facts/index.html>.

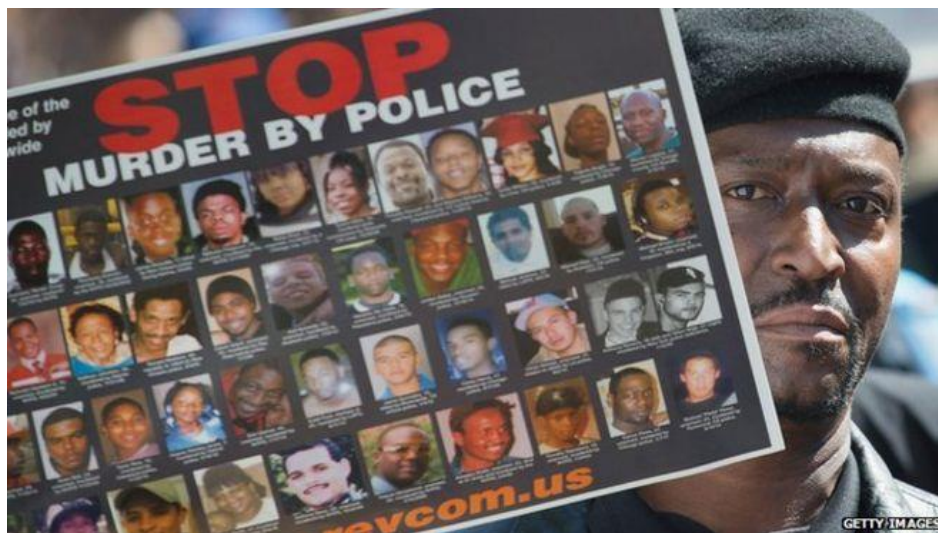
Many or even most recent and contemporary Hungarians have claimed that they can both “remember” and also “see” that the Roma people are dirty, unruly, and dangerous.<sup>4</sup>



A Roma family in the city of Miskolc in northeastern Hungary/

*Credit: Photo: Jeneen Interlandi*

In 2015 and 2016, in the USA, extremely well-armed policemen who shot a non-trivial number of unarmed young black men to death, have claimed that they “saw” the victims engaging in life-threatening behavior towards them.



<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., J. Interlandi, “What Drives Subconscious Racial Prejudice? A Study of Anti-Roma Bias in Hungary Seeks to Identify the Roots of Subliminal Bias,” Scientific American MIND Guest Blog (11 May 2015), available online at URL =

<<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/mind-guest-blog/what-drives-subconscious-racial-prejudice/>>.



In 2016, European and worldwide public sympathy for refugees was seriously compromised by the Paris and Brussels bombings, and by the Cologne New Year's Eve mob violence against women: since then, many people all over Europe and the rest of the world have claimed that they can "see" that all refugees are potential terrorists and that all young refugee men are potentially threatening to women.



Picture taken on 31 December, 2015 shows people gathering in front of the main railway station in Cologne/MARKUS BOEHM/AFP/Getty Images

And, to top it all off with a breathtaking Orwellian flourish, in 2017, Kellyanne Conway, one of President Donald Trump's top advisors, in a tense television interview shortly after the US Presidential Inauguration on 20 January, said that "we feel compelled to go out and clear the air and put alternative facts out there."



In this essay, I do three things.

**First**, I briefly sketch, and then just as briefly criticize, a widely-held contemporary theory of the nature of human memory, as specifically presented and defended in an influential essay by Felipe De Brigard, “Is Memory for Remembering? Recollection as a Form of Episodic Hypothetical Thinking.”<sup>5</sup>

**Second**, I present the basics of a *radically naïve realist* theory of memory,<sup>6</sup> and indicate its parallels with a corresponding radically naïve realist theory of sense perception,<sup>7</sup> both of which have a grounding in *the Strong Non-Conceptualist theory of essentially non-conceptual mental content*.

**Third**, I apply the radically naïve realist theory of memory and the Strong Non-Conceptualist theory of essentially non-conceptual mental content to what I call *the political theory of memory*, which in turn is a sub-species of *the political theory of cognition*.<sup>8</sup>

For the purposes of this essay, the third thing drives the first and second things. I am deeply and fundamentally interested in explaining how memory and sense perception can be ideologically manipulated for political purposes, and also how the philosophy of cognition can be deployed to indicate and justify practical, effective cognitive strategies for resisting this manipulation and for ideological self-deprogramming and cognitive self-liberation when the manipulation has already occurred. My proposal is that the overall value of those cognitive theories will be made retrogressively manifest through their ability to provide fruitful and robust consequences for political theories and real-world political frameworks that emphasize *individual and collective free agency* and *radical enlightenment*.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> F. De Brigard, “Is Memory for Remembering? Recollection as a Form of Episodic Hypothetical Thinking,” *Synthese* 191 (2014): 1-31.

<sup>6</sup> See also J. Russell, and R. Hanna, “A Minimalist Approach to the Development of Episodic Memory,” *Mind and Language* 27 (2012): 29-54, also available online at URL = [https://www.academia.edu/1352637/A\\_Minimalist\\_Approach\\_to\\_the\\_Development\\_of\\_Episodic\\_Memory](https://www.academia.edu/1352637/A_Minimalist_Approach_to_the_Development_of_Episodic_Memory).

<sup>7</sup> See R. Hanna, *Cognition, Content, and the A Priori: A Study in the Philosophy of Mind and Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2015), esp. chs. 1-2.

<sup>8</sup> What I am calling “the political theory of cognition” belongs to what Suparna Choudhury and Jan Slaby and have called *critical neuroscience*, and what Slaby calls *the political philosophy of mind*. See, e.g., S. Choudhury and J. Slaby (eds.), *Critical Neuroscience* (Malden MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); and J. Slaby, “Mind Invasion: Situated Affectivity and the Corporate Life Hack,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 7 (2016, article 266).

<sup>9</sup> See R. Hanna, “Radical Enlightenment: Existential Kantian Cosmopolitan Anarchism, With a Concluding Quasi-Federalist Postscript,” in D. Heidemann and K. Stoppenbrink (eds.), *Join, Or Die*:

Or in other words, I am saying that the fruitful and robust radical political consequences of these cognitive theories *provide special good reasons for accepting those theories*, over and above the usual reasons for theory-acceptance in philosophy, having to do with the internal intelligibility and coherence of theories, their ability to explain empirical and phenomenological data, and their ability to provide overall better accounts than competing theories.

So in sections 2 and 3, I'll present De Brigard's view and my critique of it, as well as my radically naïve realist theory of memory and sense perception, and its grounding in the Strong Non-Conceptualist theory of essentially non-conceptual content, as briefly and simply as I can, without providing either full-dress explications of those theories, or critical defenses of them against all or most possible criticisms, in order to proceed to the main political event in sections 4 and 5.

## 2. Varieties of Memory

This is what De Brigard argues:

Misremembering is a systematic and ordinary occurrence in our daily lives. Since it is commonly assumed that the function of memory is to remember the past, misremembering is typically thought to happen because our memory system malfunctions. In this paper I argue that not all cases of misremembering are due to failures in our memory system. In particular, I argue that many ordinary cases of misremembering should not be seen as instances of memory's malfunction, but rather as the normal result of a larger cognitive system that performs a different function, and for which remembering is just one operation. Building upon extant psychological and neuroscientific evidence, I offer a picture of memory as an integral part of a larger system that supports not only thinking of what was the case and what potentially could be the case, but also what could have been the case. More precisely, I claim that remembering is a particular operation of a cognitive system that permits the flexible recombination of different components of encoded traces into representations of possible past events that might or might

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*Philosophical Foundations of Federalism* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), pp. 63-90; and R. Hanna, *Kant, Agnosticism, and Anarchism: A Theological-Political Treatise* (Academia.edu, 2018), available online at URL = [https://www.academia.edu/36359665/The\\_Rational\\_Human\\_Condition\\_5\\_Kant\\_Agnosticism\\_and\\_Anarchism\\_A\\_Theological-Political\\_Treatise\\_The\\_Complete\\_Downloadable\\_Text](https://www.academia.edu/36359665/The_Rational_Human_Condition_5_Kant_Agnosticism_and_Anarchism_A_Theological-Political_Treatise_The_Complete_Downloadable_Text).

not have occurred, in the service of constructing mental simulations of possible future events.<sup>10</sup>

I have three critical points to make about De Brigard's essay.

**First**, although I think that De Brigard's thesis is ingenious, I do also think it is in effect a *skeptical theory of memory*. What I mean is that it is basically an analogue of what John McDowell has called "highest common factor" theories of perception that start with the thesis that all perception is open to worries about illusion or hallucination, and then go on to claim perception is essentially an unreal mental construct of some sort. But other things being equal, we should prefer anti-skeptical, non-constructivist, realistic theories of human cognition to skeptical, constructivist, unrealist theories of it, since the former conform better to common sense *prima facie a priori* rational intuitions about our own cognitive capacities, backed up by refined philosophical theories and corresponding authoritative *a priori* philosophical rational intuitions,<sup>11</sup> than do the latter. So that is an important meta-theoretical consideration against De Brigard's theory.

**Second**, even apart from that, how can De Brigard's theory, to the effect that episodic memory is really a mental simulation containing a hypothesis about the future, handle the phenomenon of nostalgia? Nostalgia is a memory-based longing for the past, *as* past. I'm not talking about mere sentimentalism about the past. What the truly nostalgic person longs for is *not* to experience, in the future, things that are similar to things experienced in the past, but instead *to re-live the actual past*. There is a huge modal-phenomenological difference here. There is one and only one actual past, but an indefinitely large number of possible future experiences with relevant similarities to any past experience. Does the nostalgic person want any of those? No. She intensely wants the actual world as she experienced it, *again*, or as the realist historian Leopold von Ranke put it, *wie ist eigentlich gewesen*, "as it actually happened." And how could that ever conform to De Brigard's future-oriented model of memory-content? So nostalgia is an important counter-example to his theory.

To be sure, De Brigard could respond by adopting a "debunking strategy" and/or "error theory" of nostalgia, according to which nostalgia is *actually* a mental simulation containing a hypothesis about experiencing things in the future that are similar to things experienced in the past, that is nevertheless so befuddled and self-deceived by strong

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<sup>10</sup> De Brigard, "Is Memory for Remembering? Recollection as a Form of Episodic Hypothetical Thinking," p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> For much more about rational intuitions, see A. Chapman, A. Ellis, R. Hanna, T. Hildebrand, and H.W. Pickford, *In Defense of Intuitions: A New Rationalist Manifesto* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013); and Hanna, *Cognition, Content, and the A Priori*, chs. 6-8.



emotion that it *seems to be* an intense desire to re-live the actual past as it actually happened, but *really isn't*.

The general problem with debunking strategies and/or error theories about human cognitive capacities—even those as specialized as the cognitive capacity for nostalgia—however, is that they tend towards self-stultification. What I mean is that if it were *true* that we are systematically self-deceived and mistaken about the nature of one or more of our cognitive capacities, then why would the debunking strategy and/or error-theory *themselves, as theories*, be any more likely to be correct than any other arbitrarily-chosen strategy and/or theory, given that the debunking strategy and/or error-theory are of course themselves the products of the operations of our cognitive capacities? So, just as, other things being equal, we should prefer anti-skeptical, non-constructivist, realistic theories of human cognition, so too, other things being equal, we should avoid debunking strategies and/or error theories about our cognitive capacities.

**Third**, I think that it is especially significant that the epigraph for De Brigard's essay is from Hobbes's *Leviathan*:

*So that imagination and memory are but one thing, which for diverse considerations hath diverse names.* Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* 1.2.

The *Leviathan*, in turn, provides the philosophical foundations of the modern liberal political State; and Hobbes's theory of memory is an essential feature of that political philosophy. De Brigard's theory therefore presents itself as highly "scientific" and "disinterested," and therefore entirely innocent of political assumptions. But in fact, more or less covertly, it is significantly committed to various classical Hobbesian liberal or neo-Hobbesian neoliberal democratic Statist assumptions about human nature in general and about human cognition in particular. I will come back to this critically important point later.

Now back to the human cognitive capacity for memory, as such. I think that Endel Tulving's classical distinction between

- (i) episodic (1<sup>st</sup>-person indexical, I-remembering ) memory, and
- (ii) semantic (fact-based, 3<sup>rd</sup>-personal or impersonal, remembering-that) memory,<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., E. Tulving, "Episodic and Semantic Memory," in E. Tulving and W. Donaldson (eds.), *Organization of Memory* (New York: Academic Press, 1972), pp. 381-402, also available online at URL = <http://alicekim.ca/12.EpSem72.pdf>.

is basically a good one, well-supported by empirical work in cognitive science and phenomenology alike. But at the same time, this twofold distinction does not exhaust all the basic kinds of memory: there is also “skill-memory,” or “implicit memory,” that is, *memory-how*, as studied by Daniel Schacter and others,<sup>13</sup> and this extension beyond Tulving’s breakthrough work has been generally accepted by contemporary memory theorists.

Correspondingly, granting the threefold episodic memory vs. semantic memory vs. skill-memory distinction, there are two other extremely important memory phenomena here.

The first is the phenomenon of my 1st-person remembering things about myself and my life in factual and indeed impersonal/3rd personal terms, as if I were looking at my past self and my life from the outside—see, for example, Kant’s notion of “empirical apperception” in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and Sartre’s notion of a reflective/self-conscious conceptually-constructed ego in *Transcendence of the Ego*. So, I think that Tulving did not sufficiently distinguish between these two sorts of memory-claims:

I remember being at my fifth birthday party. (egocentric episodic)  
I remember that I was born in 1957. (allocentric/semantic episodic)

Both of these, in normal cases, have first-person epistemic authority. For example,

I remember where my right hand was just a moment ago.  
I remember my own name.  
I remember where I live.

And so-on. But in other ways, and above all phenomenologically, they are sharply different. For example, I could correctly remember being at my fifth birthday party, but misremember all sorts of first-personal facts about it—such as the actual location of my birthday party, who actually attended my party, etc. Conversely, I could correctly remember all those facts, but also be remembering a confabulated dream I had about my childhood birthday parties much later in life—say, when I was a teenager—and not correctly remember being at my fifth birthday party.

A second memory-phenomenon that Tulving did not notice is the important difference between

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<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., D. Schacter, “Perceptual Representation Systems and Implicit Memory: Towards a Resolution of the Multiple Memory Systems Debate,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Science* 608 (1990): 543-571.

- (i) non-self-conscious/pre-reflective memory consciousness, and
- (ii) self-conscious/reflective memory consciousness.

During waking life, most people's everyday experiences are suffused with episodic, semantic, and skill-memories about their local environment and about themselves that they do not self-consciously or self-reflectively recognize as memories. Think, for example, about your daily, normal activities as you move around your bedroom and house shortly after waking up. You remember where your slippers and housecoat are, where the kitchen is and how to make coffee, how to brush your teeth, etc., etc., without in any way self-consciously or self-reflectively doing so. Typically, it is only if some special issue saliently arises, that calls for a special self-conscious or self-reflective act of remembering, that you self-consciously or self-reflectively remember something—for example, remembering your home address and telephone number when asked by someone else.

Therefore, to summarize, there is an important distinction to be made between

- (i) egocentric episodic memory, and
- (ii) allocentric/semantic episodic memory,

and also an important distinction to be made between

- (i) non-self-consciously/pre-reflectively conscious egocentric episodic memory, and
- (ii) self-conscious/reflective egocentric episodic memory.

Moreover, since skill-memory, implicit memory, or memory-how is *also* egocentric, there is also an important distinction to be made between

- (i) non-self-consciously/pre-reflectively conscious skill-memory/implicit memory/memory-how, and
- (ii) self-conscious/reflective skill-memory/memory-how.

Now to take an example that deploys several of these distinctions. I remember that I was born in 1957, that is, I have an allocentric/semantic episodic memory of that event with first-person epistemic authority. But I do not self-consciously or self-reflectively remember being born in 1957, that is, I lack any self-conscious or self-reflective egocentric episodic memory of my being born. Yet, given a plausible view on the nature of real human personhood, to the effect that my own life extends at least as far back as my

essentially embodied consciousness reaches,<sup>14</sup> therefore I must also non-self-consciously/pre-reflectively and veridically remember the trauma of being born. This non-self-consciously/pre-reflectively and veridically remembered trauma, in turn, not only affects my entire later life in various ways, but can also, at least in principle, under the right cognitive conditions, be self-consciously or self-reflectively recovered.

Or at least, this is so, *if* the Strong Non-Conceptualism and radically naïve realism about sense perception and memory that I will spell out in the next section are both correct.

### 3. Strong Non-Conceptualism and Radically Naïve Realism about Sense Perception and Memory

There are two basic questions at issue between the contrary theses of Conceptualism and Non-Conceptualism in the philosophy of cognition:

- (i) whether *human cognition is necessarily determined by our concepts and our conceptual capacities*, yes or no, and
- (ii) whether *human cognizers share a fundamental pre-conceptual/pre-intellectual or “purely sensible” capacity—or a set of such capacities—with non-rational or non-human animals, that operates in some substantive way independently of our intellectual/logical capacity for conceptualization, judgment, believing, etc., while still also being able to combine substantively with those latter capacities for the purposes of socially and linguistically-mediated “rational” cognition*, yes or no.

Conceptualists, aka *intellectualists* about human cognition, say *yes* to (i) and *no* to (ii); but Strong Non-Conceptualists, aka *non-intellectualists* about human cognition, say *no* to (i) and *yes* to (ii).

For reasons that I present and defend at length in *Cognition, Content, and the A Priori*—but in order to keep things fairly short-and-sweet, I will not *re-present* or *re-defend* here—I hold the thesis of Strong Non-Conceptualism.

Strong Non-Conceptualism, in turn, implies a fundamental distinction between *conceptual content* on the one hand, and *essentially non-conceptual content* on the other. Now

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<sup>14</sup> See R. Hanna, *Deep Freedom and Real Persons: A Study in Metaphysics* (Academia.edu, 2018), available online at URL =

<[https://www.academia.edu/35801857/The\\_Rational\\_Human\\_Condition\\_3\\_Deep\\_Freedom\\_and\\_Real\\_Persons\\_A\\_Study\\_in\\_Metaphysics\\_The\\_Complete\\_Downloadable\\_Text](https://www.academia.edu/35801857/The_Rational_Human_Condition_3_Deep_Freedom_and_Real_Persons_A_Study_in_Metaphysics_The_Complete_Downloadable_Text)>.

by *conceptual content* I mean the inherently general, descriptive information that is expressed by one-place predicates in natural language, and correspondingly plays an essential role in logically-structured propositions, especially analytic propositions, and inferences. Granting that, then here is the distinction between conceptual content and essentially non-conceptual content in a nutshell:

The theory of rational human cognition, content, and knowledge that I am proposing ... is, in part, a “bottom-up” theory about the nature of minded animals that anchors conceptual content in the primitive fact of essentially non-conceptual content. Essentially non-conceptual content ... is a kind of mental content that is categorically different from conceptual content, in the sense that both its underlying semantic structure and also its characteristic psychological function or role are inherently distinct from those of conceptual content. Furthermore, essentially non-conceptual content is a kind of mental content that rational human animals or real human persons share with non-rational minded animals, whether non-human (e.g., cats) or human (e.g., infants), who, it seems, do not possess conceptual capacities. So essentially non-conceptual content epitomizes the specifically non-intellectual or *sensible*, embodied, perception-based, phenomenally conscious side of human mindedness, whereas conceptual content epitomizes the specifically *intellectual* or discursive, reflective, judgment-based, self-conscious side of human mindedness.... [B]y way of a preliminary or working characterization to have in front of us, I will say that essentially non-conceptual content is mental content that necessarily includes essentially indexical formal spatiotemporal and dynamic representations that are fully sensitive to complex thermodynamic asymmetries in perceptually manifest natural objects and processes, and also that the primary psychological function or role of essentially non-conceptual content is to account for directly referential cognition, and to guide and mediate the sensorimotor processes constitutive of finegrained intentional body movements in rational minded animals or real persons.<sup>15</sup>

How does Strong Non-Conceptualism relate to what I call *radically naïve realism*?

*Direct or naïve realism* about perception, in general, makes two claims:

(i) rational and other minded animals stand in immediate, unmediated cognitive relations to external real objects that are consciously and correctly perceived by them, and

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<sup>15</sup> Hanna, *Cognition, Content, and the A Priori*, p. 25.



(ii) these external real objects partially constitute those veridical perceptual acts or states.

*Radically* naïve realism, in turn, is direct or naïve realism *plus* a thesis called *disjunctivism*.

What is that thesis?

*Disjunctivism* about perception, which is both an intensification and also a specification of direct or naïve perceptual realism, posits a categorical or essential and mutually exclusive (that is, either-or, and not both) difference between direct, veridical perception on the one hand, and non-veridical conscious experiences—for example, complete or partial hallucinations—on the other hand. *Anti-disjunctivism* about perception, by an opposing contrast, claims that not only is there no categorical or essential difference between direct, veridical perception and hallucination, but also that there is something inherently shared in common between direct, veridical perception and non-veridical conscious experiences like hallucination, such that the two either actually always are, or at least can be, *epistemically indistinguishable*.

Predictably, in the relevant philosophical literature there are different versions of disjunctivism, including epistemic and metaphysical versions, stronger and weaker versions, and so-on. But my specifically Strong Non-Conceptualist, radically naïve realist version of disjunctivism says that although direct, veridical perception and non-veridical conscious experiences are indeed sometimes, for various context-sensitive reasons, *undiscriminated*, nevertheless they are *in principle discriminable*.

The actual or possible epistemic *indistinguishability* of direct, veridical and non-veridical conscious experiences like hallucinations, in turn, not only *requires concepts* but also is a necessary condition of classical Cartesian skepticism about perceptual knowledge. Hence a Strong Non-Conceptualist and radically naïve realist approach to sense perception is especially well-positioned to avoid classical Cartesian skepticism about perceptual knowledge.<sup>16</sup>

More precisely however, my version of disjunctivism about sense perception (aka DSP) makes the following three claims.

(DSP1) A consciously experiencing animal subject can be *either* perceiving directly and veridically, in which case the subject stands in an immediate, unmediated

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<sup>16</sup> Hanna, *Cognition, Content, and the A Priori*, p. 42.

cognitive relation to an individual causally efficacious macroscopic material being that is consciously and correctly perceived by her in that context and which partially constitutes the mental content and phenomenal character of that direct, veridical perceptual act or state *or* else consciously experiencing in a non-veridical way (e.g. a complete or partial hallucination), in which case the experiencing subject does *not* stand in a direct cognitive relation to an individual macroscopic being that is consciously and correctly perceived by her in that context, but *not both*.

(DSP2) Direct, veridical perception and non-veridical conscious experience, e.g., hallucination, are categorically or essentially different, hence they share no mental content or phenomenal character whatsoever, and in fact share only whatever it extrinsically or non-essentially is that makes them sometimes undiscriminated, namely the variable abilities of the conscious animal subject to attend to the inherently different phenomenology of the experiences and to discriminate between these in different contexts.

(DSP3) Direct, veridical perception and non-veridical conscious experience, e.g., hallucination, are inherently discriminable by a suitably attentive, self-conscious, and self-reflective conscious animal subject, even if not always discriminated by that subject, or indeed by any other such subject, at any given time, due to context-sensitive failures of the subject's ability to discriminate. This discriminative ability, therefore, is authoritative but not infallible.<sup>17</sup>

Now, applying these Strong Non-Conceptualist, radical naïve realist ideas to the capacity for memory, my account of essentially non-conceptual egocentric episodic and skill-memory, as foundational and primitive, would start with what I call the essentially embodied *V-Relation* (veridicality relation) that is loaded in basic sense perception, and then stretch it out over time, with updated content moment-by-moment, and correspondingly updated formal (spatio)temporal representations, in a way that it is similar to Kant's threefold idea in the Transcendental Aesthetic section of the first *Critique* that our representation of time is the immediate form of inner sense, that our representation of space is the immediate form of outer sense, and that our representation of time, again, is the *mediate* form of outer sense.

Correspondingly, here are the basics of a Strong Non-Conceptualist, radically naïve realist theory of memory.

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<sup>17</sup> Hanna, *Cognition, Content, and the A Priori*, p. 119.

**First**, egocentric episodic memory and egocentric skill-memory are grounded on essentially non-conceptual sense-perceptual content. In this way, there is a disjunctivism for memory that runs parallel to my version of disjunctivism for sense perception. According to the Strong Non-Conceptualist, radically naïve realist theory of memory I am proposing, then, the fundamental cognitive activity of memory is *preserving a V-Relation over (space)time, via essentially non-conceptual content*.

Now any mental state that lacked the preserved V-Relation over (space)time wouldn't be real memory, but in fact only "false memory," even if it had some superficially similar features that allowed, in context, for failures of discrimination by the subject. So false memories are the analogues of perceptual hallucinations. Misremembering, correspondingly, is the analogue of perceptual illusions: preserved V-relations with significantly false conceptual/propositional content.

**Second**, allocentric/semantic episodic memory, and semantic memory more generally, are doubly grounded,

on (i) egocentric episodic memory and egocentric skill-memory, hence on essentially non-conceptual content,  
and also on (ii) conceptual content.

To the extent that memory is grounded on conceptual content, it involves significant "cognitive penetration" — which is just a recent, newfangled term for the use of concepts in cognition under the thesis of Conceptualism. But to the extent that memory is grounded on essentially non-conceptual content, it is *inherently resistant to*, that is, *necessarily underdetermined by and cognitively autonomous from*, conceptualization and cognitive penetration.

In this way, then, what holds for the radically naïve realist theory of sense perception that I developed in *Cognition, Content, and the A Priori* must also hold for the radically naïve realist theory of memory I am sketching in this essay. Here, disjunctivism for memory says:

EITHER I am in a veridical memory state, aka *real memory*, grounded on essentially non-conceptual content,

OR ELSE I am in a categorically different state that may superficially resemble real memory in various ways, sufficient to fool me in certain contexts, but it is not really memory, rather it is only "fake memory," and the difference between veridical, real memory and non-veridical, fake memory is in-principle epistemically discriminable.

The in-principle epistemic discriminability of veridical, real memories and non-veridical, fake memories is crucially important in what follows.

#### 4. The Political Philosophy of Memory

That finally brings me to the political philosophy of memory, as brilliantly explored in fiction by Orwell, and more recently, in cultural criticism, by Henry Giroux.<sup>18</sup>

It is clearly true that all memory, insofar as it contains a conceptual component, is somewhat fallible and unreliable. See, for example, the famous study on the unreliability of “flashbulb memories” done in the early 1980s by Ulric Neisser, and many other studies on misremembering done since then, cited by De Brigard. But those facts should be no more likely to make us skeptics and constructivists/irrealists about memory than the fact that all sense perception, insofar as it contains a conceptual component is somewhat fallible and unreliable, should make us skeptics and constructivists/irrealists about sense perception.

Nevertheless, obviously, just like sense perceptual illusions and hallucinations, concept-driven misremembering and non-veridical, fake memories *can be manipulated*. A prime mechanism of thought-control in coercive States, especially totalitarian ones, is inducing misremembering (“illusions” of memory) or non-veridical, fake memories (“hallucinations” of memory) for coercive political purposes—as per the terrifying heyday of the Inquisition, as per the Nazi/fascist era of the 1930s and early 40s, and as per Orwell’s *1984*, which is of course a dystopian sci-fi allegory of the late 1940s that comprehends both the totalitarian Nazi/fascist era and the post-World War II totalitarian Stalinist/communist era.

But the ideological manipulation of memory also fully applies to contemporary neo-Hobbesian, scientific, technocratic, big-capitalist neoliberal democratic States. For example, suppose that you are exposed hour after hour, day after day, to movies, TV, music, social media, etc.,etc., that were subtly or not-so-subtly Statist, anti-communist/socialist, racist/anti-Arab, ultra-capitalist, ultra-patriotic, etc., etc., and suppose that this started when you were very young. Then, almost inevitably, you would have all sorts of misrememberings and/or non-veridical, fake memories, say, about 9-11, about various US invasions of other countries, or about the crowd size at Trump’s Inauguration—“we feel compelled to go out and clear the air and put alternative facts out there”—just as if you were living in a media-created version of *The Matrix*:

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<sup>18</sup> H. Giroux, *The Violence of Organized Forgetting* (San Francisco, CA: City Lights Publishers, 2014).

“Are we at war with Russia (or North Korea, or Syria, etc.), or not? Dang. I can’t remember now.”

“I don’t know either! Better check Facebook and our Twitter feeds.”

Indeed, I believe that *a great many Americans have all sorts of ideologically-manipulated misrememberings and/or non-veridical, fake memories with significant political content and implications*, about themselves, about history, and about the world in general. And, of course, not just Americans. In the larger context of contemporary neo-Hobbesian, scientistic, technocratic, big-capitalist neoliberal democratic States, and of course paradigmatically in classical totalitarian States like Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia or neo-totalitarian States like contemporary China, the ideological manipulation of human memory for economic and political purposes is virtually a universal phenomenon. If you have ever gone to school, read a popular magazine or popular book, read a newspaper, looked at a billboard advertisement, watched TV and especially a newscast, watched a movie or streamed a video to your personal computer, listened to a radio, or to an iPod or MP3 player, downloaded podcasts to your handheld mobile device, used the internet, or used any kind of social media, then you have been exposed to it.

Moreover, not merely misremembering and non-veridical, fake memories *but also perceptual illusions and perceptual hallucinations* can be (and are constantly being) manipulated for political purposes, as per the Inquisition, as per classical or neo-totalitarian States like Nazi Germany, Stalinist Russia, and contemporary China, and as per the contemporary political situation in neo-Hobbesian, scientistic, technocratic, big-capitalist neoliberal democratic States. That is a direct entailment of the “cognitive penetration” thesis—indeed, it is simply a direct entailment of the role of concepts in human cognition, interacting with contemporary social institutions, especially States and State-like institutions—even if most cognitive-science-oriented work on memory and sense perception that contemporary philosophers of mind pay any serious attention to, generally presents itself as completely innocent of social and political implications.

People who have had serious ideological disciplining start to see, hear, smell, feel, and taste the world, and to experience their own bodies, and other people’s bodies, and to remember or seem to remember, in ideologically-determined, sociopolitically expedient ways. For example, perceptually stereotyping/framing people with a certain non-Hungarian ethnicity and social history as “dirty,” perceptually stereotyping/framing young men who have dark skin and are wearing hoodies as “threatening to the police,” or perceptually stereotyping/framing refugees who have swarthy complexions and are wearing vaguely foreign-styled clothing as “potential terrorists” or “potentially



threatening to women.” And then of course there’s that “alternative fact” about the crowd size at Trump’s Inauguration.

For all these reasons, I strongly believe that we can all significantly learn, and also individually and collectively benefit, from the political philosophy of cognition. Moreover and above all, any *emancipatory political philosophy*—for example, existential Kantian cosmopolitan anarchism<sup>19</sup>—is also going to have to develop and deploy a serious, critical political philosophy of cognition.

Strong Non-Conceptualism and radically naïve realism about memory and about sense perception are uniquely theoretically well-suited for providing an adequate explanation of such ideological manipulation, and also for developing phenomenologically robust and agentially effective strategies for cognitive resistance, ideological self-deprogramming, and cognitive self-liberation. This is for two reasons.

**First**, mainstream theories of cognition, like De Brigard’s, are either content-monist, constructivist/irrealist, or functionalist/mechanistic, or any two of the above, or all three, and therefore cannot accommodate or account for

either (i) first-person, conscious or self-conscious cognitive resistance to cognitive penetration,  
 or (ii) first-person, conscious or self-conscious veridical cognition, as a realistic and in-principle epistemically discriminable standard against which misremembering (illusions of memory) and perceptual illusions, and non-veridical, fake memories (hallucinations of memory) and perceptual hallucinations can always be directly and first-personally, as well as intersubjectively, tested,  
 or (iii) first-person, conscious or self-conscious normatively-guided, free volitional control of cognitive activities.

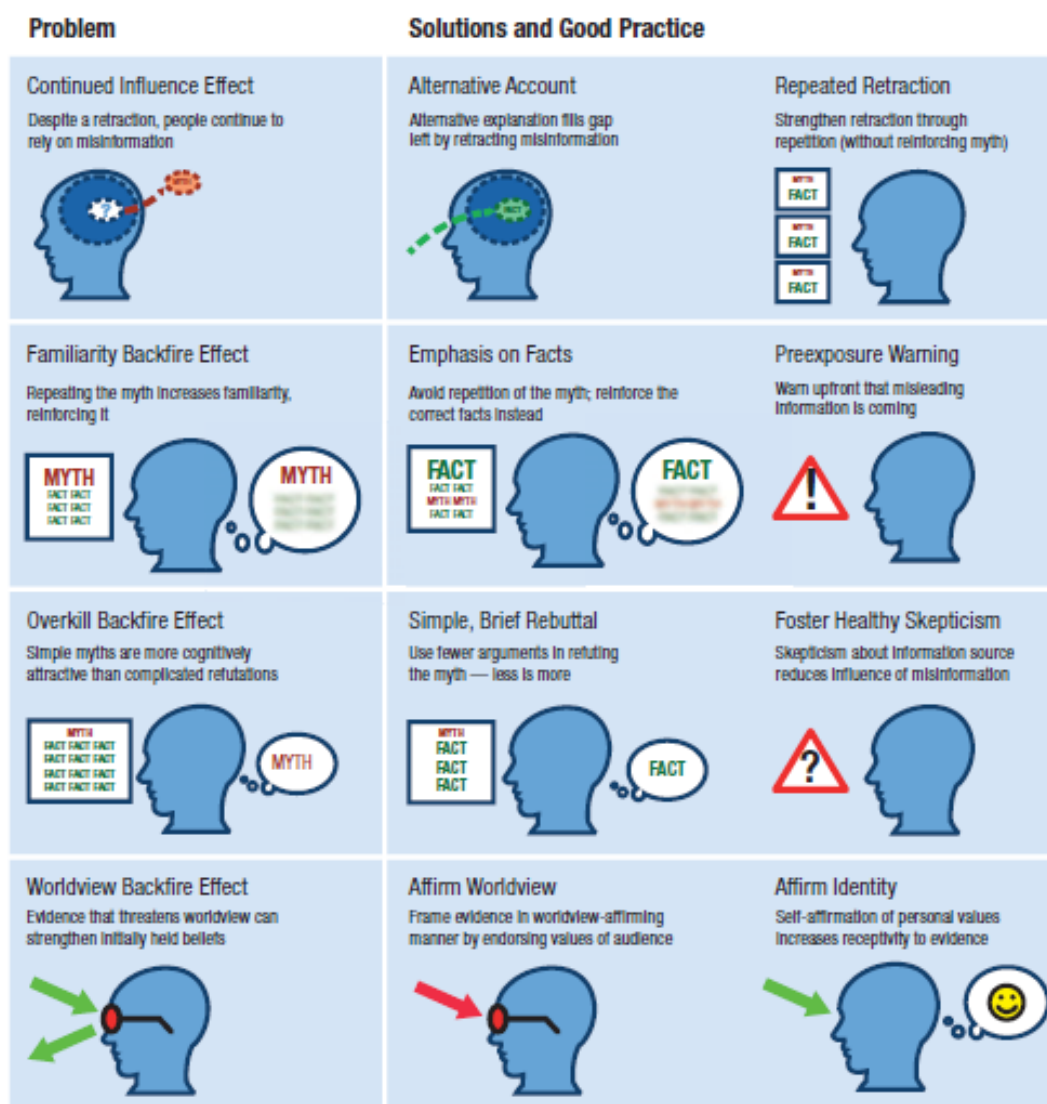
In short, these mainstream theories cannot account for phenomenologically robust and agentially effective strategies for cognitive resistance, ideological self-deprogramming, and cognitive self-liberation *that we can freely try out and repeatedly practice ourselves, in public contexts*, in a process of critical, radically enlightening, mutual self-education in which students and critical educators are reciprocally learning from and teaching each other.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> See note 9 above.

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. M. Ramos (New York: Continuum, 2007); and P. Freire, e, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: Seabury Press, 1973).

**Second**, and sharply on the contrary, it follows that the Strong Non-Conceptualist, radically naïve realist approach to memory and sense perception *is* in a uniquely good position to explain the foundations of contemporary empirical research about cognitive bias, the persistence of misinformation, and the effectiveness of cognitive de-biasing. For example, diagrammatically represented, here is what Stephan Lewandowsky and his co-researchers propose:<sup>21</sup>



To repeat: in view of the Strong Non-Conceptualism and radically naïve realism about memory and sense perception, it follows that *we can freely try out and repeatedly practice*

<sup>21</sup> S. Lewandowsky et al., "Misinformation and Its Correction: Continued Influence and Successful Debiasing," *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 13 (2012): 106-131, at p. 122; available online at URL = [https://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/780/docs/12\\_pspi\\_lewandowsky\\_et\\_al\\_misinformation.pdf](https://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/780/docs/12_pspi_lewandowsky_et_al_misinformation.pdf).

*these techniques ourselves, in public contexts, in a process of critical, radically enlightening mutual self-education in which students and critical educators are reciprocally learning from and teaching each other.*

Therefore, sharply unlike what is entailed by mainstream theories of cognition like De Brigard's, according to the Strong Non-Conceptualist, radically naïve realist theory of memory and sense perception that I have just been arguing for, *we don't need* Government-funded or corporate capitalist-funded and Government-monitored or corporate capitalist-monitored men in white coats, cog-sci labs, machines, or drugs to be able to do this. *We can do it ourselves, without the funding and without the technocracy.* That is: *we don't need* a little army of neo-Hobbesian, scientific, technocratic, big-capitalist neoliberal democratic, university-based O'Briens in white coats to reverse-manipulate what some other O'Brien did to us. *We can do it ourselves, without being told what to do by the O'Briens.*

Moreover at this point, the more or less covert, significant social and political commitments of mainstream theories of cognition, including De Brigard's, should be self-evident: *follow the funding!*



## 5. Conclusion

In order to develop the politically resistant and emancipatory cognitive strategies I have been talking about, like the ones suggested by Lewandowsky and his co-researchers, embedded in political theories and real-world political frameworks that emphasize individual and collective free agency and radical enlightenment, and grounded on the Strong Non-Conceptualist, radically naïve realist theory of human sense perception and memory, I hereby propose *that we creatively adapt* well-tested, effective

techniques for resisting cult-indoctrination, military-prisoner thought-control, and kidnap-victim or terrorist-hostage-victim thought-control, especially including Stockholm Syndrome, *and then apply them ourselves, in public contexts*, in order to resist and reverse the ideological manipulation of human cognition for economic and political purposes.

Indeed, the Wikipedia article on “Mind Control,” and J.A.M. Meerloo’s *Mental Seduction and Menticide* are good starting-places for learning about these techniques.<sup>22</sup>

An important and illuminating irony here, of course, is *that the most practically-useful, hands-on accounts of these techniques have been recorded in classified, publicly-unavailable US security agency, military, and foreign service handbooks* that have themselves been designed and written in the larger context of powerful, politically-expedient ideological cognitive manipulation, by the US government, of the very people who are required to study and master those handbooks as part of their highly demanding, rigorous, and thought-controlling training.<sup>23</sup>

But this is only one of many important, illuminating ironies in the political philosophy of cognition.

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<sup>22</sup> “Mind Control,” *Wikipedia*, available online at URL=[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mind\\_control](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mind_control)>. See also J.A.M. Meerloo, *Mental Seduction and Menticide: The Psychology of Thought Control and Brainwashing*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1957.

<sup>23</sup> See, e.g., J. Schmidt, *Disciplined Minds* (New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), chs. 14-15.