REMEMBERING WITHOUT KNOWING

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Memory sometimes yields knowledge and sometimes does not. It is, however, natural to suppose that if a man remembers that \( p \), then he knows that \( p \) and formerly knew that \( p \). Remembering something is plausibly construed as a form of knowing something which one has not forgotten and which one knew previously. We shall argue, to the contrary, that this thesis is false.\(^1\)

Four Counterexamples. We shall present some counterexamples and subsequently explain why they are effective. First example. I am musing about my past and a vivid image occurs to me of an elderly woman standing by a stone well next to a red barn. I have no idea, initially, who the person is. Then suddenly the thought occurs to me that the person is my grandmother, that my grandmother once stood by a stone well next to a red barn. Moreover, the thought is not the result of conjecture or external suggestion; it occurs to me from memory. I have no idea, however, whether this thought that suddenly occurs to me is a true recollection of the past or a figment of my imagination. For all I know, the image I so vividly recall is of some quite different person, or is an image from a movie or a dream. I do not know whether my grandmother ever stood by a stone well next to a barn or not. The thought just occurred to me that the woman in the image was my grandmother, and I do not know whether this is so. Suppose, however, in fact, the image is one collected from a visit to my grandmother's home. The thought has occurred to me from memory, and it is a true recollection. Thus, I do remember that my grandmother once stood by a stone well next to a red barn, but I do not, by any means, know that this is so. For all I know, the image is not of my grandmother, and she was never in such a situation.\(^2\)

Second Example. I am an extremely depressed mental patient. I have an enemy, Hamish, who has a sister, Cleopatra, that I dearly love. But Hamish

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1. Throughout our discussion, when we speak of remembering, we shall mean remembering that \( p \), that is, remembering that something is true.

2. C. B. Martin and Max Deutscher argue in a similar manner in "Remembering," The Philosophical Review, 75 (1966), p. 170. However, the example they use is one in which a man paints what he believes to be an imaginary scene when, in fact, it is a scene he remembers. Since the thought never occurs to the man that the scene is of anything
has been completely effective in preventing me from seeing Cleopatra, and, though I might harm Hamish, such aggression would undermine Cleopatra's affection for me. This conflict has brought on my severe depression. The doctors decide that the most effective therapy would be to eliminate all memory of the situation by using electroshock therapy. They try. The doctor in charge asks his assistant, who examined me subsequent to the therapy, whether the treatment was successful. He replies, "Not entirely, he remembers that 'Cleopatra' is the name of somebody's sister, but he does not remember anything about her or about Hamish." He continues, "But he is pretty confused, and I don't think he knows that what he remembers is true." In my confusion, the thought occurs to me that 'Cleopatra' is the name of somebody's sister. I have no idea who she is or why this thought occurs to me. Thus, even if I feel confident that it is so, I do not know that 'Cleopatra' is the name of somebody's sister. I do not know why I think what I do, or even how to interpret my own thought. It does not fit in with other thoughts that I have. I have no reason to think this is something I remember, though, in fact, it is. The thought occurs to me from memory, and it is perfectly correct. I remember that 'Cleopatra' is the name of somebody's sister, but I do not know that 'Cleopatra' is the name of somebody's sister. For all I know, the thought is an aberration, and nobody has a sister with that name.

Third Example. I am avidly lecturing when the noon bell rings. I do not notice the bell ringing at the time but continue with my lecture. A student, seeking to free his fellows for lunch, asks me, "Haven't you forgotten the time?". Somewhat startled, and without looking at watch or clock, I remember the ringing of the bell which I had not noticed before. I reply, "Yes, now I remember that the bell rang." When I make this remark, I remember and I know that the bell rang. But did not know this before. I know that the bell rang only, and for the first time, after the student's remark, when I remember that the bell rang. When the bell rings, I do not know that it is ringing, because I am distracted and do not notice it. Though unnoticed, the ringing of the bell is not unheard. The sensory experience fails to break into consciousness at the time it occurs, but passes into memory nonetheless. Thus, the thought and, indeed, the knowledge, that the bell rang, comes to me from memory even though I did not previously think or know that the bell had rung.

Fourth example. I have a copy of Knowing in my office. On Monday, one

real, it is not at all obvious that he remembers that p, that is, remembers that anything is true. Robert K. Shope, in his "Remembering, Knowledge, and Memory Traces," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, 33 (March), 1973, was the first to point out the inappropriateness of the painter example, but his conclusion is that Malcolm's analysis comes through unscathed.

3. This example is due to Thomas Reid. It was cited by Timothy Duggan and Richard Taylor in "On Seeing Double," Philosophical Quarterly, 8 (1958), pp. 171-174.