

Preface

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**Memory and Understanding: Concept formation in
Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu***

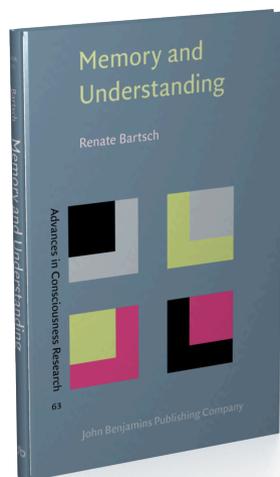
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Preface

This study presents a theory and model of memory and remembrance, which is a further explication of the theory of Dynamic Conceptual Semantics and of the Unconscious and Conscious, which has been developed in Bartsch (1998) *Dynamic Conceptual Semantic: A Logico-Philosophical Investigation into Concept Formation and Understanding* and in Bartsch (2002) *Consciousness Emerging: The Dynamics of Perception, Imagination, Action, Memory, Thought, and Language*.

First, an introduction is given to concept formation, remembering and understanding, and it is pointed out how phenomenological data and dynamic conceptual semantics have a correspondence in neurological structures and processes, which provide the capacity to concept formation and understanding. The neurological architecture has to consist of circuit activation along connections between groups of neurons, which is capable of generating semantically directed binding of concepts in constituent structures of situational concepts and sentences, namely types of utterances representing situations. There are groups of neurons that function as conceptual indicators, which together form the general memory, and there must also be groups of neurons that function as indices for episodes, which form the basis of the specific memory. From there the constituent structure of a remembrance is constructed by connections to conceptual indicators in the general memory. When these conceptual indicators activate via their connections certain phenomenally dedicated neurons on the sensorial and motor fields, the circuit activation between the conceptual indicators on the conceptual fields with the phenomenally dedicated neurons on the sensorial and motor fields gives rise to conscious representations, being perceptions and imaginations of situations and utterances, or productions of actions and utterances. This model of memory and understanding is sketched and argued for in the first chapter and it is elaborated in the second chapter of the book.

In the second chapter, the memory of episodes and facts is presented as a capacity for construing remembrances. Remembrances are not stored as ready-made representations or images in a kind of large library or box. Rather they

are generated. In order to generate remembrances with the right situational constituent structure, the specific memory must consist of groups of neurons that function as indices for specific episodes and individuals, and that direct the construction of the remembrance. It is shown in a model how the specific memory can work as a capacity for constructing remembrances by connecting from out the indices and in a structured fashion to the general memory (consisting of conceptual indicators and their inter-connections) and to emotional, sensorial, and motor fields. The specific memory works in an unconscious mode as long as the circuit activation between conceptual indicators initiated and directed by the memory indices does not involve the sensorial and motor fields. As soon as these fields are involved in the circuit activation, a conscious representation is achieved in the form of an imagination grounded in the indices of the specific memory. This then is a remembrance. Our capacity of understanding new situations consists of the working of the general and the specific memory, which makes that a new situation gets imbedded into the similarity and contiguity structures established on the whole set of our previously experienced situations in the course of building up the whole memory structure on the basis of our previous personal experiences, and possibly pre-organized to some degree by biases in the connectivity of the brain inherited and formed by mutation and selection on the basis of the experiences of individuals during the evolution of the human race. The establishment of these structures is what happens in concept formation, in ontogenesis as well as in phylogenesis. There is, thus, no difference in principle between what is learned and what is innate. These are the same kind of structures, established in history in the same way, on the basis of experienced data.

In the third chapter, the theory of concept formation and understanding, and the model of memory is related to Bergson's philosophy of memory, and it is applied to Marcel Proust's novel *A la recherche du temps perdu*, in its English translation *Remembrance of Things Past*. It is shown that, and how, Proust's novel exemplifies concept formation and understanding as based on the capacity of general and specific memory, how concept formation and remembering result in understanding new episodes based on previously experienced episodes, and how they result in the structure of the life-history explored in the consciousness of the Narrator, which is the structure of the novel. The interaction between the unconscious and the conscious, as it is explicated by more theoretical investigations of the Narrator into his life-history, are especially attended to. In this context Proust's aesthetic theorizing is analyzed in terms of the enjoyment of ones cognitive abilities, which are related to the structures of the novel. This chapter is restricted to an application of the theory of con-

cept formation, memory, and understanding to Proust's great novel. It does not take part in the broad discussion of scholarly literature concerning the interpretation and literary criticism of Proust's work. It is merely meant to be a philosophical approach to Proust, in the light of the theory of Dynamic Conceptual Semantics and Cognitive Science.