

The Centre for Philosophy of Memory: The first seven years

El Centro de Filosofía de la Memoria: Los primeros siete años

Kourken Michaelian*; Denis Perrin**

*Université Grenoble Alpes
Institut Universitaire de France
michaelian.kourken@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5205-3046>

**Université Grenoble Alpes
Institut Universitaire de France
denis.perrin@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3206-0345>

Abstract

This short article provides an overview of the creation of the Centre for Philosophy of Memory (CPM) at the Université Grenoble Alpes in 2018 and its development since then into a key node in the international philosophy of memory network. It describes the CPM's strategy and activities and discusses the challenges that the centre has encountered and overcome. The goal of the article is twofold: first, simply to make a record of the history of the CPM available to philosophers of memory and to others to whom such a record might be of interest; second, to provide a resource for colleagues in other fields who have created or are contemplating creating similar centres.

Keywords: philosophy of memory; Centre for Philosophy of Memory; episodic memory; mental time travel; simulationism; continuism

Resumen

Este breve artículo proporciona una visión general de la creación del Centro de Filosofía de



Received: 16/04/2025. Final version: 11/07/2025

eISSN 0719-4242 – © 2025 Instituto de Filosofía, Universidad de Valparaíso

This article is distributed under the terms of the

Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License



CC BY-NC-ND

la Memoria (CPM) en la Université Grenoble Alpes en 2018 y su desarrollo desde entonces hasta convertirse en un nodo clave en la red internacional de filosofía de la memoria. Describe la estrategia y actividades del CPM y analiza los desafíos que el centro ha enfrentado y superado. El objetivo del artículo es doble: primero, simplemente hacer disponible un registro de la historia del CPM para filósofos de la memoria y para otros a quienes tal registro pueda resultar de interés; segundo, proporcionar un recurso para colegas en otros campos que han creado o están contemplando crear centros similares.

Palabras clave: filosofía de la memoria; Centro de Filosofía de la Memoria; memoria episódica; viaje en el tiempo mental; continuismo

1. Introduction

This short article provides an overview of the creation of the Centre for Philosophy of Memory (CPM) at the Université Grenoble Alpes (UGA) in 2018 and its development since then into a key node in the international philosophy of memory network. It describes the CPM's strategy and activities and discusses the challenges that the centre has encountered and overcome. The goal of the article is twofold: first, simply to make a record of the history of the CPM available to philosophers of memory and to others to whom such a record might be of interest; second, to provide a resource for colleagues in other fields who have created or are contemplating creating similar centres.

2. The context in 2018

Philosophy of memory was just becoming self-aware as a field when the authors of this paper took the decision to create the CPM in the fall of 2018. The field had started to take shape several years earlier, as philosophers whose research focused on memory found each other and as their numbers increased beyond a critical threshold. By 2018, several factors made it clear that something was afoot. First, the volume of published research was growing rapidly (see Sakuragi, Dranseika & Michaelian forthcoming). Second, reference works were starting to appear, as the *Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Memory* (Bernecker & Michaelian 2017) was published, along with a new *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry on memory (Michaelian & Sutton 2017). Third, following a notable increase in the frequency of small workshops and symposia dedicated to philosophical research on memory, full-blown conferences were being organized, with Issues in Philosophy of Memory (IPM), the first conference in the field, being held in 2017 in Cologne. Finally, professional associations were being established: the Philosophy of Memory Organization (PhOMO), charged first and foremost with ensuring that further iterations of the conference would occur, was founded during a meeting at IPM.



3. Creating the centre: collaboration and support for early-career researchers

The context in 2018 thus lent itself to the creation of a centre for philosophy of memory, but getting the CPM up and running nevertheless required overcoming significant challenges. Initially, there were only two CPMers (Kourken Michaelian and Denis Perrin), and the centre had no office space, website, or infrastructure of any sort. Significant financial support provided by the UGA enabled Michaelian and Perrin to hire two postdocs, André Sant’Anna and Chris McCarroll. The group managed to obtain office space —no easier a task at the UGA than at any other university— set up a website (<http://phil-mem.org/>), and began to develop a research culture and a strategy.

From the outset, one important element of the culture of the CPM has been to provide extensive support for early-career researchers, who are encouraged and expected to be fully involved in all of the centre’s activities. As the CVs of the early-career researchers who have passed through the CPM will attest, this approach has been highly beneficial both to them and to the centre. Another important element has been an emphasis on collaboration. Each member of the centre has his or her own research programme, and members often disagree sharply even with respect to the most central questions of the field,¹ but work at the centre is nevertheless done in a highly collaborative manner, with members regularly coauthoring, coediting, and coorganizing.²

This collaboration is made possible by the fact that members work together at the centre on a daily basis. Indeed, it was in virtue of the need to enable intensive face-to-face collaboration that obtaining office space for the CPM was among the first tasks that we set ourselves. Collaboration is also made possible by the adoption of a resolutely ecumenical stance that treats no question or approach as being off limits. That stance is illustrated by the fact that the centre has, even while maintaining a strongly analytic orientation, remained open to a variety of philosophical approaches to memory, actively engaging with, for example, the phenomenological and Bergsonian traditions.

¹ This puts the lie to suggestions to the effect that there is a “Grenoble school” (De Brigard under review). CPMers have, for example, disagreed in print about the viability of the simulation theory of memory (McCarroll 2020; Michaelian 2024), the nature of the causal connection potentially involved in remembering (Andonovski 2024; Perrin 2021), the continuity of memory and imagination (McCarroll 2022; Michaelian 2016a; Perrin 2016; Sant’Anna 2021, 2023), accuracy in observer perspective memory (McCarroll 2018; Michaelian & Sant’Anna 2022) and in memory in general (McCarroll, Wang & Lin 2024; Openshaw 2023; Sant’Anna 2024). This list is merely illustrative.

² Of the six edited volumes for which the CPM has been (partly) responsible, for example, all but one have involved more than one CPMer as an editor.



4. Building the centre: a disciplinary and international strategy

This openness notwithstanding, the CPM has deliberately downplayed interdisciplinary approaches. The centre is not opposed to interdisciplinarity —far from it. Many of its members have active interdisciplinary collaborations, and all share a naturalistic orientation. The CPM has, moreover, organized both a number of interdisciplinary workshops and the 2024 conference of the European Society for Philosophy and Psychology. But memory is a much less well-established topic in philosophy than it is in psychology and related disciplines, disciplines whose members dramatically outnumber philosophers, and we have therefore elected to give priority to developing philosophy of memory as a field in its own right —a field with its own questions, methods, concepts, and debates.

The adoption of a strongly disciplinary orientation has been one important component of the CPM's strategy. The adoption of a strongly international orientation has been another, and the CPM has consistently sought collaborators around the world. The very first workshop that it coorganized took place in Shanghai, and it has since coorganized workshops in Bochum, Cologne, Florianópolis, Fukuoka, Santa Maria, Shanghai (again), Sofia, Taipei, and Tartu, in addition to coorganizing workshops in Grenoble with partners from many of those and other locations. The roughly fifty visiting researchers that it has hosted have hailed from Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Estonia, Germany, Iran, Israel, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Mexico, Norway, Poland, Spain, Taiwan, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Its forty-four associate members are based in some fifteen countries. And there are virtually as many nationalities represented by the CPMers themselves as there are CPMers.

That these orientations were the right ones to adopt is suggested by the continued success of the CPM's activities, which include three seminars (its highly active internal seminar, its public seminar, and the online Bochum-Grenoble-Taipei Memory Colloquium, of which it is a coorganizer) and an average of about seven workshops per year. In addition to the 2024 ESPP, it organized IPM 2 in 2019 and the early-career researchers conference of the francophone Société de Philosophie Analytique in 2023. In total, the CPM has organized roughly three hundred meetings of its three seminars (Figure 1a) and roughly thirty-five workshops and conferences (Figure 1b).³ It has hosted about fifty visiting researchers (Figure 1c). It publishes PhilMemBib, a comprehensive philosophy of memory bibliography that now includes about 2500 entries (see <http://phil-mem.org/philmembib.html>). It organizes (together with the *Review of Philosophy and Psychology*) a biannual essay prize competition for early career researchers. It has published a steady stream of articles and chapters and has edited multiple books and special issues —in total, over seventy articles and chapters

³ These numbers and those given below were current as of the end of 2024.

(Figure 1d) and six edited collections. And it has been successful in obtaining funding to support all of these activities (see section 5).

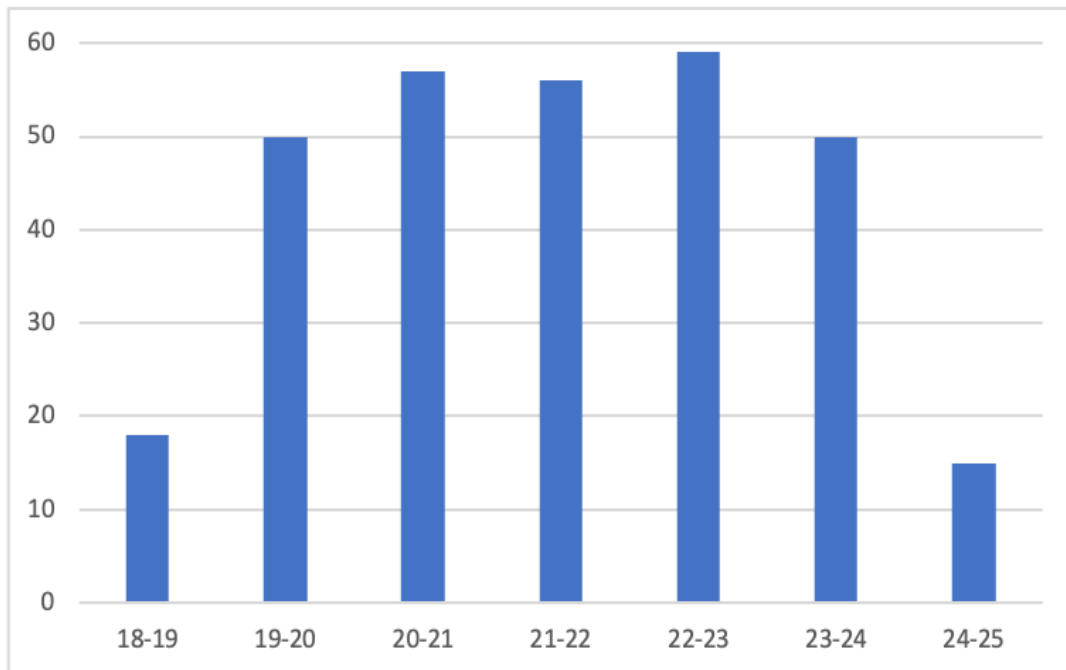


Figure 1. Seminars organized by the CPM as of the end of 2024.

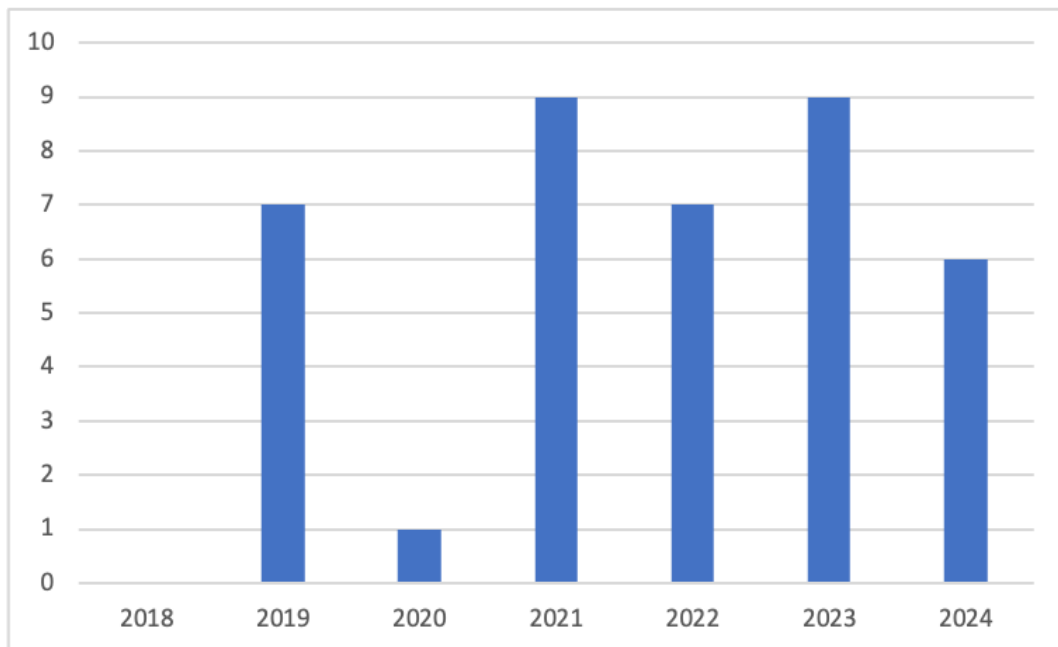


Figure 2. Workshops organized by the CPM as of the end of 2024. The decrease in 2020 is due to the pandemic.

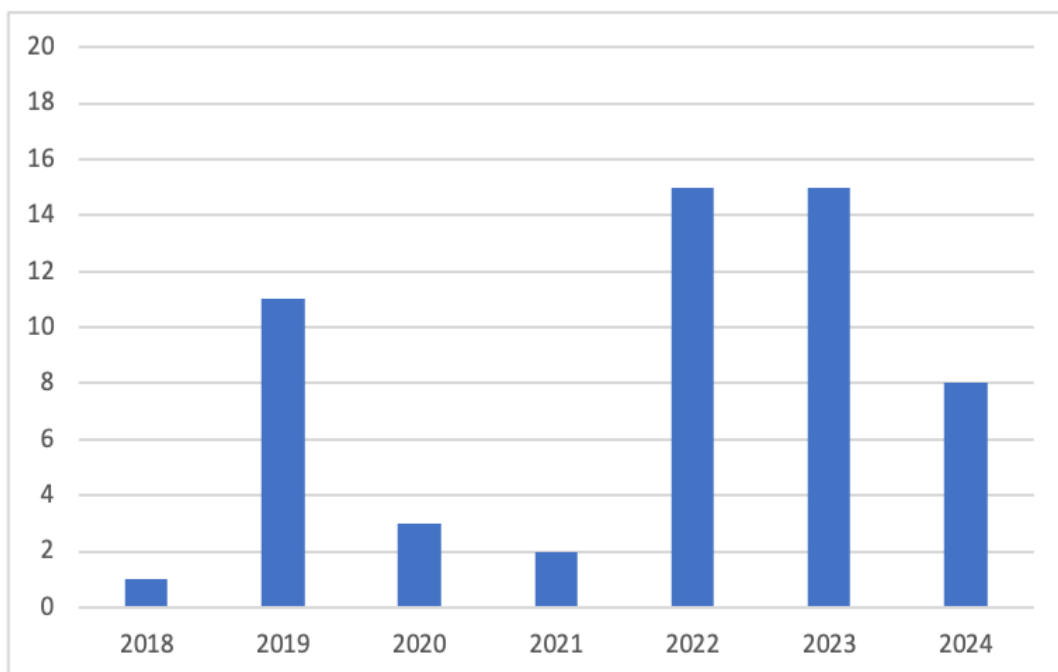


Figure 3. Visiting researchers hosted by the CPM as of the end of 2024. The decrease

in 2020 and 2021 is due to the pandemic.

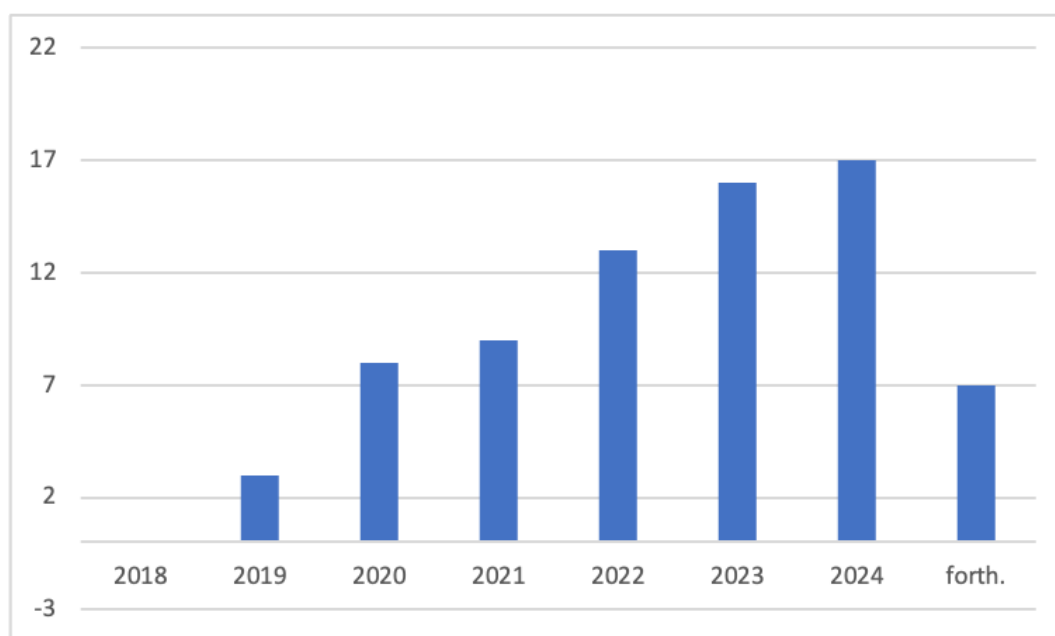


Figure 4. CPM-affiliated publications as of the end of 2024.

5. The CPM today

Initially, there were two CPMers, then four. Today, there are seventeen (including four affiliated members). Sant’Anna and McCarroll have moved on to new positions: Sant’Anna is now an SNSF Ambizione Fellow at the University of Geneva, and McCarroll is associate professor at the National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University in Taipei. James Openshaw spent several years as a postdoc at the CPM and has likewise moved on, taking up an assistant professorship at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. All three former postdocs contributed greatly to the development of the CPM and remain actively involved as affiliated members. Today, the CPM has three new postdocs. It has six PhD students —this is in addition to one completed PhD, Vilius Dranseika, who has a position at the Jagiellonian University in Warsaw but who remains involved as an affiliated member. And it has several master’s students. Like the centre’s former postdocs, all of these early-career researchers contribute greatly to the CPM, which has been and continues to be very much a team effort.

The growth that the CPM has undergone has brought with it a new set of challenges. More office space was required, we came to need a dedicated meeting room, and a more

formal internal structure (involving, for example, regular lab meetings) became necessary, as did defined internal means of communication (such as a shared calendar and an internal mailing list). The main challenge, however, has been and continues to be that of obtaining funding. The funding that CPMers have obtained from all external and internal sources so far amounts to roughly 1.5 million EUR in total. The price of obtaining this funding, measured in terms of time spent on both successful and unsuccessful applications, is significant, but, as it is impossible for a group like the CPM to function without funding, the price is well worth paying.

7. Conclusion: The CPM tomorrow

In the seven or so years since the CPM was founded, the philosophy of memory has continued to undergo impressive growth. The volume of published research continues to increase rapidly. New reference works continue to be published, including *Current Controversies in Philosophy of Memory* (Sant’Anna, McCarroll & Michaelian 2022) and the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Memory* (Sant’Anna & Craver in preparation), along with a new *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry on the epistemology of memory (Frise 2023) and two textbooks (Senor 2019; De Brigard 2023). New conference series have been established, with the second Generative Episodic Memory conference taking place in Bochum in 2025. And new professional associations have been established: the Eurasian Memory Network, with a regional focus intended to complement the global focus of PhOMO, was founded at the Eurasian Memory Meeting in Taipei in 2024. We hope that the CPM will continue to contribute to the growth of the field for the next seven years and beyond.

Acknowledgements: KM’s and DP’s work on this paper was supported by ANR grant number ANR-23-CE54-0004-0. KM’s work was also supported by the ANR in the framework of the “Investissements d’avenir” program (ANR-15-IDEX-02). Thanks to Chris McCarroll, James Openshaw, and André Sant’Anna for comments. A shorter version of the paper appeared as a post on the Memory Palace blog (thememorypalacephil.substack.com).

References

- Andonovski, N. (2024). Engrams as mental files. *Synthese*, 204(6), 154.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-024-04801-x>.
- Bernecker, S., & Michaelian, K. (Eds.). (2017). *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Memory*. Routledge.



- Frise, M. (2023). Epistemological problems of memory. In Zalta, E. N., & Nodelman, U. (Eds.), *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2023/entries/memory-episprob/>.
- De Brigard, F. (2023). *Memory and Remembering*. Cambridge University Press.
- De Brigard, F. (Under review). Remembering as inverse causal inference.
- McCarroll, C. (2018). *Remembering from the Outside: Personal Memory and the Perspectival Mind*. Oxford University Press.
- McCarroll, C. J. (2020). Remembering the personal past: Beyond the boundaries of imagination. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 585352. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.585352>.
- McCarroll, C. J. (2022). Memory and imagination, minds and worlds. In Berninger, A., & Vendrell Ferran, Í. (Eds.), *Philosophical Perspectives on Memory and Imagination* (pp. 35–53). Routledge.
- McCarroll, C. J., Wang, I. J., & Lin, Y. T. (2024). Attitudinal pluralism in dream experiences and dream memories. In Gregory, D., & Michaelian, K. (Eds.), *Dreaming and Memory: Philosophical Issues* (pp. 177–200). Springer.
- Michaelian, K. (2016). Against discontinuism: Mental time travel and our knowledge of past and future events. In Michaelian, K., Klein, S. B., & Szpunar, K. K. (Eds.), *Seeing the Future: Theoretical Perspectives on Future-Oriented Mental Time Travel* (pp. 62–92). Oxford University Press.
- Michaelian, K. (2016). *Mental Time Travel: Episodic Memory and Our Knowledge of the Personal Past*. MIT Press.
- Michaelian, K. (2024). Radicalizing simulationism: Remembering as imagining the (non-personal) past. *Philosophical Psychology*, 37(5), 1170–1196. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09515089.2022.2082934>.
- Michaelian, K., & Sant’Anna, A. (2022). From authenticism to alethism: Against McCarroll on observer memory. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 21, 835–856. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-021-09772-9>.
- Michaelian, K., & Sutton, J. (2017). Memory. In Zalta, E. N. (Ed.), *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/memory/>.



- Openshaw, J. (2023). (In defence of) preservationism and the previous awareness condition: What is a theory of remembering, anyway? *Philosophical Perspectives*, 37(1), 290–307. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phpe.12191>.
- Perrin, D. (2016). Asymmetries in subjective time. In Michaelian, K., Klein, S. B., & Szpunar, K. K. (Eds.), *Seeing the Future: Theoretical Perspectives on Future-Oriented Mental Time Travel* (pp. 39–61). Oxford University Press.
- Perrin, D. (2021). Embodied episodic memory: A new case for causalism? *Intellectica*, 74, 229–252. <https://doi.org/10.3406/intel.2021.1992>.
- Sakuragi, S., Dranseika, V., & Michaelian, K. (Forthcoming.) Trends in philosophy of memory: A quantitative approach. *Lexis – Journal in English Lexicology*.
- Sant’Anna, A. (2021). Attitudes and the (dis)continuity between memory and imagination. *Estudios de Filosofía*, 64, 73–93. <https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.ef.n64a04>.
- Sant’Anna, A. (2023). Is remembering constructive imagining? *Synthese*, 202(5), 141. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-023-04338-5>.
- Sant’Anna, A. (2024). Metacognition and the puzzle of alethic memory. *Philosophy and the Mind Sciences*, 5. <https://doi.org/10.33735/phimisci.2024.9880>.
- Sant’Anna, A., & Craver, C. (In preparation). *Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Memory*. Oxford University Press.
- Sant’Anna, A., McCarroll, C. J., & Michaelian, K. (Eds.). (2023). *Current Controversies in Philosophy of Memory*. Routledge.
- Senor, T. D. (2019). *A Critical Introduction to the Epistemology of Memory*. Bloomsbury.