

A Phenomenology of Forgetting

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ABSTRACT

Despite the ubiquity of forgetting in human life, scholarly research has said relatively little about it. The following project aims to begin to remedy this neglect by offering a phenomenological analysis of the pivotal role that forgetting plays in making us who we are. By foregrounding the experiential impact of forgetting, this phenomenological approach will move beyond the reductive view of forgetting as a mere failure to ‘encode an input,’ or an absence of a ‘neural trace’, and it will allow me to illuminate the crucial role forgetting plays in our existence. Along the way I will discuss various threads in the epistemology and metaphysics of memory to provide a new way of looking at forgetting via a phenomenologically informed view of our mindedness: that we are best placed to understand the role of forgetting if we foreground the idea that mindedness is based in care.

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*for Matt,
I couldn't have done it without you,*

*and for Ceri,
who will not be forgotten.*

INTRODUCTION

Memory makes us who we are. This claim animates a rich research tradition on human identity that spans disciplines from the arts and humanities to the social and cognitive sciences. Philosophy is no exception; its history is pervaded by accounts of the relation between memory and the self. Though fruitful, this tradition is not without its blind spots. Of particular interest to me is that the focus on memory has led scholars to all but overlook an intimately related capacity that plays a similarly vital role in structuring the self, namely, forgetting. Memory makes us who we are, but so does forgetting. To have a self that is typical of human life one needs to remember and to forget. Nietzsche, one of the few philosophers to notice this, puts it bluntly: “it is generally completely impossible to live without forgetting” (Nietzsche, 1876). Once acknowledged, few would dispute this claim. Yet since this goes so often unacknowledged, the precise role that forgetting plays in human life is left underexplored and poorly understood. The following project will begin to correct this neglect through an analysis of forgetting, its relationship to what we care about, and its role in the constitution of the self.

Our sense of self, our sense of who we are, is constituted as that which persists over time with a relatively stable character. I will argue that in order to capture the influence of our forgetting we must turn to insights from the closely linked fields of classical phenomenology and care-based theories of the self. From the first-person perspective, having a coherent sense of self presupposes that some things which do not align with this sense of self have been forgotten. For example, say I think of myself as an especially generous person. To experience myself this way, I not only need to remember episodes that confirm this self-conception, for example, the times I gave up my seat on the bus or offered you the last biscuit. I must also have forgotten things that could challenge my sense of who I am, for instance, the times I’ve ignored homeless

people asking for spare change, or the times I felt motivated to help them but failed to act on those motivations. Through forgetting, I manage to see myself, without qualification, as a generous person. My forgetting maintains my first-personal sense of who I am.

Valuable phenomenological work has sought to grasp the nature of memory. Often examined are the feelings of pastness, ownership, and familiarity (Teroni, 2017). By seeking to discern what having a memory is like, what the first-personal structure of memory entails, and how memory shapes the experiences of persons and cultures, phenomenologists have raised important challenges to the paradigm of memory proffered by the cognitive sciences.

A neuroscientific notion of memory as a ‘neural trace’, phenomenologists would suggest, reduces memory to a quasi-physical substrate, and so it leaves us without an account of memory as it is experienced. However, the phenomenological argument continues, neuroscientific inquiry itself in fact presupposes a grasp of the experiences that correlate with the parts of the brain it studies. Without a first-personal experiential concept of memory, the neural correlates of memory pinpointed by neuroscientific research would signify nothing. Phenomenologists have thus sought to supplement the neuroscientific study of memory through descriptive and clarificatory analysis of its experiential character.

There is similar work to be done to respond to the neuroscientific conception of forgetting. When the status of forgetting is questioned, the unsatisfactory answer that the cognitive science model tends to offer is that forgetting amounts to merely an absence of a ‘neural trace’ that might be activated by a ‘cue’. From the perspective of the dominant paradigm, forgetting is just some kind of ‘nothing’.

Contrary to this, I argue that forgetting is not a ‘nothing’ but rather something that plays a positive role in making us who we are. In fact, I will argue, forgetting shapes our lives in countless ways. On this basis and in light of the insightful contributions phenomenology has made to memory research, I want to provide a similar analysis to explicate the phenomenological structure of forgetting. Since inquiry into experience sits within the domain of phenomenology, my project will likewise utilise this approach by focusing on forgetting.

Turning to another cognitive science, the predominant psychological view of memory as the process by which data is mentally ‘encoded,’ ‘stored,’ and ‘recalled’ (Tulving, 1974) treats the brain like a hard drive which stores inputs. This research paradigm has offered a complex typology of memory that has deeply informed the philosophy of memory. Let me outline the three main philosophical categories (Bernecker, 2010). i) Semantic memories comprise facts about the world, e.g. “I remember octopuses lay eggs.” ii) Episodic memory involves picturing oneself in a past event that caused, and is sufficiently similar to, what one pictures, for example, trying to mentally picture what you did last night to find your keys. iii) Procedural memory refers to your habituated ability to remember how to do things; the common example is remembering how to ride a bicycle. Phenomenologists have intervened in this literature to show that these different types of memory resist being subsumed under the ‘encode, store, and recall’ model (Käufer, 2011). Rather, memories of a fact, an event, or a skill are qualitatively distinct in our experience of them. Indeed, presupposing a grasp of the phenomenological character of memories informs the very typology under discussion.

Here, too, work on memory offers a profitable way into this project on forgetting. My initial point of departure in Chapter One (Remembering and the Importance of What We Care About) will be to investigate the following question: what is required of us to make claims over whether

something counts as remembering? In order to answer this question, I will begin an exposition of the nature of caring and our care-based mindedness as a view which will bring to the fore those conditions that we place on remembering. This account of care will be vital for the project of investigating the phenomenon of forgetting. For the most part, given the enormous wealth of literature on remembering, I limit the discussion primarily to those experiences that are typically termed ‘episodic’ when remembered. Accordingly, in Chapter Two (What Becomes a Candidate for Forgetting?) I ask a similar question to the one posed above. How might we distinguish between cases in which we have forgotten and cases where we never had the relevant experience to later forget. From the ‘outside’ both cases look remarkably alike in that an individual is unable to provide relevant knowledge. My account stresses that having attended to the relevant object in the appropriate way enables us to make this basic distinction. In this context, I will also develop an account of *attention* with help from the phenomenological tradition. Chapter Three (Passive Forgetting) will offer an investigation into perhaps the most common form of our forgetting. In doing so, I will show how passive forgetting supports and maintains the cares that we have by discarding those things which we do not care about. In Chapter Four (The Possibility of Successful Forgetting) I seek to challenge the commonly held intuition that our forgetting is, in all cases, a failure or processing error. Contrary to this intuition, I will argue for a more even-handed view of forgetting that takes into consideration the ways in which forgetting can be either normatively neutral or successful. This will involve thinking through the rather counterintuitive ideas that i) forgetting can be intentional, and ii) that sometimes success means getting something wrong about the past. Finally, in Chapter Five (How Our Forgetting Shapes Us), I will turn to the question of how and to what extent can our forgetting shape who we are. I will argue that forgetting is crucial for shaping not only our memories and our interpretive horizon, but also our cares themselves. Accordingly, I will argue

for a dynamic dyadic relationship between our forgetting and our caring, and I will tackle the puzzling fact that our cares influence what we forget and what we forget shapes our cares.

One might find the choice of a *phenomenological* analysis of forgetting perplexing or counterintuitive. On the face of it, forgetting is a paradigm case of ‘not experiencing’ something and so a methodological choice that tends to prioritise first-personal experience might look like a poor fit for the project undertaken here. However, I argue, forgetting is not a kind of “nothing” as the neuroscientific paradigm seems to suggest; rather, it is an elusive experiential phenomenon that still falls under the purview of phenomenological research. Notably, for instance, much research has been conducted to articulate the nature of pre-reflective action which is similarly elusive and difficult to bring into view. Furthermore, the interrelated phenomena that will be vital for an explication of forgetting, particularly caring and attention, have a more directly accessible first-personal character and utilising earlier insights on these phenomena will be a great aid to the present inquiry. Indeed, if the developments in this project are illuminating then this will highlight the widening scope available to phenomenological analysis. Accordingly, the following project ought to be considered a contribution of the expanding field of applied phenomenology in which crucial insights are brought to bear on as yet under-researched phenomena.

CHAPTER ONE

REMEMBERING AND THE IMPORTANCE OF WHAT WE CARE ABOUT

Memory has an epistemic purpose, or so most contemporary theories imply. Whether we recollect past experiences simply for the sake of our present epistemic demands or as part of a broader mental network geared to constructing future scenarios, at bottom, interest in memory and remembering is principally epistemic in bent. While disagreements about how best to theorise remembering have proliferated, they all, at least those who build an epistemic requirement into their theory, are ultimately dependent on a wider as yet unspecified backdrop which necessitates that epistemic focus.

In this chapter I discuss the overarching similarity of contemporary theories of memory in their tendency for building in this variable, but essentially, epistemic role of memory. I argue that paying attention to instances of remembering highlights the need for further explication of the conditions in which this epistemic requirement takes hold. The ‘logics of caring’, as Linda Zagzebski has termed it, provides us with the explanatory context in which the epistemic issues of memory find their salience. It is only with reference to what we care about that the epistemic role of memory receives its privileged place. To advance the claim that the epistemic role of memory is situated within a broader sphere of caring I will first look to unpacking the core ideas of a care-based analysis. Doing so within the context of classical phenomenology and care-based approaches to agency will demonstrate the profitable avenues for thinking through the epistemic demands that various theories of remembering make appeals to. Once we have a clear picture of the logics of caring in view, I will turn to the two principle and, at times, antagonistic strands of thought in the philosophy of memory, those of the preservationist or simulationist views respectively. I show how, despite the radical differences, both of these are committed to a view of memory in which an epistemic purpose takes centre stage. The work

that this epistemic role is geared towards may differ in each theory but in both these cases, it is to our caring that this epistemic role is ultimately tied.

It ought to be emphasised in advance then that the claim made in this chapter is not that memory is non-epistemic. Rather, I claim that when we think of remembering as fulfilling an epistemic purpose or function (at least in those cases where it does), that epistemic demand (which varies according to the preservationist or simulationist view you take) must be viewed within the broader context of caring if we are to better grasp the existential significance that remembering, as a whole, plays in our lives.

In the final section of this chapter, I will ask if the arguments developed don't simply sit atop an internal debate, without making any inroads into the contemporary discussion. One might argue that a care-based approach may well supplement existing theories but does little to contest the essential claims on which the contemporary debate is waged. On the contrary, I argue, firstly that an analysis of our caring is necessary to make sense of the complicated requirements of a contextual account of remembering. Without this we are unable to adequately make sense of instances of misremembering or forgetting. Furthermore, the epistemic focus on memory leaves under-theorised those instances of genuine remembering that cannot be so cleanly subsumed under an epistemic framework. We don't solely remember for the sake of fulfilling present epistemic demands, and to overlook the role caring plays in remembering, we miss non-instrumental instances of remembrance. Without an analysis of care, these instances of remembering appear without purpose or explanation. While memory may indeed play a crucial epistemic role, this is not its only role and, accordingly, is not the most felicitous approach for studying it fully. As I will argue in this chapter, the narrow epistemic approach leaves little to be said of the role that remembering, and crucially for this thesis as a whole,

forgetting, plays more broadly in our lives. The work of this chapter, therefore, not only intervenes upon a rapidly expanding body of literature within the philosophy of memory but will also motivate the approach that I will be taking throughout this thesis on forgetting.

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The importance of our capacity to care plays a pivotal role in a number of significant philosophical disciplines. Though not an exhaustive list, the notion of care can be found in different guises within theories concerning perception, agency, selfhood and virtue epistemology. While the precise definition of what it is to care and the philosophical purposes to which care is put to use do diverge, I will in the following be drawing on this significant body of literature to isolate two specific and mutually compatible features of caring. With these two key ideas the subsequent section of this chapter will be to broaden the scope within which we find contemporary epistemological disagreements in the philosophy of memory.

Caring, as I conceive it, is partly synonymous with things mattering to us and, to some extent, things being significant for us. As will become clearer throughout, the objects of our care can be vast in scope: we care for others, goals, plans, ideas, belongings, and many other things. There are, to some degree, few limits on what we can care about. I take it as given that despite the shifting objects of our cares, the fluctuations in the intensity our caring and the clear differences between individuals over the kinds of things which we do (or even, can) care about, caring itself is nevertheless an inescapable feature of our existence. We cannot but care. I will develop two core aspects of caring in this first section. (1) The way in which our caring directs our attention within the circumstances we find ourselves and provides a source of intelligibility for those experiences. (2) That caring necessitates certain epistemic demands for us with

respect to those things we care about. Thanks to these two aspects, I claim that the nature of caring offers us normative conditions on remembering judgements. In other words, that an experience *counts* as an instance of remembering will depend upon both the specificities of the context which we are in and the responsiveness of our memory to those things we care about. In addition to these two core ideas, there are other important aspects of caring which will be developed along the way to provide a fuller picture of the concept of care. We will revisit some of these aspects in subsequent chapters. For instance, the implications of a care-based view of agency will be taken up in a later discussion regarding the ways which our forgetting can be more or less agential. To intervene in the contemporary literature on remembering in this chapter, however, it is to the two core aspects which we will now turn.

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Caring and Phenomenology

The central claim of this section is that throughout our experiences certain objects available to us are foregrounded in light of what we care about while other things either show up to us as irrelevant or are glossed over entirely. Attention, I claim, is deeply bound up with what we care about. In keeping with the general methodological commitments of this thesis, the first point of departure in our exploration of care is classical phenomenology. The emphasis on attention in discussions about experience are wide-ranging; Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty all considered the nature of attention. I will discuss ideas from the first two of these thinkers though there may well be additional points of agreement from the latter two and others. The work of these two thinkers, of course, is vastly more complicated than I can do justice to

here. For the present purposes, however, I will draw on a key idea from each to facilitate our discussion of remembering.

We gain both an inroad and some initial clarification for my claim about the connection between caring and attention with the Husserlian distinction between two senses of attention at play in experience. Within the scope of all things which can be presently intended, some elements of our experience are foregrounded or “seized upon and singled out” (Bégout, 2007). We can think more clearly about this sort of attention when considering how we shift our focus not only between different objects in our perceptual field, for instance the keyboard in front of you to the noise of sirens outside, but also our shifting focus between attending to the cold and abandoned cup of tea on the desk and, say, wondering what time it is. Described here is the movement of “primary attention” (*Aufmerken*). Yet we don’t solely attend to those pressing thoughts or more eye-catching elements of our surroundings. Indeed, our primary attention occurs within surroundings. We apprehend plenty of objects that make up the backdrop from which certain parts stand out: furniture in our immediate vicinity, the view from the window, the tightness in our lower back, and, perhaps, those thoughts at the back of our minds. Here we take up our surroundings with “secondary attention” (*Bemerken*) (Bégout, 2007). These things are, Husserl says, “just remarked” by us but not strictly heeded, at least not in the way those objects apprehended with our primary attention are.

By way of pre-empting our later discussion, it’s worth noting that this interplay between the two senses of attention will prove useful when considering the necessary conditions for making remembering judgements (at least in those instances where the function of remembering is epistemic). When we are remembering (or any other phenomena that we might mistake for remembering, for example imagining something from the past that did not in fact happen) we

are experiencing. In virtue of being an experience, arguably an experience that is about an experience we previously had, our remembering will involve the senses of attention just described. Not only will the past experience have been directed in terms of where our primary attention was focused but also our present experience while remembering too. We will return to this when thinking through the senses of accuracy put forward by contemporary memory theorists.

What is the nature of our primary and secondary attention? Although Husserl explores these matters in Ideas II and other manuscripts, here I want to turn to Heidegger's approach on this question because of his well-known emphasis on the importance of what we care about. As mentioned earlier, we cannot but care and we find support for this in the Heideggerian assertion that, for beings such as ourselves, we simply are disposed to the world in such a way that things *matter* to us. We can understand our receptiveness to things mattering more or less in terms of how we find our attention prioritised at any one time. At one moment you may find particular tasks more demanding of your attention, the wellbeing of a friend more pressing, or you might pause your current activity to enjoy the light cast through the window.

Rather than an overlay of interpretation we apply to our experience, when we experience the world we are already caught up in a tangle of cares which direct our attention to certain objects as more or less significant in present circumstances. The fresh cup of tea on the desk shows up to me as desirable in my cold study and as posing a possible risk to my laptop. I care about warming up and I care about preserving my laptop from serious tea-related damage. Expressed in terms of what I pay attention to, these cares guide my actions with respect to my cup of tea: holding it properly, not hovering it over the keyboard, placing the cup on a steady surface. Moreover, it is possible to make sense of our attention not only aligned with these situationally

specific cares but also nestled within much broader cares I have: I care about staying caffeinated enough to write clearly. I do this because I care about being comprehensible and I care about that in light of my further care to be a good philosopher (for which comprehensibility is an important aspect of succeeding at that goal). It isn't the case, of course, that one needs to pay attention to all *these* motivating cares themselves. In fact, it would be quite peculiar and a poor description of our experience to suggest that we consistently and explicitly pay attention to what we care about. It isn't necessary that I consciously acknowledge my caring about the safety of my laptop, nor the place of my laptop within the wider scope of caring about being a good philosopher for these cares to nevertheless direct my attention in various ways and shape my actions. The significant point here is that all of our experiences are already shaped in light of what we care about, certain things will always show up as more or less salient and we will act in ways that align most closely to those things we care about most.

This way of understanding attention is noticeably Heideggerian. Not only is it simply the case that we are engaged with the world in such a way that things matter to us and that our attention is directed upon some things and not others, but that the meaningfulness of those things appears to us teleologically. In other words, objects in the world are attended to in terms of their purposiveness which springs from what we care about. Importantly, this is also not to say that we always and only attend to things we positively care about and which directly contribute to the fulfilment of our wider cares. We can think of plenty of circumstances in which our attention is drawn away from what matters to us. The catchy a song on a seemingly endless loop in our head, a flickering lightbulb, or the sound of footfall on the floor above us, are just three examples. Indeed, we find these things annoying or distracting in light of them *disrupting* our attention towards those things we do care about. The frustration of being distracted makes sense

as a response once we acknowledge the role of our caring shaping the quality of our experiences.

Overall, we can now make two additional steps in the direction towards the contemporary theorists of memory. Firstly, when we try to remember for the sake of some current and pressing epistemic demand, we are going to be attentive to those things which will satisfy our aim. For example, among all the things I remember from the night before, what matters, what I presently care about, is where I put my keys. Given what I currently care about, once I correctly recall the location it is appropriate to say I have remembered. If I wasn't able to recall the location we would, on the whole, say I had forgotten. And, if I was to think the keys were on the kitchen table (when actually there were in my coat pocket), we may well say I misremember.

A second upshot of this analysis is methodological. It is, I suggest, unsurprising that much of the research within the philosophy of memory singles out our remembering as geared towards an epistemic purpose. Despite the divergences in theoretical explanations as to why this is the case, the tacit assumption is that our memories serve the purpose of providing us with knowledge of the past. I claim that this teleological understanding of memory as purely epistemic falls short. By neglecting to situate the various epistemological claims about remembering within a broader scope of what we care about we fail to see not only the existential purpose of remembering but also how what we care about puts our remembering judgements at stake too.

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Caring and Theories of Agency

We now have a more general sense of how caring shapes our attention and thus our experiences. But the rich phenomenon of caring cannot be completely reduced to our attention. I have emphasised above that it is not necessary for what we care about (nor the fact of our caring itself) to itself be the focus of our attention for it to nevertheless navigate our attention in various ways. We might ask, then, what other paradigmatic features of the experience of caring are there? If we look closely at the experience of caring, what will we find? The Heideggerian picture of our caring has been brought under the scrutiny of philosophers of agency. Here, there are a trio of aspects of caring that frequently come up in the literature. Caring involves either essentially, or sometimes contingently: being emotionally at stake with regards to what we care about, having some desires related to what we care about, and forming evaluative judgements about what may be best for the sake of what we care about. In some research within this domain, the task taken is to isolate what is most fundamental for caring and with it, what might be considered most fundamental for our agency (and, if a such distinction is made, for our selfhood). The idea in that work is that caring explains the source of actions which are rightly attributable to an agent and is, therefore, foundational for our agency. Caring about something motivates us to act in particular ways which align with the preservation or improvement of the cared-for object and which provides our reasons to act as we do. In this way, the cares that we have “speak for us” as agents (Jaworska, 2007b). To stress this further, as Shoemaker claims, “our identity as functioning, well-developed agents [...] is constituted by our nexus of cares.” (2003, 113). If caring could be reduced to one of the three key features, then supposedly we would have an account of what is most fundamental for agency. Overall, however, I hold the view that we can’t do without any of these three aspects if we are to capture a broad theorisation of what it means to care. The question of which aspect is most fundamental for agency doesn’t bear on the present question of how the fact of our caring shapes the epistemic judgements we

make about remembering and so we will leave it to one side. As mentioned at the outset, we will pick up these strands of thought in subsequent chapters. For now, to gain a stronger sense of how caring is relevant to understanding remembering, I suggest we look more closely at these three moving parts: emotions, desires, and judgements.

The idea is not that caring *causes* us to be emotionally vulnerable, to make certain evaluative judgements, to have certain desires. It would be wrong to conceive of caring as a mysterious stand-alone mental state with the power to elicit these reactions. Rather, being emotionally vulnerable to the fortunes of our cared-for object, holding judgements about what is best, or desiring particular things are expressive of caring. These aspects are what caring consists in. It is in light of my care about my mother's happiness and that it matters to me to have a good relationship with her, for example, that I am motivated to call her on Mother's Day. Here all the three aspects of care are at play: I desire to hear her delight upon picking up the phone, and I evaluate our mother-daughter relationship as one worth protecting. If I do not manage to call her on Mother's Day, perhaps she doesn't pick up, I may be subject to feeling a complex set of emotional responses: disappointment, frustration and, perhaps, worry that she'll think I'm a bad daughter for not calling. These are all expressions of caring about my mother. Moreover, we are able to glean a sense of what is it we and others are committed to, what we and others care about, in virtue of our emotional responses, desires, and evaluations within certain situations. Our sadness at our favourite team's defeat is indicative that we care who should win the game. Our desire to help a stranger in need shows us we care about minimising their distress. When we find ourselves judging something as being the right thing to do, say, admitting we were wrong in a familial disagreement, we acknowledge this judgement as expressive of our caring for reconciliation and for our family.

To care is, at least in part, to have a set of emotional attunements to objects and people in virtue of which we are emotionally vulnerable to their fortunes and which motivate us to act (Shoemaker, 2003, 94). Importantly, our emotions are at stake in caring for something. What kind of emotions are expressive of caring? For Jaworska, to care essentially involves “some subset of secondary emotions” (2007b, 559). Secondary emotions involve a relatively high degree of situational understanding. Unlike the immediate jolt of fear that accompanies jumping out of the way of an oncoming car (a primary emotion), secondary emotions involve a greater understanding of present circumstances. For instance, frustration, embarrassment, joy, guilt, gratitude and hope all involve a more extended consideration of the situation at hand. Moreover, our emotional attunements don’t occur in isolation from one another, part of what makes these emotions attributable to that agent (if one’s purpose is to argue for the agential questions mentioned above) is that they interrelate with one another. As she claims, “It is psychologically implausible for someone to experience grief if they have not previously experienced, be it in a repressed form, the joys, hopes, fears, regrets, etc. characteristic of caring about the same object. Grief only makes sense as part of a network of emotions characteristic of caring.” (2007a, 562) This also bears on our own aims here. Caring is not only a matter of our attention being directed in various ways, nor just that those things we attend to can be understood teleologically in terms of broader existential cares, but that by caring we are emotionally at stake too. Caring, then, involves a potentially highly complicated network of emotional vulnerabilities. In fact, it is, I suggest, unsurprising that our caring is expressed in terms of these secondary emotions since they too are compatible with our Heideggerian vision of our teleological and temporally extended experience of the world.

Likewise, when we care about something, we frequently hold certain desires in relation to that cared-for object. Desiring the wellbeing of our friends and wanting to succeed at tasks we set

for ourselves is indicative of these things mattering to us. I don't wish to suggest that, in all cases, holding a desire is sufficient for caring since it seems possible to trivially desire certain objects or states of affairs where it would also be inaccurate to say one truly cares. But equally it's unclear how one could care deeply and be subject to the kinds of emotional vulnerabilities outlined above if these emotional vulnerabilities did not also involve the frustration or satisfaction of some desire. Indeed, the experience of fraught emotional conflict we can be subject to in light of our desires for incompatible objects can be expressive of our competing cares. The relevant point here is that what we care about will sometimes be expressed in terms of what we desire and, furthermore, that sometimes the fulfilment of that desire relies on our remembering. Accordingly, our desires can be at stake in what we remember. For instance, in desiring success on a driving theory test we will attend more closely to those things which will help us to succeed. We will practice the tests and hope that, when the day of the test arrives, we will remember what we need to. By desiring success, a demand is placed on us to remember the right things. We don't just desire passing, we also want those things which will facilitate that success, namely, being able to remember. Moreover, in passing the test, we might not only take pride in now being closer to driving but also take pride in being able to remember what we needed to. Again, as with the earlier remarks about emotion, it is plausible to interpret these desires and the possibility of them being frustrated within our broader teleological engagements with the world. We will see this idea brought into sharper focus in the following section where we look to the epistemic demands placed upon us by caring.

The last of the three aspects of caring that emphasise, the forming of evaluative judgements, will work as a bridge to our next section investigating the implications of our caring for epistemology. Beyond the role of our emotions and desires, some theorists of care have emphasised its essentially evaluative dimension. For those concerned with agential questions,

the idea is that we are motivated to act in accordance with those things we judge to be valuable. In doing so we stake a claim about what matters to us in a given situation. Often what is at stake in these judgements are our very cares themselves. Faced with some conflict between competing cares, we act in accordance with the care we deem most valuable. This Frankfurtian view of agency is explored by Shoemaker (2003). One way to think of this is that in caring for something, we face certain demands on our agency. This model has been criticised for being too strongly reflective and would imply that only certain individuals are capable of caring (Jaworska, 2007b). While I am broadly in agreement that we ought not to insist upon such a highly self-reflective view of caring, there is another way to draw upon this idea of making or holding evaluative judgements or attitudes with respect to those things we care about. Furthermore, there is a way of construing evaluative judgements that doesn't require explicitly conscious reflection upon the judgements that one makes. Notably for our purposes, the explanatory potential of the fact of our caring has been acknowledged within virtue epistemology. Zagzebski (2004) argues that caring presents us with unavoidable epistemic demands. In short, we desire and value epistemic goods in the domains of what we care about. By developing this idea further and combining it with our previous considerations about the nature of caring we will have in hand the theoretical tools to investigate the theories of remembering judgements proffered by thinkers in the philosophy of memory.

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Caring and Epistemology

In addition to the way in which caring directs our attention, entails a teleological engagement with the world, and is expressed through emotive and desiderative experiences, when we care

about something we are motivated to form certain beliefs about that thing. When we care about a particular research topic or political issue, we may well find ourselves seeking knowledge in that area. When we care about the wellbeing of another person, it matters to us to know about the kinds of things that will make them happy and the situations that will affect them negatively. Even in circumstances that aren't highly complex interpersonal or long-term engagements, when we care about something, we also care about knowing the relevant kinds of things that will promote success, betterment, or good outcomes for that cared-for object. If I care about making a spectacular meal, for instance, it will matter to me that I remember to buy the right ingredients, that I know how to combine them, and it'll matter that I recall an error I made the last time I prepared that dish.

Zagzebski (2004) makes clear these overarching claims about what is required of us when we care, and they involve being *epistemically conscientious*. Being epistemically conscientious involves aiming for intellectual virtue, in other words, striving to be attentive and careful with regards to forming true beliefs or gaining knowledge within a given domain. Caring, she argues, places demands on us to be epistemically conscientious. There are two important factors that influence the degree of epistemic conscientiousness demanded of us that will be useful for thinking about what is required in an account of remembering. Firstly, the degree to which we care about something, and secondly, the present context in which we find ourselves. We will look to each in turn and consider how those findings help us to better think through remembering before finally turning to the contemporary theorists of memory.

Firstly, in the domains of those things we care about, in virtue of that caring, we are subject to a non-epistemic demand to be epistemically conscientious. The core idea is that what it is to care is to be (epistemically) conscientious with regards to what it is you care about (2004, 356-

357). In short, it's part of caring about an issue to conscientiously strive for knowledge about that issue (or, at least, true beliefs regarding that issue). Furthermore, it isn't required of us to be explicitly aware of this demand itself to nevertheless be motivated in light of it. For example, it isn't incumbent on a caring parent to explicitly reflect that they must seek knowledge about their children for that parent to nevertheless strive to know about what will benefit their children. Relatedly, and something which has been left mostly in the background so far, is that caring can come in degrees. These degrees of caring will fluctuate in at least two ways for a single individual. We care more deeply about some things over others, and that at any one time we might care more strongly about something we cared little about previously (the reverse is also true: we can presently care much less about something that we used to care a great deal about). In line with this, the degree of epistemic conscientiousness forms a positive correlation with the degree of our caring. The more we care about something, the stronger the demands on us to be epistemically conscientious regarding it (2004, 361). In other words, the more I care, the more it's going to matter to me that I'm not mistaken about my beliefs in that domain. Conversely, for instance, if you claim to care deeply about, say, global nuclear disarmament but don't attempt to seek out any knowledge in that domain, it seems plausible that you are mistaken about the depth of your caring.

How does this bear on remembering? Well, I suggest, firstly we will strive towards knowing things about what we care about in order that we will remember those things. Certain information or events will show up to us as memorable, or worth remembering, or something we would like to remember. We hope we will remember this or that occasion in the future (and, occasionally, hope that others will too). These attitudes, valuing or desiring, that we take towards events or information that encourage us to remember will be familiar, they are the previously discussed aspects of what it is to care. Accordingly, we will pay attention to the

relevant parts of our experiences for the sake of being able to remember later. This is all to say that by caring about something we are drawn towards being epistemically conscientious about forming (accurate) memories of those things we care about. This demand on us isn't necessarily explicit to us though. We may occasionally say to ourselves or someone close to us "I hope I will remember this day" (or, "I must remember to send that email!") and perhaps in doing so we will remember better. However, for the most part, the demand on us to be epistemically conscientious about what we care about will be expressed in terms of paying greater attention to aspects of our experience rather than making a declarative statement. We can see this in the reverse scenario in which we remember past events only faintly and wish we'd paid more attention at the time. Perhaps it hadn't occurred to us that, in the future, this might be something we'd care about.

This is not all, however. What we care about will inform the degree of conscientiousness demanded of us while remembering in two further ways that are both dependent on our present context. Clarifying this will require that we take an epistemically contextualist approach to what we remember. First off, when we care about certain things, this caring will furnish us with questions that we look to memory to answer and which, if we did not care, we wouldn't be faced with. This may sound rather similar to the previous section but let me elaborate to show how it is different. Given that we care about certain things over others, particular questions which we rely on our remembering to answer for us are going to present themselves in the first place. If I care about keeping my doors locked at night, I will ask myself "did I definitely lock the door?" and then try to remember whether or not this evening I did indeed lock the door. Given that I live on the sixth floor and believe that it's very unlikely anyone will try to break in through the window, I'm going to care less if the windows are locked. The question "did I lock the windows?" isn't going to even come up for me. And, if it did, the question isn't

something I'll agonise over. Maybe I will remember, maybe I won't; either way the answer isn't going to matter to me very much. The point here is that by caring, we open ourselves to the possibility of certain questions being relevant to us and their answers pressing while others are not. Caring shapes the way we experience our present context by foregrounding some questions over others.

Secondly, it isn't just the degree to which we care that shapes the context where we depend on remembering, our contexts will change too. When what we remember is, broadly speaking, episodic, certain aspects of that very experience will be attended to us in light of what we presently care about. It will matter to us which parts of our recollection are clear and which appear to us with certainty. In those circumstances in which we depend on our memories to provide us with knowledge that will benefit what we care about, we will need to be more conscientious with regards to the accuracy of what we remember. This might not demand high degrees of accuracy in general, but at least high accuracy with respect to what is relevant for what we care about now. Since our circumstances may change and the context in which we call upon a memory might be different, these are going to influence how accurately we need to remember too. For instance, you might have an amalgamation of memories from a party last night. Snippets here and there, some in greater detail than others. Perhaps at some point you were a little too honest to your friend and inadvertently hurt their feelings. Morning comes and you recall the altercation, you feel guilty. Given that you care about your friend and their feelings, and you care about being a good friend, it's going to matter to you more that you remember accurately what you said. It's going to matter to you much less that you accurately remember, say, a brief conversation you had with an acquaintance or what an onlooker was wearing. Here we can see that what we care about will have an impact upon what is demanded of us in remembering. Caring influences what we need to remember and how accurately. But

this is not all. This also shows us how even when what we care about remains stable (in this case, caring about your friend), the change in context will change how accurately you need to remember. Whether or not you said something hurtful to your friend, you deeply care about them. Given that you have said something hurtful the context is different than if you'd said nothing and so it matters more to you to remember accurately what you said. Because you care about your friend, it is demanded of you by that very caring that you be epistemically conscientious in finding out what you said. Accordingly, you might think very carefully about what you remember and ask someone else if they remember what you said differently.

Caring, then, promotes certain questions that we look to remembering for answers to, and it places implicit standards regarding what we need to remember and how accurately for us to be, in fact, remembering. The idea I have in mind will become clearer whilst addressing theories of remembering directly, but for now I will say that if we look to memory to satisfy some epistemic demand (a pressing question, say) the decision whether our experience is one of remembering or misremembering (or imagining, or forgetting) will depend, in part, on whether what we experience is capable of satisfying that demand. Since the questions we ask in certain contexts are foregrounded to us in light of what we care about, and since we have an additional care to be conscientious in the domains of what we care about, casting judgement over whether something *counts as an act of remembering* will depend on whether the accuracy of what we remember is responsive to our present context and what we care about. In short, the degree of accuracy required of an experience for that experience to count as remembering depends on our cares and our context. The degree of accuracy we are capable of achieving will, drawing on our earlier considerations, be due, in part, to how we attend to aspects of our experience.

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Theories of Remembering in The Epistemology of Memory

Contemporary discussions in the philosophy of memory often centre on providing a workable theory of remembering. That is, offering an account for the conditions on which we can make a judgement whether a mental state counts as remembering, hence the term ‘remembering judgements.’ In doing so the vast majority of these theories tacitly presuppose that remembering is essentially epistemic in nature, that it can provide us with a source of knowledge. Additionally, the conditions on remembering as an epistemic source provide certain standards that allow us to distinguish what is not remembering. With regards to semantic memories, memories for facts, the relationship between remembering and knowledge appears rather straightforward. Remembering something factual seems tantamount to knowing it. The case becomes rather tricky, however, when considering the epistemic qualities of the more conceptually elusive phenomena of episodic memories. Broadly speaking, episodic memories are memories for events of a subject’s past that are experienced in a similar mode to how we imagine. Variations in methodological approach yield remarkably different accounts of the relationship between episodic remembering and knowledge. Furthermore, the prioritising of certain questions over other divides up the field in various different ways. Accordingly, many debates in the philosophy of memory concern the question whether remembering is preservative or generative. What is preserved or generated in these various accounts differ: a whole host of phenomena such as the preservation or generation of content, justification for beliefs, representations, abilities or knowledge have proliferated. The debate then is largely concerned with the purpose which memory operates in the service of. In the next section, I will turn to the two significant and opposed views. On the one hand are the traditional storehouse, or preservationist views; on the other, the simulationist views. Importantly for this chapter, in both cases these views assume some epistemic role for memories and build this into their accounts of remembering. In light of the preceding discussion about the role of caring for

remembering I will ask whether these theories have anything to gain from acknowledging our cares.

It is worth noting in advance that, ultimately, I do not wish to endorse or reject either position in favour of the other. Unlike the theorists on either side of this debate, I won't throw my hat in the ring over which approach is the best to uncover the epistemic nature of memory. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight that these very different views share certain shortcomings with regards to the role of what we care about in shaping what counts as remembering. Methodologically speaking, particular claims made in support of either view shouldn't form the basis of arguments made in this current project either (for instance, the empirical research in memory reconstruction) since the kinds of questions those claims are looking to answer aren't meaningful, for understanding the role of memory for beings like us, unless they are situated within a broader, existential recognition of what we care about. This is precisely what this chapter seeks to do. Ultimately, whatever the consensus becomes on the issue of what counts as remembering (were one to materialise, that is) my claim is that this theory needs to be responsive to what we care about or else will fail to capture why it is that memory matters to us at all. This may imply, moreover, that remembering is not reducible to an epistemic source.

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Preservationism

Highly strict preservationist views require that whatever you currently experience be identical with whatever experience caused it for that present experience to be classed as remembering (Cheng & Werning, 2016). In the face of much psychological and neuroscientific research, however, it has become clearer that the phenomena we refer to as memories don't typically

display the necessary literal identity required by theories of this sort. To avoid the conclusions that what we consider to be remembering is not really remembering at all and that we rarely truly remember, many accounts have conceded that literal identity between mental representations is far too high a threshold for making remembering judgements. In other words, mental representations that we refer to as memories do not need to be exactly the same as earlier mental representations. The empirical research that indicates a variety of ways in which our memories aren't perfectly preserved copies of previous experiences has led to a fork in the road within the philosophy of memory. On the one side are views that acknowledge this development but maintain that remembering involves some preservative elements. We will look to an example of this kind of approach in this section. On the other side are views that take up this research to argue that the traditional notion of remembering is incorrect, that what we call remembering actually involves vastly different mental processes and our memory operates in the service of a different goal: simulating possible future scenarios. We will look to an example of this kind of approach in the subsequent section.

For the purposes of this chapter, we will look to a recent paper, Schwartz (2020), to get clearer on what preservationist views may be committed to and how our work to situate remembering in terms of our caring relates to this understanding. The important idea that Schwartz's work brings to the fore is the crucial relationship between the required accuracy of an instance of remembering and what he calls Tolerance. The principle of tolerance insists that our remembering judgements (the judgement that distinguishes an instance of remembering from similar phenomena like imagining) must be sensitive to the purpose of that instance of remembering. Tolerance allows that we can make remembering judgements for those experiences that may be somewhat inaccurate, but which are accurate with respect to some necessary features. Which features will they be? We can get a sense of Schwartz's general view

here: “The mere fact that a subject retrieves an episodic representation that is inaccurate in some respects and at some level of description does not imply that she is not remembering the episode in question. What matters is whether the inaccuracies of the representation prevent it from doing the real-life epistemic work it is needed for.” (2020, 494). For our purposes, there are two crucial points being made here. First, remembering can involve a degree of inaccuracy just so long as that inaccuracy doesn’t obstruct the purpose of remembering. In other words, in order to be truly remembering, only certain aspects need to be accurate. Secondly, that the purpose of remembering is epistemic. If we assume, for the present argument’s sake, that the purpose of remembering is indeed epistemic, then the features of a memory representation which must be accurate are those which satisfy the demands of the epistemic context in which that remembering takes place. For example, if I need to remember where I put my keys last night, it won’t matter if I recall taking my shoes off before or after placing the keys on the mantelpiece. What will matter is that I recall that I put the keys on the mantelpiece.

Where do our preceding considerations come in to all this? Hopefully it should be relatively clear the direction we’re taking, but I’ll elaborate nonetheless. I argue that the epistemic context, as Schwartz terms it, is only going to show up to us at all in light of what we presently care about. First of all, the broader remit of what I care about sets the context in which the location of my keys is even a question for me. I’m attentive to the location of my keys in light of the fact I care about not being locked out, that I care about not running late and that I care about not putting my housemate in an awkward position if I have to borrow their set. Indeed, Schwartz does acknowledge that context matters:

“What matters for remembering is that the content of the representation retrieved from the storehouse is the same as the content of the representation deposited there in the dimension(s) and at the level(s) of description that are relevant to the demands of the retrieval context. It makes little sense to classify a subject as remembering or

misremembering an episode unless we know about the retrieval context, and the reasons and objectives of the remembering subject.” (2020, 500)

For arguably simple examples such as remembering the location of one’s keys, however, the wide consideration of all the things that an individual subject cares about might appear a little excessive. The defender of a view such as Schwartz’s may respond that it’s not necessary to account for the fact that my attention is drawn towards the location of my keys, that I attend to the accuracy of my memory of the previous evening and attend to the reasons for which I’m looking. In this example, it does seem plausible that an account of remembering doesn’t need to make such explicit reference to what I care about. All that we need to account for to ascertain the required accuracy is that I’m looking for my keys. But, I argue, many instances of remembering, even those we can assume are for the sake of some epistemic purpose, aren’t so easily captured this way. Indeed, when what we need to remember cannot be cleanly understood as a fact of the matter (like the location of your keys) the relevance of paying heed to what that we care about increases.

Take our earlier example of remembering what you said to a friend at a party. Let’s say that it wasn’t an offhand comment but a longer, more sustained criticism of some aspect of their personality, let’s say, too, that a lot of people heard it. It would miss the mark to say that there is one single reason, akin to looking for keys, for which you are presently trying to remember what you said. That it matters to you at all comes from a kaleidoscope of different cares that you have. You care not just about your friend and their wellbeing. You care about not being a bad friend, about not being a dislikeable person. You care about what others think of you. It matters to you that you must be honest with yourself and that you need to apologise. You care about why it is you said anything in the first place. It matters to you to remember in the future not to speak to your friends like this again. To make matters worse, under the weight of all the

emotional volatility you experience in the face of these cares, you also desire not to feel so guilty. To that extent, it matters to you to not feel so bad. Perhaps in that moment you only need to remember that you said *something*, anything more would be too much. If it's at least plausible that you can remember too much, then the question arises if we can be too accurate in our remembering. At this point, we might ask whether the degree of accuracy and its relation to an epistemic goal is, in fact, the right way to think about remembering in this context at all. For those who are deeply committed to the idea that remembering is principally epistemic in purpose, however, the degree of accuracy required of you to adequately count as remembering (rather than misremembering or imagining) will nevertheless need to be sensitive to at least something you care about in that moment.

This is not all that needs to be said about the notion of accuracy and in the subsequent section we will see further how it can relate to what we care about. What I hope to have made clear here is that our remembering judgements, on this model, need to be responsive to what we care about in order for them successfully fulfil those “contextually-specific epistemic roles” (2020, 500). Whatever accuracy is demanded of us in remembering, is demanded of us in light of what we care about.

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Simulationism

Earlier I indicated that the findings within psychology and neuroscience have pointed to various ways in which our memories aren't strictly identical to the past experience of what it is supposed to be a memory. One way of responding to this was the preservationist view detailed above. The other route described here is gaining traction within contemporary debates within

the philosophy of memory. In this section I will discuss the way in which simulationist views make epistemological claims regarding our remembering. The form of simulationism offered here will be from Michaelian (2016). Here we find a radically different approach to the question of the epistemic nature of memory. This view starts with the assumption that, in general, memory is perfectly reliable as an epistemic source. What needs to be ascertained are the mental processes underlying our memory such that we can be confident that our memories reliably offer us knowledge about the personal past. Despite the stark differences between this approach from the preservationist view detailed above, both are committed to a view of remembering which places the emphasis squarely on its epistemic purpose. The simulationist view ultimately argues that remembering is simply a form of past-directed imagination (in virtue of the two experiences, apparently, sharing the same brain regions) and so is aimed towards facilitating the imagination of possible future scenarios. Episodic memories are supported by an episodic memory system which forms part of a larger episodic simulation system. Given this, the view considers remembering capable of reliably providing us with knowledge about the personal past. The simulationist argument presented by Michaelian suggests that it is thanks to two types of metacognitive processing that our memories are, broadly speaking, accurate with respect to the purpose of our remembering. Due to these processes, our memories are reliably accurate and thus provide us with an epistemic source. Given the overall similarity in the reliance on accuracy, the relevance of what we care about for remembering judgements bears much similarity with how we discussed accuracy in the previous section. It is therefore, I argue, only by paying heed to what a subject cares about (which entails paying heed to a first-person perspective) that we could have a workable notion of accuracy in the first place.

I suggest we have an avenue into thinking about this further by looking more closely about the notion of ‘personal past’ in this simulationist view. Instead of defining an event occurring within someone’s personal past in terms of it having been experienced by that person, on the simulationist account, for an event to occur in one’s personal past, all that needs to be the case is that the subject was “involved in [that] event” (2016, 107). In virtue of, in some sense, being involved in an event it occurs within our personal past. If we accurately imagine that very event, on this account, we are remembering it. This leads to the rather perplexing idea, one which Michaelian endorses, that we are able to remember things that we never actually experienced. If we accurately imagine a puppet show from our childhood, even if we were too young to experience it “fully” at the time, if that puppet show is an event within our personal past, our present episodic simulation (in other words, imagination) counts as a memory. Moreover, this doesn’t count as epistemic luck. So long as the episodic simulation was the product of a “well-functioning episodic simulation system,” driven by metacognitive processes that ensure accuracy, then this current experience is a memory. This is not to say that if we were to imagine the fact that we went to a puppet show as a child we would be remembering it; since that would be employing semantic notion of memory, not an episodic one. Rather, we need to imagine the scenario of being at a puppet show and for this imagination to be accurate. This ought to strike us as rather strange. The question arises: “accurate to what?” What are the metacognitive processes ensuring our present experience is accurate to, if there was no earlier experience of the event?

The answer to this question is elusive. We can assume, I suggest, that what is meant is some third-personal, perhaps perspective-free, ‘fact of the matter’ version of the event in question. This should strike us as implausible. While there may be facts of the matter about how we personally experienced events, there are no perspective-free versions that a present experience

could aim at being accurate in relation to. A workable notion of accuracy must acknowledge this necessity. Accordingly, the notion of personal past invoked above must be rejected. We can extend this idea further. In so far as an event occurring in a personal past describes those events personally experienced by that individual, that event will be experienced with all the detail and richness described in the opening sections of this chapter. In being an experience, our attention will be directed to certain objects over others, we will acknowledge objects in terms of their teleological relevance to what we care about, and we will be emotionally, desideratively and evaluatively at stake. Furthermore, what we care about sets the contexts in which we look to memory as an epistemic source. We must bear in mind that all these aspects that shape our experiences are present both at the time we remember and were present during the experience that is now being remembered. If we are to apply a notion of accuracy for our remembering judgements, this accuracy must be responsive to all these aspects. In order for the claim that our memories are frequently reliable to hold any water, the accuracy that this claim of reliability is tied to must be responsive to those things that matter to the subject. For the simulationist view, this requires acknowledging that an instance of remembering is accurate then when it is sensitive both to the context in which the subject finds herself and to the things that she cares about.

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Closing Remarks

In this chapter I have argued that the epistemic focus of memory obscures a more fundamental way in which our remembering operates. A theory of remembering, I have argued, must be sensitive to those things that a subject cares about and the context in which she finds herself. To advance these claims I first offered an extended discussion of aspects of caring from different philosophical disciplines. We saw that when we have experiences, our attention is

directed in various ways. The ways in which our attention is directed are aligned with a teleological engagement with the world that foregrounds those things that we care about. Caring, on this view, is expressed in terms of emotional vulnerabilities and desires for the cared-for object. Additionally, in virtue of caring, a demand is placed upon us to be epistemically conscientious in the domains of what we care about. This means we need to be attentive to and careful about forming true beliefs about what we care about. When discussing these considerations in relation to two popular trends in the philosophy of memory it was emphasised that despite their differences, both strands rely on a deeply epistemic conception of remembering. What this analysis has emphasised is that even when context is considered relevant for making remembering judgements, the broader role of our caring is unacknowledged. Accordingly, I argued that it is only in light of the broad scope of what we care about that the epistemic questions that memory is relied upon show up to us in the first place. One general concern might be raised: whether this account of caring glides over the top of the contemporary debate in the philosophy of memory and doesn't stake a claim within that debate. Rather than insisting on a theory of remembering paying heed to what we care about, insofar as our understanding of memory is epistemic, the level of specificity required to make sense of remembering does not need to extend to the broad remit of what we care about. On the contrary, I have suggested, paying heed to our cares is deeply necessary for two reasons. Firstly, without acknowledgement of our cares, we cannot hope to understand the relevance of memory for an epistemic purpose. That our memory shows up to us (at times) for the sake of some pressing epistemic demand is a feature of the fact that we are caring beings. Secondly, I have alluded to the limits of a purely epistemic conception of remembering. I have suggested that the accuracy of our memories might not necessarily be responding to an epistemic demand but a demand from our cares more broadly. To this extent, our remembering judgements need to be responsive to wider conditions of success than the narrowly epistemic.

The upshot for this broader analysis then is the following. By orienting the epistemic nature of memory within its existential significance, we are better placed to understand how we can distinguish between remembering and misremembering. Here it is to the context of the subject understood in terms of what she cares about that a remembering judgement can be made. When a memory is accurate in some respects and inaccurate in others, what matters is whether this accuracy is responsive to the present reasons for remembering. Moreover, by suggesting that memory is not wholly geared towards epistemic purposes but rather to a wider scope of what we care about, this opens up space for a more nuanced understanding of what constitutes forgetting. Rather than a mere failure to satisfy an epistemic demand, forgetting can be oriented in light of what we care about. This is a key idea that will be taken up in various ways in subsequent chapters. Overall, there are plenty of further avenues that this acknowledgement of caring can take us. I have said little on the question of how, and if, we ought to theoretically distinguish between remembering and imagining. Given the possibility to understand remembering in a broader context than the epistemic, it is plausible that an alternative conception of this difference may be required. I have also remained silent on the role that others play in presenting us with demands where it does not appear to matter to us to remember accurately.

Ultimately, however, I have argued that whether a preservationist or a simulationist view is taken on the question of remembering, without an acknowledgement of the wider role that cares play in situating an epistemic demand or the fulfilment of it, we are no closer to understanding why memories matter to us at all.

CHAPTER TWO WHAT BECOMES A CANDIDATE FOR FORGETTING?

Forgetting is ubiquitous and quotidian. Even those of us who might consider themselves to have excellent recall are liable to admit the plausibility that we forget the vast majority of what we experience. Despite the limitless number of things that we can care about we are, ultimately, finite thinkers. We can't remember everything, sometimes we need to forget. In this Chapter I would like to get clearer on when it truly is appropriate to say we have forgotten. When looking from a third-person perspective, it's hard to empirically ascertain whether the reason you do not or are not able to remember something is due to having forgotten or that you never adequately experienced what you presently cannot bring to mind. It's a fair assumption that you cannot remember the end to a movie you never watched and your inability to recall what happened doesn't count as forgetting if you haven't seen the ending either. Not having previously been acquainted with something will prohibit the possibility of that thing from being forgotten. But how much of what we do experience, in the broadest possible sense, also does not reach an appropriate threshold for being forgotten? Could we really forget everything we experience? What is the basic criterion of engagement that makes something a candidate for forgetting in the first place?

For a useful analogue to grasp the problem at hand recall that in Chapter One I discussed the concept of 'remembering judgements.' This term refers to the notion in the literature on memory that tries to stipulate what must be the case for some mental phenomenon to 'count' as remembering in particular, as opposed to, say, imagining. The desire to make this theoretical distinction arises from some scepticism about our ability to individuate remembering and imagining from a first-person perspective. The impetus for this distinction rests within a wider project in the literature of deciphering to what extent we can rely on what we remember for

knowledge: an epistemological project. If what we remember does offer us a source of knowledge it is crucial to distinguish it from that which we imagine but which may appear (from a first-person perspective) to 'look' like remembering. The core distinction is that remembering can be separated from imagining on the basis that what is being remembered actually did happen in the past. Since a defining feature of what we imagine is that it is not empirically true, it cannot be knowledge. Thus, instances of remembering must be distinguished from mere imagination. To clarify, for the theorists occupied with these epistemic questions, the qualitative similarity between the experience of remembering a past episode and the experience of imagining an episode is a problem. This snag is further compounded by the possibility that a belief that we are indeed remembering (or imagining) may be unreliable. The belief expressed by the exclamation "I'm certain that that's what happened!" is not a failsafe against merely having imagined a past event. Conversely, the likely rarer belief expressed by the exclamation that "I'm sure I just made that up or dreamt it. You're telling me that really happened?" is not a failsafe against actually remembering. Accordingly, the issue raised here has led many epistemologists in the field to seek an alternative route to stipulating precisely what theoretically distinguishes remembering from imagining; in other words when it is correct to make 'remembering judgements.'

Our ultimate focus here is not on the epistemic properties of memory, but the gist of the problem with regards to forgetting can be expressed in the following way. From the 'outside,' instances of not being able to remember (of forgetting) look identical to never having encountered something in the first place. In both scenarios a subject will not be able to produce the relevant knowledge called for by the context in which she finds herself. From this perspective, the outcome looks the same and yet something very different is going on. To capture this, an account of forgetting needs to be able to distinguish between those instances where you really

have forgotten something and those instances where you were never in a position to have forgotten in the first place. Accordingly, in this Chapter, I wish to get clearer on just what it is that conceptually distinguishes cases of truly forgetting from those which are not. In other words, when can we say that something counts as an instance of forgetting rather than never having known?

Akin to the search for the appropriate criterion for making remembering judgements, in this Chapter I would like to find a similar explication for what must be the case for making forgetting judgements. In my account I will stress that we can best capture the common and reasonable assumption by paying heed to *attention*. This will offer an account of forgetting that distinguishes the phenomenon from not being able to recall due to there being no impression in the first place. Taking a phenomenological approach, I will argue that an object, state of affairs, person, or event must be attended to by us in a specific way in order to pass the benchmark for something that could be forgotten. I will stress that those things we attend to *as* something meaningful given what we are up to can appropriately be said to become a candidate for forgetting. I will stress further that it is the fact of our mindedness being structured in light of what we care about that those objects are attended to in the way that they are. I will suggest that it is in light of what we care about that what we are up to makes sense at all and so the meaning with which we attend to this or that (*as* this or that) is ultimately indexed to our cares. Of course, all these claims need extensive elaboration in order for my argument to be convincing.

This chapter, therefore, will proceed in the following stages. Initially I discuss comparable discussions in the philosophy of memory to get a sense of what basic criterion of experience we are looking for. I then apply these considerations to the phenomenon of forgetting. In so

doing, I discuss at length various articulations of the notion of attention, which I will be using to help us grasp what is required for something to be forgotten in the first place. Subsequently, I turn to a discussion of the relationship we can glean between the notion of attention and the care-based view of mindedness that I have developed in the course of the previous Chapter. In closing I will discuss forms of experience which ultimately do not meet the required threshold for forgetting. This will, overall, offer us a conceptualisation of what will make something a candidate for our forgetting and what will not.

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Views in the Philosophy of Memory

We have a useful inroad for our discussion of forgetting if we briefly turn to the articulations that various philosophers of memory have offered to account for the intuition that in order for something to be remembered (an episode or some factual information, say), it must have happened, and we must have, in some sense under investigation, experienced it for us to be in a position where we could remember it later. This will offer us a springboard to get clear on the corresponding requirement for forgetting. Let us first consider an internal conception of accuracy when making remembering judgements. Bernecker (2014, 56) neatly summarises, though does not ultimately endorse, this viewpoint in the following way: “a memory is accurate if it accords with the subject’s initial perception of reality, whether or not the initial perception was veridical. ... [I]t has a mind-in-the-present-to-mind-in-the-past [direction of fit]. The idea is that we cannot ask more out of memory than that recollections reflect the person’s original perspective; otherwise we confuse errors in perception with errors in memory.” Accordingly, it is the relationship between a past perception and a present representation that matters for us

when making claims on whether a mental event counts as remembering. For some present mental representation to count as a memory of a past experience, there must be an appropriate degree of accuracy to that initial mental representation.

Opposing theorists stipulate that not only must a subject's present representation bear appropriate fidelity to that subject's initial perception to be a memory but that this initial perception must also have been veridical in some objective third-personal sense. This is to insure against the possibility of remembering falsehoods and thereby maintain a view of remembering as an epistemic source. Given that the broad thrust of this thesis is situated within a phenomenological perspective, I am occupied instead with an analysis that prioritises the first-person perspective. It is not my claim, then, that a subject's initial perception needs to correspond to some perspective-free reality. I am willing to bite the bullet on the suggestion that my account will allow the possibility of remembering falsehoods. I argue that it is legitimate to claim that you are remembering when your present representation bears sufficient and appropriate fidelity to an earlier experience you had in the past even if your earlier experience cannot be empirically verified. For example, it is legitimate to claim that you are remembering your dreams if your present representation bears sufficient fidelity to dreams that you really had; likewise, you can be remembering something hallucinated if your present representation bears sufficient fidelity to the prior hallucination as you experienced it.

Regardless of whether an account requires a degree of factivity to objective reality, most theories acknowledge the necessity of a subject as one who, at the very least, has both an initial experience on the one hand and a present experience which may or may not count as a memory on the other. Accordingly, my view seeks to negotiate between the two poles offered by the literature. I wish to emphasise that we certainly can be mistaken about things we experience in

reality and so there is a sense in which factivity is relevant for ascertaining whether a memory provides us with a source of knowledge. Equally, however, even if we are mistaken in our experience of the world, those experiences can also be the foundation for the phenomenon we refer to as remembering. When it comes to forgetting, an internal conception of accuracy succeeds in highlighting how we can forget events or states of affairs *as* we experienced them and therefore can get something wrong about the initial perception we had. But the external conception likewise succeeds too, we can also forget what really happened when our initial experience did track with reality. In short, we can forget both our own experience of E and we can forget E's actual nature. Both are possibilities that any good theory of forgetting should capture.

Turning to an alternative conception of the basic criterion we are searching for, Anscombe (1981) and Debus (2014), for example, both refer to the idea of 'witnessing' an event or relevant scene in the past. Again, this term is used in order to articulate the general sense that a subject must have experienced whatever they are said to be presently remembering. Both thinkers gear their discussion towards the causal requirements of a theory of remembering. Given that our project here is primarily phenomenological, I am not in the business of adjudicating on causal matters but nevertheless the idea of 'witnessing' in part captures the sense in which the subject themselves needs to have been in the presence of and did experience whatever they are said to presently be remembering. Both Anscombe and Debus, along with many others make reference to 'perception' in their accounts of remembering to point towards the basic criterion we are looking to articulate in this Chapter (see Hume 1739/1978; Werning and Cheng 2014; Bernecker 2014; Fernández 2014, and many others). It is by no means assured that all those theorists who refer to 'perception' are, strictly speaking, referring to the same thing. Indeed, a further point of contention, I suggest, is that the nature of perception in many of these theories

is not fully fleshed out. At times ‘perception’ is articulated as a necessary starting point (often causally-speaking) for remembering, at other times ‘perception’ is held up as something which differs in experiential character from remembering (often with stipulation that the experience of remembering includes additional feelings of, for example, ‘pastness’). Many of these theories rely wholly or in part on the ‘Encode, Storage and Retrieval Model’ (Tulving, 1973) that I mentioned in our Introduction. Briefly again, this account aims to capture our intuitions about the inner workings of memory. As Robins has articulated “Across memory science, there is the widespread idea that remembering involves three processes: encoding, storage, and retrieval. Encoding refers to the process by which information makes its way into memory.” (2018, 83) Subsequently, storage refers to the process by which that encoded information persists in our minds in such a way that it can be retrieved at a later date. It can be assumed, I argue, that the notion of perception employed in many contemporary accounts approximates whatever experiential state a subject must be in prior to the encoding process.

Notably, for our purposes, Robins goes on to state the following in relation to this prior necessary state: “One must actually attend to a piece of information in order for it to be a candidate for remembering.” (2018, 83). It is this notion of attending which I would like us to focus on in this Chapter. I have so far been referring to whatever it is that makes something a candidate for remembering in terms of experience. I have used this term broadly to capture the wide variety of articulations that various theorists have employed to point towards the basic criterion that we must have had some prior conscious engagement with something for us to be presently remembering it. I am now suggesting that we narrow our terminology to focus on attention, and my reasons for doing so will become clearer as we proceed.

It is here that I wish to make a crucial claim: just as an individual must attend to something in the appropriate manner in order for that something to become a candidate of remembering, I argue, an individual must likewise attend in the appropriate way for something to become a candidate for forgetting too. It is the same attention which makes the object of our attention a candidate for remembering or forgetting. Justifications for this are the following. Firstly, in cases of remembering and forgetting, it's clear that not having appropriately attended to something leaves us without anything to remember or forget. There is a misguided tendency to understand the mind in terms of contemporary technology, and so to distort the way it actually functions. That tendency poses a danger here: one might think of the mind as if it's a video recorder, such that anything it points to and captures becomes a candidate for remembering or forgetting. But this profoundly distorts the way the human mind works. We only attend to certain elements of our mental landscape in light of a certain sense of relevance. It is no surprise, then, that in cases where someone was present at an event that they cannot recall, we often wonder whether they weren't paying attention. Perhaps their eyes were pointed at the scene in question but their minds were somewhere else entirely. Now, one might agree that cases of either forgetting or remembering require an appropriate degree of attention in the first place but disagree that this attention must be the same. In other words, remembering might require a certain type or kind of attention, and that forgetting requires its own certain type of kind of attention. I argue, however, that both remembering and forgetting share in their need for the same kind of attention. Support for this can be found in experimental psychological literature. Here one will find studies that often involve the participants learning lists or pairs of words (Wixted, 2004). Later the participants will be asked to recall those words they were earlier taught. Those words which the participants adequately recall at a later time are considered to have been remembered and the participants are said to be remembering. The experimenters are also (at least tacitly) attuned to the difficulty of deciphering whether the

inability for a participant to recall might be due causal processes associated with forgetting, those either classed as ‘decay’ or ‘interference’, on the one hand, or the possibility that the participant never properly ‘encoded’ the information on the other. To alleviate this worry, some experiments control with a second stage. For those instances in which the participants do recall, they can be later tested again. Those participants who cannot recall during the second phase are said to be forgetting. This ensures that the inability to recall doesn’t come as a consequence of not having paid sufficient attention in the first phase and rests on the idea that the participants must have adequately attended to the relevant information, else they would not have been able to recall in the first phase. Accordingly, an inability to recall during the second phase must be due to forgetting rather than never having paid sufficient attention from the outset.

The upshots of this research for our purposes are the following, firstly it lends support to the basic suggestion that there is a theoretical distinction between the inability to recall due to a subject having forgotten and the inability to recall due to not having adequately attended to the relevant information in the first place. Secondly, it is the kind of attention that makes something a candidate for remembering in the first phase that ultimately makes that something a candidate for forgetting in the second phase. In other words, the kind of attention required is the same. This research therefore indicates that we have good reason to believe that whatever makes something a candidate for remembering is also what makes something a candidate for forgetting. As I have been discussing above, a usefully narrow criterion for this phenomenon is attention. Ultimately, of course, the precise nature and description of this necessary form of attention is not fully articulated in the experimental literature. Little can be gleaned in the literature of the experience had by the participants when attending to the objects they are initially presented with (in most cases, lists or pairs of words). Accordingly, this experimental research provides an opportunity for philosophical intervention to supplement the nature of

attention that this research presupposes in its investigation. On this basis, the following discussion will aim to expand this notion of attention and will do so by paying heed to the phenomenological tradition.

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Attention

Given that experience is too broad to capture what makes something a candidate for remembering, I contend it is too broad for a basic criterion for forgetting. To this end, let's look now to forgetting to show how attention will be a suitable focus for our discussion. My reasons for stressing that attention will be helpful in our inquiry can be captured in the following examples: If I never again recall a train journey I took and my experience of it effortlessly fades into oblivion, then we can say I have forgotten that journey. But it appears inappropriate to claim that I forget the number of stations the train stopped at before I reached my destination, unless I paid attention and counted them. Merely experiencing, say, the train stations along the way to my destination isn't enough to warrant the claim that I am forgetting when I cannot recall their number. There are many things which we encounter or experience in passing which leave so little an impression that it would be misguided to call our inability to recall those details forgetting. To forget something, as with remembering, it is necessary but not sufficient that we first experience it. I didn't forget the numberplates of all the cars I walked past to catch my bus this morning; but the street featured in my visual experience. Similarly, it would be odd to claim that you are forgetting if you couldn't recall the number of sips it took to finish your morning coffee, or the uniform of the ticket inspector on your train journey. You experienced

these phenomena, however, neither were attended to such that it would warrant the claim that you could remember or forget them.

Taken this way, merely experiencing something does not make it a candidate for forgetting. Experience is simply too wide a net. Just as Robins suggested that we need to actually attend to something in order for it to be a candidate for remembering, so too, I argue, for a candidate for forgetting. As discussed at length in Chapter One, the nature of our experience is to already have our attention shaped in various ways. For instance, we do not pay equal attention to all objects even just in our visual field. Instead, much of what is available for our close attention remains, for the most part, simply unremarked and unacknowledged by us. Consider the following example: it's only on the imminent arrival of a house guest that I notice the dust that has accumulated on my desk! While the desk has always been in plain view, I'd paid no attention to its dustiness before. Indeed, cast this way, the dustiness of my desk was not something that could be the subject for my forgetting even though I may see the desk and interact with it daily. I wish to argue that it is only reasonable to attribute the possibility of forgetting to those things which are attended to; since you never attended to the dust before, it wasn't something you could forget.

There is one way of conceptualising the phenomenon of attention that implies our focusing, or concentrating, or homing in on particular point. Examples of this way of thinking about attention might include the level of attention while threading a needle, the concentration of scrubbing a stubborn spot on the cooker, or focusing on your breathing while meditating. This is not the sole sense of attention that I wish to employ here. While these examples are instances when you are attending to the matter at hand, this notion of attention is far too restrictive for the work it needs to do in this account. It would be unreasonable to claim that the only things

that could become candidates of our forgetting are those we explicitly attend to in this narrow, highly alert way. There are after all, plenty of things we later remember and plenty of things we will consider ourselves to have forgotten where neither instance involved a heightened focus of this degree. Accordingly, I will be arguing for a broader notion of attention that encompasses more than purely those things which occupy us with such intensive scrutiny.

Similarly, I am also not suggesting that only those things which we attend to propositionally are things that can be forgotten. While the literature within the philosophy of memory abounds with accounts looking to distinguish between semantic memories from episodic memories (in other words, memories for facts from memories for past events), it is clear that paying heed to the experience of remembering episodically shows us how episodic memories are more experientially complex than basic semantic factual knowledge. While it is certainly the case that we can often transpose our experience of the present and of our episodic memories into language by articulating them, I argue that the qualitative nature of these experience ought not to be diminished or reduced at the outset. After all, while the aim in the contemporary literature to find a distinction between remembering and imagining might indicate a difficulty with focusing on the first-person perspective, the very fact that this perspective makes distinguishing difficult doesn't give us reason to omit it from our inquiry. Given that I have argued that there is a common basis in that both things that are subject to be forgotten and those which are remembered which consists in having been appropriately attentive, we are currently looking for the widest sense of attention possible that is nevertheless restrictive enough to exclude those instances that will not make something a candidate for forgetting. On that basis, I do not wish to exclude instances in which we attend propositionally, for instance, when we make an exclamation, but I will stress that our attention is not solely propositional. It is not the case, I suggest, that in order for something to be a candidate for our remembering or our forgetting

that we must put it into words. It is not the case then, that my notion of attention here refers to (1) solely those things which we closely inspect, nor (2) solely those things which we propositionally engage with. Both of these senses of attention may make what is attended to a candidate for forgetting but they are not the only ways.

Alternatively, then, I will be employing the sense of attending captured by Heidegger's notion of the existential-hermeneutical 'as' (BT 201/158). This can be captured in terms of registering something *as* something. It is, I argue, only when we attend to something which shows up for us *as* something that makes sense in terms of what we're up to that it can become a candidate for forgetting. To get a better idea of the sense of attention I suggest does make something a candidate for forgetting, let's consider that desk again. I see my desk most days, and I interact with it as a desk, by stacking books on it, using the drawers, not walking into it, and so on. I do not explicitly focus on the desk, or say to myself, "Wow, what a great desk." I, therefore, engage with neither with a high degree of focus nor propositionally. Instead, I comport myself towards my desk and interact with it as a desk, it fits into a meaningful whole, or what Heidegger called a 'referential totality' [*Verweisungsganzheit* (BT, 99/70)] in light of what I get up to in my study. I attend to my desk within an interpretive horizon that allows me to engage with it without propositional awareness. Given my interaction with the desk in this pre-propositional way, if I fail to remember that I have a desk in my study, perhaps I completely neglect to check it in my search for an elusive book, it's still appropriate to say I've forgotten about my desk even if I never explicitly focused on it. This is because I've comported myself in relation to it as my desk and as the place where some of my books are kept. Since, in that moment, it doesn't occur to me to search my desk for this elusive book, it would be fair to say, in that moment, I'd forgotten about it.

To forget something then, it is not enough to merely experience it, you also have to attend to it in the sense just described. In other words, you need to have experienced it *as* something which is meaningful in light of what you're up to. It is worth pausing to include a few words of clarification. We ought to tread carefully when thinking about the term 'meaningful' in this discussion. There are two senses of the term that are relevant for our purposes. In the first case, meaning can be best expressed as the intelligibility of what shows up to us in experience. I am able to interpret the things that I see within the context of whatever I'm up to such that they are intelligibly meaningful. For instance, the sound of sirens in the public library is intelligible to me *as* a fire alarm. The sound of the fire alarm is understandable given that I am in a context where a fire alarm may occur. If I heard those sirens in the middle of, say, the wilderness, it would be a deeply strange experience. The strangeness of this experience would spring from the fact that the sirens would show up to me unintelligibly as they do not fit into the environment in which I find myself. That's the first conception of meaning; meaning and meaningfulness as intelligibility. Later I will also be talking about meaning in terms of what we care about. There meaning takes on an alternative, second, sense; it implies a degree of value. Objects in the world show up as meaningful to me, in this sense of the word, given their relation for what I care about. Here, to continue with the sirens example, we could say that the fire alarm shows up to me *as* an irritating but necessary drill in light of it happening to interfere with the work that I care about completing. In a different context, I might experience the fire alarm *as* a welcome relief from a particularly dull training seminar I'm required to participate in. This is the second conception of meaning; meaning and meaningfulness as value. The relation between these two senses of meaning and the phenomenon of attention we are occupied with will be elaborated later on where I will argue that this intelligibility itself takes on the character it does in light of what we care about since it is what we care about which motivates us to act in certain ways and to be 'up to' the things that we are up to. For now, though, it is

sufficient for us to focus on the first sense of meaning and meaningfulness as intelligibility. Thus, when objects within my referential totality show up to me as this or that, they are doing so as intelligible in a certain way.

Returning again to the example of the desk, this ought to help us to understand why it would not be correct to say that I forgot my desk was becoming dusty. I certainly experienced that dusty desk. But it was only intelligible to me as my desk, neither dusty nor spotless, in terms of what I was up to as an academic researcher. I never previously attended to it as dusty, which I only do now, because I'm looking at my apartment in terms of what I'm up to now: a paranoid host, not a scruffy academic. The dustiness of my desk, therefore, only becomes a candidate for forgetting once I have experienced it *as* dusty or clocked the dust as something that I am drawn to clean quickly, perhaps before my guest notices. Let me reiterate, attending to something *as* something does not entail the kind of explicit focus or concentration that is sometimes associated with the term 'attention'. The sense of attention employed here does not rely on a simple conscious-unconscious binary. There is, of course, a vast continuum running through propositional awareness, pre-propositional engagement, and dull oblivion. My claim, then, is that things can only become candidates for forgetting when they are attended to such that they register in our experience *as* this or that. That can involve (1) an explicit propositional grasping of X as a Y: "Oh no, my desk is so dusty!" Or (2) purely comporting myself, pre-propositionally towards X as a Y: balancing my teacup on the edge of the desk as a suitable resting spot, or lazily wiping it with my hand to clean it up because it shows up to me as a potential source of embarrassment in front of my guest. This, I suggest, allows us to make the conceptual distinction between those things that can be forgotten and those things that were never appropriately attended to in the first place.

A further way to bring this intuition to the fore is to consider the differences in attention between two people for the same scenario. Consider an example in which two people, let's say a lecturer and a student, are exposed to the same perceptual field. It is plausible that these two people may well remember very different aspects of that field. The student may primarily attend to the squeaky auditorium chair they've unfortunately placed themselves in, remembering it as an irritating and embarrassing distraction to the lecture being given. The lecturer may not notice the squeaking chair at all and instead attend predominantly to the expressions on the faces of the audience, aiming to gauge their understanding of the topic they are engaged in teaching. The lecturer doesn't forget that the chair was squeaking, it just doesn't show up amongst the myriad features of the scene in which they are engaged as a lecturer.

Of course, there is a possible worry. Given that vast continuum between explicit propositional awareness and pre-propositional engagement with the objects that we encounter, how can we really know whether you have really registered *X as Y* in the appropriate sense? Ultimately, this is an empirical question and one which cannot be answered within my phenomenological framework. I am not suggesting that we can, in any given case, distinguish between those things which we have truly forgotten and those which we never truly adequately attended to in the first place. The capacity to make that sort of empirical claim successfully will vary across instances and individuals. As I highlighted above, experimental research in psychology and neuroscience attempts to circumvent a similar problem by conducting two-phase trials. While these trials may ensure that participants have sufficiently 'encoded' such that participants can later remember and then subsequently forget, these experiments ultimately do not consider the phenomenological question of the nature of experience which permits the possibility of remembering and forgetting. Recall that what we have been looking for is a basic conceptual distinction that allows us to differentiate in principle between the class of things that are

candidates for forgetting and those that cannot be. We're looking to capture the intuition that only those things which we've engaged with in the appropriate way could ever be subject to our forgetting. I'm suggesting that what makes the difference is the kind of attention such that we register something *as* something situated within the referential totality of what I'm presently engaged with and up to.

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Caring and our Interpretive Horizon

It is perhaps unsurprising given the general thrust of this project that our next development in relation to what it is that we forget will involve thinking about attention in terms of our cares. The way in which we relate to the entities and others in our experiential field, registering them as this or that determinate entity or other, I argue, is informed not just by what we are up to but ultimately what we care about. It is within the scope of our care-directed mindedness that what we get up to makes any sense at all. What we care about structures our interpretive horizon such that we experience any given X *as* a Y. In short, caring gives meaning (in the sense of value) to what we are up to and therefore to the way we attend to things. All these claims, of course, need further explication. To do so, let's revisit some of the ideas outlined in Chapter One. In that Chapter I argued that it is only with an analysis of caring as an inescapable feature of our existence that the purpose of remembering makes sense. I suggested furthermore that both our present context and what we care about set conditions for whether some mental event can be classed as remembering (as opposed to merely imagining or misremembering). That, ultimately, we must pay heed to one's context of recall and their cares if we are to have a theory of remembering. For present purposes, in which I wish to advance the claim an analysis of

caring helps us to make sense of what becomes a candidate for forgetting, I will be returning to and fleshing out the account of caring outlined in that chapter. Accordingly, it is worth quickly revisiting some of the main ideas explored there.

Caring, as I phrased it, is best understood as a basic attachment we may have to an almost infinitely vast range of objects. From this attachment we are disposed in a multitude of ways in relation to that cared-for object. We are liable to be emotionally vulnerable to the fortunes of what we care about and our emotional responses to events can often be interpreted in relation to what we care about. We tend to evaluate the object of our caring as good and make judgements over whether or not something may be beneficial for the sake of what we care about. Caring leads us to experience various desires and form beliefs. When we care about something we often strive towards knowledge about the thing we care about. There is a degree to which caring involves commitment to that object; we find ourselves motivated to act in accordance with our commitment to that cared-for object and to be epistemically conscientious towards those things which put our cared-for object at stake. These features of caring are by no means exhaustive but there is one further aspect which bears most relevance for what we are investigating here: the way in which caring shapes our attention such that we attend to those things in terms of their significance for what we care about.

Incidentally, there is empirical research within the field of experimental design which suggests that incentivising participants by paying them considerably for their time in an experiment increases the chances that these participants pay adequate attention and improves memory (see Katz et al., 2018). One way to interpret this is to say that giving someone more reason to care will increase the likelihood of them attending to the matter at hand and thereby retaining the information that matters. Of course, this doesn't capture the full scope of the way in which

what we care about and our attention interact, but it offers a useful starting point to supplement this research further. I will do so in the following by looking more closely at three dimensions to our attention that can be best understood by thinking through their relation to our care-based mindedness. This will involve looking at the scope, direction, and temporality of our attention.

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The Scope of Attention

Earlier in this Chapter, I noted that our attention is ‘broader’ than the highly alert focus that one may attend with when threading a needle or concentrating on one’s breathing while meditating. There I was talking about the limitations of an account of attention that require a high degree of concentration. Instead, I claimed, in order to include those things that we consider only in passing but which nevertheless are those we later remember (or forget) we needed a broader notion of attention. This led me to the wider sense of attention denoted by the Heideggerian ‘*as*.’ I suggested that things can become candidates for forgetting (and remembering) even if they are attended to in a less highly concentrated way. Our attention is directed in terms of what we are up to and how, given what we care about, we comport ourselves. It is enough, I’ve argued, that we attend to an object in our environment such that it shows up *as* something intelligible in terms of whatever it is we’re up to.

Recall that it is possible to forget not only that a desk is dusty after, say, exclaiming to yourself your private horror, but it is also possible to forget that you have a desk at all (though this is, of course, likely to be uncommon) even if you have never propositionally noted your ownership of the desk and merely comported yourself to that desk *as* that desk by interacting with it. I

relate to my desk *as* a place where I work and keep books, or *as* a suitable spot for my teacup and I have this relation in virtue of doing those very activities: working there, storing books there, placing my teacup on it. It's in virtue of my attending to the desk in terms of what I'm up to that it becomes a candidate for my remembering or forgetting. This is one respect in which attention is broad: it is not limited only to those things we can explicitly bring into language. In line with this, those things which are subject to forgetting can encompass a wide variety of different forms of experience. On this basis the kind of attention that makes an object a candidate for forgetting can be less highly articulated or all-consuming of our conscious concentration and is therefore also present in our everyday goings on and engagements with the various things we encounter in the world.

Moreover, within just our pre-propositional engagement with objects of our experience there are degrees of heightened awareness that are similarly broad. Our attention is not always confined to a precise central point of focus as it might be if we were, for example, focusing on our breathing while meditating. Given that attention operates when we are meaningfully engaged in an activity – when we are up to something – it can encompass a wide net of thinly attended to features within the horizon of experience. Thus, not merely our highly acute focus. Our attention can therefore fluctuate between, for example, a broad scan over a party full of guests and take in the multiple different features of that experience before snapping towards the smash of a broken glass nearby. The key feature in attending is that parts of our experience register to us *as* this or that in the way that they do. In support of this idea, consider that we are often later, to our own surprise, able to remember minute details of things we only partially attended to. Consider, for example, a key witness to a crime being able to provide a description of a perpetrator and their clothing without having previously said to themselves “His red t-shirt had that logo on it.” This is, I suggest, because our attention (which also makes parts of our

experience candidates for remembering) can operate pre-propositionally. In line with this, those things which are subject to forgetting can also encompass a wide spectrum of degrees of awareness.

Despite this clarification that our attention is not limited to highly focused undertakings, there is yet another way in which the examples of threading a needle or focusing on our breathing might lead to confusion about the scope of attention. Thus far my discussion has been primarily bolstered by examples (desks and dust, for one) which may be considered relatively simple compared with the vast complexity of our ongoing experience in the world. Our attention is not limited to only those smaller details that are available to us. Instead, we may also attend to broader scenes themselves which contain many details we may then focus in on. Think of how our attention can switch between an underlying bassline of a piece of music and the whole ensemble, or of pinpointing the tasting notes of a wine or coffee and the overall flavour, or from the fine embroidery to the entire scene depicted in a tapestry. Think further how all these relatively small things we attend to occur themselves within wider circumstances in which we are more broadly attentive: the recording studio, the holiday trip to a vineyard, or a visit to a museum. These examples are intended to show how our attention can change in scope from localised areas to broader, more complex wholes. It isn't the case that we attend to these wider more complex scenes as simply a sum of all the small details, though. We attend to them as themselves a broader totality, and we attend to these broader totalities as this or that in terms of what we're up to. We certainly can divide up the larger scenes we attend to into smaller pieces. Experimental research suggests we are more likely to be successful at remembering, for example, phone numbers if we break them into smaller blocks of digits (see Cowen, 2001 for a discussion of these findings). Nevertheless, we just simply aren't limited to taking up the world in small chunks. One of the background themes for this investigation is the

methodological commitment in the phenomenological tradition which pushes back against certain articulations of experience. From the way Husserl and Heidegger shaped an understanding of time that is not experienced simply as a succession of time-slices or ‘nows’, to Merleau-Ponty highlighting that space is not first an empty Euclidian void but rather a space of meaningful possibilities experienced in relation to our embodied existence. Likewise, I wish to push back against the suggestion that our experience is only a total of aggregates, instead we can attend to whole scenes. When taking a country walk, for instance, I don’t just attend to a tree here, a rock there. I will occasionally attend to the entire environment as the place in which I find myself. In such cases, my surroundings show up to me intelligibly *as* a panoramic whole and become a candidate for me to remember or forget as this panorama.

Lastly, our attention can also change in scope while it is oriented towards our own thoughts. It would be a mistake to assume that our attention is solely outward at the world. Attention is always intentional – i.e., it always takes an object – but sometimes that object is the self or some aspect of the self. Think, for example, of a scenario in which you are mentally weighing up the various options available to you while considering some problem which may have a moral or ethical character. Let’s say you’re contemplating whether you should tell your friend the truth about something which might upset them. In doing so your attention may be drawn to contemplating not only the specific and uncomfortable revelation itself but the scope of your considerations may also extend beyond just this particular case to instead attend to the wider implications on your friendship, your friends’ wellbeing and whether you want to be the kind of person who is truthful or who keeps things from friends. Here, the scope of your attention switches between the more directly local to broader implications. The idea that you can attend to your own self and your thoughts will be taken up in greater depth in the following section on the directionality of attention. For now, it is worth reiterating the main points of this section.

I have been arguing that one of the important aspects of attention is the fluidity of its scope. Our attention can fluctuate between the very narrow and the very broad both for those things which we take up sensorily but also those which are more inward and thought-directed. It is clear that I have sought to highlight various ways in which the scope of our attention can shift. This provides us with a wide variety of different things which can become the candidates for our forgetting. Not only simple features in our experience, but also more highly complicated broader wholes which are attended to such that they will become things we could either remember or forget.

Where, then, does the fact of our caring come in? I have argued that it is in virtue of our practical worldly engagement that whatever shows up and is attended to will be intelligible to us in the way that it is. I wish here to make the further claim that the intelligibility of what we're up to is itself due to those things we care about. For example, my concern over the dustiness of my desk shows up once I consider myself as a host rather than a scruffy academic. It was in virtue of my caring that I desire not to be embarrassed at the state of my desk; due to this, the dust shows up to me at all and became something attended to. Were it not for this caring, I am likely to be indifferent to my surroundings such that the dust never reaches the threshold of something attended to. Accordingly, it's thanks to those things we care about that we adopt the perspectives we do, and so attend to the things we do in the way that we do.

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The Direction of Attention

The previous section outlined the ways in which our attention can fluctuate with regards to scope, the direction of our attention will occupy us now. It is caring, I have suggested, that

structures the interpretive horizon in which we experience what appears to us as this or that. Let me clarify this further. As discussed in Chapter One, I suggested, along Husserlian lines, that our attention is split between those things we take up in primary attention (those things we directly ‘clock’ given what we are up to) and those we take up in secondary attention (those things which form the backdrop or periphery in which our primary attention occurs). It should be clear that whatever we attend to with primary attention becomes possible a candidate for forgetting. Whatever we attend to primarily will necessarily be attended to as something that bears upon what we care about. It is worth bearing in mind, too, that I am invoking the wide notion of attention just discussed. Given that what I am up to has meaning for me in light of things that I care about, what I will primarily attend to will be experienced by me as this or that depending on what I am up to. If I care deeply about getting some work done, then I will experience the beautiful weather outside as an alluring distraction. However, if I don’t care about the work and instead care about, say, honing my tennis skills, then I’ll experience the beautiful weather outside as a perfect opportunity. If I care about both getting work done and honing my tennis skills, the weather will mirror my ambivalence, appearing ambiguously as a distraction and an opportunity. Later on, I will discuss in more detail what it means for us to attend to things in a secondary sense. There I will make a case for the idea that those things we attend to secondarily are those things which we experience but which are not attended to in the appropriate sense for them to become candidates for forgetting.

For the sake of clarity, I should fend off a potential confusion that might arise from the language of ‘horizon’ and ‘background’ that I’ve used to characterize secondary attention. This language does not imply that primary attention always has a narrow focus. As my above discussion of scope suggests, my primary attention can range from a narrow focus on my needlework to a panoramic view of a mountain range. In the cases when the wider scene occupies my primary

attention, there is still a background in light of which that scene shows up. For example, if my primary attention turns to a clearing in the woods, there is still a wider background that I secondarily attend to and in terms of which that clearing shows up precisely as it does. The scene of the clearing is intelligible as a clearing in the woods in light of the fact that I know I'm in the woods, even though those woods are not currently the theme of my primary attention. Primary and secondary attention correspond to an experiential foreground and background, respectively, and it's important to bear in mind that the foreground can itself be quite wide in scope. We must also bear in mind that 'horizon' and 'background' here are visual metaphors meant to capture a point not only about visual phenomenology but more broadly about meaning in general. For example, when my sister compliments my choice of dress, that specific approval is the object of my primary attention, but it has its distinctive sense in light of the history of our relationship and her subtle disdain for my dress-sense. The 'horizon' or 'background' there is not visual or spatial but rather an experiential history in light of which this new compliment has its distinctive weight and joy. That very vague sense of a background history is attended to secondarily and partly constitutes the object of my primary attention.

Crucially, it isn't necessary that I explicitly acknowledge the fact of my caring about something for objects within my experiential horizon to nevertheless show up to me as this or that. Let me give another example. Given that I care about not disturbing my neighbours, while I watch a film, I may experience the volume on my television *as* suddenly too loud and experience the remote control *as* frustratingly out of reach. The way that these objects in my surroundings (the volume, the remote control) show up to me (*as* too loud, *as* out of reach) pivots on what I care about (being a considerate neighbour). I may or may not contemplate that my attending to the television volume in this way springs from my caring about being a quiet neighbour. Even if I were to do so, to contemplate that the television volume puts my status as a respectful

neighbour at stake, at the very least it's unlikely that I consciously acknowledge that my caring about being a quiet neighbour sits within a broader care that I have about being a considerate person. Regardless of whether I contemplate the existential significance of what I'm up to when I lurch towards the remote control to turn the volume down, the important point here is to see how our primary attention is filtered through what we care about, whether or not we acknowledge those cares themselves. If I did not care about being a quiet neighbour, I might experience the television volume differently. I might experience it *as* thrilling or *as* well produced, and the proximity of the remote control might not show up to me at all. When we are up to something, in this case watching a film at home, living in proximity to neighbours, various objects register to me *as* something ultimately meaningful in light of what I care about. The registering of these objects, my lunging to the remote control for instance, involves the kind of attention such that my engagement with these objects may be subject to forgetting.

To add further complication to this picture, however, it's worth bearing in mind that thus far we have also been mostly occupied with examples concerning objects that we attend to with our senses. But we often attend to our own thoughts even if we aren't focusing specifically on those things that we care about. We can remember thoughts we've had and can be distinctly aware of scenarios in which we can't remember (and believe ourselves to have forgotten) past thoughts too. But the characterisation of what makes something a candidate for forgetting articulated thus far might seem a little strange to us at this point. I have claimed that what makes something a candidate for forgetting is that it shows up to us as something intelligible thanks to what we are up to given what we care about. This might lead one to think I am stipulating that only a second-order consideration of our thoughts permits our thoughts to become candidates for our forgetting. This line of thinking would imply that it is only when the thoughts we have themselves show up to us *as* this or that consciously that we might remember or forget

them. This would be a mistake. While it can indeed be the case that from time to time we do reflect on our own thinking, for instance, in therapeutic settings we might make judgements on whether our thoughts or thought patterns are broadly positive or negative, or whether they align with how we view ourselves, we might reflect that our judgements are too harsh or insufficiently critical, perhaps. Alternatively, we might privately reflect that thoughts we have are either intrusive or comforting. On the whole, however, it is my suggestion that we tend not to give this much reflexive contemplation to our own thinking. It can't be the case then, in view of how frequently we do remember or forget the thoughts we have that a high degree of self-reflective focus is necessitated for those thoughts to become candidates. On the contrary, as I have argued throughout this Chapter, attending in the sense described does not strictly and solely require that we attend as we would for highly focused situations or propositionally, something which is presupposed by a second-order model.

Analogously to how our engagement of the desk pre-propositionally succeeds in making that desk something we could remember or occasionally forget about, likewise this is the sense of attention which we ought to apply to our own thoughts. This shouldn't seem so troublesome, our thoughts are also involved in whatever we are up to, they form part of the norm-governed practices that makes what shows up to us intelligible in the way it is. I attend to X *as* Y because it shows up to me within the referential totality of my engagement, whether X is something that appears to us as 'inside' or 'outside' our minds. Thus, it is in virtue of our thoughts contributing to the norm-governed practices of what we are up to that they are intelligible to us in the way they are. In other words, we comported ourselves towards whatever we're up to in such a way that our thoughts contribute to that activity. Our thoughts, therefore, show up to us pre-propositionally (like the desk does) as part and parcel of whatever we're up to and, in this sense, our thoughts are attended to in the appropriate sense for them to become a candidate for

forgetting. The attention we have when immersed in our practical engagements is the same as that when we are immersed in our thoughts too.

Along these lines, then, we are in a position to further describe how our attention can be directed in a multitude of ways that permits various things to become candidates for our forgetting. In the preceding section I gave an example of being concerned over telling a friend some upsetting truth. I used this example to highlight how the scope of our attention can oscillate between purely being focused on the secret to be revealed, to the impact this might have on one's friend, to the even broader question of how one might feel as the bearer of bad news and the ethical responsibilities one might feel: torn between being a truthful person and being one who doesn't, perhaps needlessly, upset those that one cares for. This example also indicates the fluctuation of the direction of our attention and its relationship to our cares. That one's attention fluctuates in this way makes sense in light of the things that one is concerned with and cares about. Later on, while divulging the information to one's friend, one might completely forget the extent to which the ethical implications were considered earlier on. But it is clear that in having had these thoughts, which were intelligible to the individual in virtue of overall considering the problem at hand, they became something which could be, and then was, forgotten. The absence of awareness here in the present of the past ethical considerations was due to having forgotten, not due to never having occurred in the first place. This is in virtue of the fact that the individual in question attended to these thoughts in the appropriate manner.

Moreover, due to our attention being inextricably tied to those things we care about, and which give the qualitative character of what we attend to the intelligibility it does, we must be careful to bear in mind that even attending to the reality 'outside' of us discloses ourselves to ourselves as the attending subject. It is a persistent thread within phenomenological research to emphasise

the inherent sense of subjectivity contained within experience and we ought to be conscious of it here. This adds an additional but important layer of complexity to our considerations on the directionality of our attention. Not only can we think about our attention directed outward or inward, but our attending is always from the first-person perspective and as such involves a sense of the subject being the one for whom that attending is happening. In other words, that the experience had by an individual contains within it the pre-reflective acknowledgement that this experience is ‘theirs.’ Again, this ought not to be construed as a second-order propositional judgement that experiences are indexed to the one who is having them, rather, that even ‘outward’ directed attention itself involves acknowledgement that it comes from within that particular attending subject. Not only do objects show up the way they do (in other words, as this or that) in virtue of the cares that the subject has but what shows up does so as an experience belonging to that subject. On this basis we can see how those things we attend to and do not forget (those things we remember) have the quality of being our own experiences.

How then should we see the advances we’ve made in the discussion of the directionality of attention bearing upon the central project of this Chapter regarding forgetting and its relationship to caring? As with the preceding discussion regarding scope, I am not articulating a causal account of caring. I am not suggesting that in virtue of caring about something we are causally led to attend to the things that we do, I remain neutral on matters of causality. Rather, it is in virtue of caring that the things we attend to are attended to by us in the way that they are. Caring is what motivates us to attend to certain things with the quality and intensity that we do. In caring for this or that we are likely to find ourselves attending to a multiplicity of different factors and objects available to us which require different scopes and directions.

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The Temporality of Attention

The final aspect of attention that we will look at here concerns temporality. It should be noted from the outset that I am not looking to specifically discuss the ways in which we attend to time or temporality itself. For now, I'm concerned with the temporal character of attending. I'd like to discuss the durational character of our attention and how this shapes what becomes a candidate for remembering or forgetting.

If we think about our memories for events in the past, they often appear to us as self-contained episodes of our past (it is unsurprising that these are frequently referred to as episodic memories). These memories tend to have a beginning and an end, or at least a sense that they are a whole. Think for example of the memories we have for past conversations or scenes from films or even dreams we've had. Our experience, however, doesn't often appear to us this way. Instead, we appear to have a constant stream of consciousness in which our attention fluctuates in the ways described above – in scope or in direction (there may be other ways in which our attention fluctuates too). Given the disconnect between the way we experience the world in the present and the bracketed nature of our discrete memories, we might wonder how our memories take on this quality and I will suggest that it is forgetting of much of those things we attend to 'in between' that contributes to us remembering in the way we do.

The question for us here is whether we ever attend in such a way that could lead to the bookended character of our memories. As I've said that both remembering and forgetting share the basic form of attention that makes these phenomena possible (what makes something a candidate for remembering or forgetting), we have reason, then, to ask if our attention is

bookended for those things which are forgotten too. While in the main, I advocate for an understanding of consciousness that does not see experience chopped up into, say, time-slices or a succession of ‘now’ moments, I will suggest there are ways in which what we can attend to can appear to us as discrete wholes. The sense I have in mind here regards the way in which we attend to events which show up to us as finite themselves. Think of the experience had whilst sitting an exam. The duration of the exam is set from the outside and so this will influence the way in which one experiences that duration overall. Those precious last minutes of scribbling before ‘pencils down’ will influence the nature of one’s attention. It may become highly focused on the task at hand, or will perhaps (more unfortunately) be drawn away and focused instead on the impending end or the amount left to do. What does this mean for the analysis I have been expounding in this Chapter? The point here is that various events themselves may show up *as* this or that self-contained event during the time in which they occur. Consequently, rather than a succession of vanishingly small ‘now’ moments, the experience in which we are attentive has a duration that unfolds as a whole. This whole becomes a candidate for remembering or forgetting in the same way that in earlier examples I’ve spoken of discrete objects.

Here, however, we have external influences that shape how we attend. In the example of the exam, it is primarily the exam duration which sets our attention such that it shows up as a discrete whole. This is in contrast to the way in which, previously, I’ve emphasised how what we care about does this work. Ultimately, we have plenty of reason to believe, however, that caring can do this work in tandem with the external time constraints. For example, think of how a special day may show up as a self-contained whole, say, the wedding of a close friend. To some degree this day will show up in its entirety in part because of the social convention that it occurs over the course of a day. However, given that this day is meaningful (in the sense

of valuable) because we care about, among other things, the happiness of our friend, we are liable to experience the totality of the day as a unified event as we experience it. All the various parts of the day which themselves may become individual candidates for remembering will occur within the overarching temporal horizon of the day in its entirety. Thus, I suggest, when it comes to remembering the day, it is plausible that the memory we have of the day appears to us as a unified whole (even if we don't recall every detail), because our initial experience was of an unfolding day as a whole, rather than a later aggregate of all the small details we attended to throughout.

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Reiterating the Relationship Between Caring and Attention

Thus far, one would be forgiven for thinking that the analysis that I've outlined implies that in virtue of our cares leading us to attend to the things in the way that we do that we only attend to things which are, in a sense, relevant for what we care about. In other words, that all things irrelevant for our caring and what we are engaged in just simply won't show up at all. This interpretation of my analysis would lead to some rather peculiar scenarios and will lead us to an erroneous dilemma. On the one hand, one might think that my analysis suggests our caring blinkers us to the extent where all else is just invisible and not subject to our experience at all. On the other hand, one might interpret my suggestion that those things we attend to are viewed by us as bearing upon what we care about thanks to some second-order judgement akin to the possible objection I raised above. Clearly neither of these options can be the case. First off, we frequently attend to a whole host of things which either do not clearly bear on what we care about or, further, are completely peculiar to us. Consider the number of memories we have for

odd things in the past. Secondly, it simply doesn't track the experience of attention that all those things we attend to are done so with a secondary judgement.

These two mistaken interpretations can be circumvented by thinking about my analysis of attention in the following way: it is only on the mistaken assumption that showing up *as* something requires a degree of conscious reflection that we enter into this bind. Alternatively, as I've been arguing at length, what it means for X to show up *as* a Y is not strictly propositional nor requiring a high degree of focus. The attention we take to objects such that these objects become candidate for our forgetting can be articulated through the activity we're engaged in. Recall that what makes my desk a candidate for forgetting for me is simply my interaction with that desk in terms of the way I use it as an academic. On this basis, the claim that what we care about shapes our attention is not a quantitative statement. The claim is, instead, that whatever shows up to us does so qualitatively in virtue of what it is that we are up to and what we care about. This permits the possibility that of all the things that show up to us, plenty will be attended such that they appear strange, or peculiar or out of place. My suggestion is that this quality of strangeness itself is in virtue of the fact that what we are attending to isn't relevant for what we're up to but it nevertheless receives this quality because it doesn't neatly align with what we're up to.

To push the point further, it's not the case that the dust on my desk is literally invisible to me. Rather, it just doesn't 'show up' in the sense implied by the view of attention I've been presenting. For things to show up to us, then, is already for these things to be intelligible to us in some way indexed to what we are up to. In the next Chapter, I'll be discussing how, for the most part, our forgetting tracks the relation between those things we attend to and their relevance for our cares. Those things which don't align will be mostly forgotten. Of course,

and as I will explore more fully there, we hold on to plenty of peculiar memories. The way to view these cases is to stress that we are not well-oiled machines; that our consciousness is messy and liable to operate imperfectly. This allows us to say that even if what we care about does shape the qualitative way in which things show up to us as this or that, it doesn't follow that caring blinkers us such that only things relevant for our cares show up.

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What Doesn't Become a Candidate?

At this stage we have discussed at length what makes something a candidate for our forgetting (or our remembering). In order for something to even become something that we could forget, we need to attend to it as something; what shows up does so intelligibly in relation to what we're up to. I've considered the wide variety of permutations in our attention that tracks its propensity to change in terms of scope, direction, and temporal dimensions. I've also discussed how what shows up to us does so in terms that are indexed to what we're up to while also making it clear that this channelling of our attention does not prohibit all sorts of objects from appearing to us (it does not make objects in the world invisible to us). Rather, the nature of our attention is such that what we attend to is shot through with the intelligibility it gains from what we're up to. What I haven't touched on, and what will illuminate my analysis further, is a discussion of what doesn't become a candidate for forgetting. I've claimed above that experience is too broad a notion to capture the specificity of what makes something such that it could be forgotten. But most importantly, here, I wish to argue that there are plenty of things we experience but which never reach the threshold for becoming a candidate for forgetting. These are things which we experience in a sense so attenuated that they are not attended to in

the appropriate sense to become a candidate for forgetting. Recall earlier how I claimed it would be incorrect to say I'd forgotten the number of stations on a train journey I took unless I counted them. In that example I was gesturing to what concerns us now.

To start with, we can say simply that those things which aren't attended to us in the appropriate sense fail to reach the threshold for being forgotten. As I hinted to above (and in Chapter One), if we adopt the Husserlian suggestion that we have both primary and secondary attention we gain a better sense of what is experienced but cannot be something forgotten. I indicated that even while we attend to things primarily, which is to say we attend such that things show up intelligibly, this takes place within a much broader scope of objects that form the periphery. Unlike those things which we attend to in a primary sense, and which accordingly show up to us as this or that in light of what we are up to (and have their distinctive meaning in terms of what we care about), those things that we attend to secondarily fail to be remarked by us in a way that is anything more than as the background to our primary attention. To some degree we hit a methodological stumbling block on the grounds that, once we pay close enough attention to those things which form the periphery, anything within that periphery becomes attended to or engaged with by us as this or that in terms of what we are up to (propositionally or pre-propositionally). Then we are no-longer attending 'secondarily;' those objects have become our primary focus. Accordingly, here our analysis will have to be limited to the conceptual. The best we can approximate for much of those things which never become a candidate for forgetting is that they must only appear to us as background and not something which features within my engagements to any further degree of specificity. Let me be clear, while our attention is always directed in such a way that there is a secondary backdrop to our present focus, I am claiming that the objects within this backdrop are not considered by us *as* featuring within what we are presently up to in the appropriate sense.

Let's expand that loud television example I detailed earlier. Recall I'm watching a film and the volume is too loud given that I don't wish to disturb my neighbour. Let's say I reach the remote control just in time and turn the volume down. However, rather than continuing to be engrossed in the high drama of the film I'm watching, my mind starts wandering. I start to think more about my downstairs neighbour in particular, whether she ever worries about making too much noise, whether she's going to make a complaint or knock on her ceiling with a broom again, I start practicing an apology. While my mind wandered, the film has continued playing and after some time I realise that I have no idea what's happening. I'm going to need to rewind a few minutes. All this time I was primarily attending to an imaginary confrontational scenario with my neighbour, and I'd only secondarily attended to the moving shapes on the screen and glanced at the subtitles. I wasn't attending to the images on screen or the subtitles in such a way that the film now makes sense to me. Since I hadn't paid attention (primarily) to that scene of the movie while my mind wandered it was never experienced in such a way that I could forget it. My ignorance of the plot development comes from not paying adequate attention to it, not that I'd forgotten it. I might later forget that I felt compelled to turn the volume down, that I'd pondered my neighbour, that I rewound the movie, because all of these things were attended to primarily. However, if someone asked me what just happened in the movie, I'd have to reply that I don't know; it wouldn't be right to say I'd forgotten because I only attended to that clip of the film as the background surroundings in which I wondered about my neighbour.

There is a possible limit case to this way of thinking about attention. Instances I have in mind here are those in which we appear to snap back to reality after our mind wandering so completely that we have no way of figuring out what we were thinking about. Here the

experience can be approximated as of returning to being conscious after some indefinable period of something akin to oblivion. A question one might have is whether for that period, which now appears to us as oblivion, we were attending and have completely forgotten, or, alternatively, we weren't attending to anything at all and so there is nothing for us to remember. One might suggest that here all experience was secondary in the sense of being peripheral. Again, as I've mentioned above, we're not in the business of making empirical judgements and cannot adjudicate on each and every case. Nevertheless, it is worth outlining the limit case for this way of conceiving of attention and its role in making experience a candidate for forgetting. Overall, however, we can glean some understanding of what clearly doesn't become a candidate for forgetting (or remembering) but which we might say is experienced by us. All those parts of our experience which only appear as the background of our attention are never attended to in the appropriate sense and therefore do not become something we could ever forget.

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Closing Remarks

The relevance of this overall discussion is that it aims to pin down more precisely the shared intuition amongst philosophers of memory that there is some basic criterion that differentiates between, on the one hand, those things which we adequately experienced such that we remember and are not imagining, and on the other hand those things which we adequately experience such that we forget as opposed to those things we never could. My account has argued that it is attention in the phenomenologically-informed way I have described which permits us to make these conceptual distinctions and that this account applies not only to

remembering but to forgetting too. To summarise, only those things which we grasp in primary attention become candidates for our forgetting because they are attended to in light of what we are up to. Whatever we attend to secondarily may become the focus of our primary attention. However, so long as it remains secondary in attention, it does not reach the threshold for being a candidate for forgetting. Given that what we care about steers the direction of our attention (to thoughts of our neighbour, rather than the movie that's playing) and shapes how it is that we evaluate the various objects that appear to us (the television volume registers as too loud, rather than as thrilling) we can now see that caring plays a role in demarcating what could become a candidate for forgetting. Moreover, caring plays a role in shaping the scope, direction, and temporality of our attention. This allows us to see the wide variety of different objects that our attention can take and thereby become something we could forget (or remember). I have indicated a potential limit case and made clear that this analysis is neither causal nor epistemological in character. Despite this, we are now in a better position, having articulated what makes something a potential candidate for forgetting, for the following Chapter in which we will turn to a systematic discussion of which things ultimately are forgotten by us: those things which do not adequately align with what we care about.

CHAPTER THREE PASSIVE FORGETTING

In the preceding Chapters, I have argued that our mindedness in general is best understood as being structured around those things that we care about. My claim in this Chapter is to emphasise that the phenomenon of forgetting, like remembering, operates in the same fashion. Accordingly, I have emphasised that elucidating the relationship between caring and both our remembering and forgetting will allow us to understand more fully the way in which these phenomena shape our experiences and who we are. To further this aim, in this Chapter I will be not only applying the insights gleaned from our previous Chapters to investigate the most pervasive form of our forgetting but to articulate the rather less acknowledged temporal aspect of caring. Conceptualising our cares as temporally extended and subject to fluctuations in intensity and activity opens an interpretive space for understanding the possibility of our cares becoming *dormant*. More precisely, I will show how the dormancy of our cares helps us to make sense of the most common and elusive kind of forgetting which appears to occur continually and does not appear (at least on the face of it) to be tied to our agency: passive forgetting.

Passive forgetting is, I suggest, continually at work on various aspects of our experience. Sometimes our passive forgetting is instant and our realisation sudden: you forget your train of thought, or where you placed the piece of paper that you were holding a moment ago. Here we very quickly realise that we've forgotten. It's also possible that we forget just as rapidly and only much later do we become aware, if we become aware at all. For instance, you can forget where your car is parked, the name of your fellow conference presenter, or to buy bread while you were shopping. But passive forgetting is more complicated still. It doesn't just immediately happen to those recently attended to parts of our experience; it also works upon things which

we were able to remember for significant periods of the past. We passively forget names of old classmates, the origin of a trinket, the method for solving differential equations, or how we spent the summer ten years ago. These are examples of things which, for a period of time in the past, were readily available. Indeed, some of which we may have had to memorise. Nevertheless, by now they have been passively forgotten. Though we are likely to have paid significantly more attention when memorising the method for solving differential equations than those things we forget instantly, the examples of forgetting previously remembered things emphasise that our forgetting is a pervasive ongoing process that can work upon both those things we pay a great deal of attention to and those which we don't. Even those things which we presently deem as vitally important may at some future time be completely forgotten by us. Moreover, there can be ambivalence over the way in which we view our own forgetting. While we may bemoan all those things we have forgotten from our undergraduate years, for example, we may also breathe a sigh of relief at having jettisoned much of the mental clutter that we have no use in remembering. The important points here are that the eventual passive forgetting of even notable parts of our experience goes largely unnoticed by us; we place no effort in forgetting these things. If we do ever realise that we've forgotten, the process of our forgetting appears to us only vaguely and our interpretation of this forgetting is never one-sidedly positive or negative.

Despite its ubiquity, the precise nature of this quotidian forgetting is difficult to capture. This difficulty of conceptualising the positive role of forgetting and its relationship to our cares stems partly from the fact that our forgetting goes mostly unacknowledged by us. In general, I argue, forgetting of the sort alluded to by the issues I will outline below occurs utterly effortlessly, without our awareness of it happening and seemingly faces no resistance (occasionally to our later annoyance). This forgetting just happens to (or within) us; thus, I call

it *passive forgetting*. These difficulties with making sense of forgetting may give us pause but they are not insurmountable for an analysis of the phenomena. Indeed, as I will suggest throughout this chapter, while there are three problematic aspects of forgetting which make an analysis more difficult, they are, ultimately, what gives forgetting its strength for operating in the service of our cares. Allow me to elaborate by looking at these difficulties which nevertheless show how the nature of forgetting contributes to maintaining what I have previously articulated as our care-based mindedness.

First off, it is part of the very nature of forgetting to no longer be conscious of what it *is* that we've forgotten. If you are consciously aware of some detail from your past experience, then you are not forgetting it; you are remembering it. To clarify, while we may be able to say that there are significant periods of our lives that we can make basic claims about regarding what we were doing or, say, where we lived, we may nevertheless be unable to recall the vast majority of experiences we had during that time. Here I am emphasising that while we are able to understand *that* we have forgotten, ultimately, we are not able to pinpoint *what* has been forgotten. A second aspect of the tricky nature of investigating forgetting is that, for the most part, we do not notice that we have forgotten what we have. It's not just the case that we lack awareness of some past event or experience, we also don't notice our lack of awareness. While there are indeed plenty of occasions in which we do notice our forgetting (as suggested above or in cases where our forgetting shows up as a nuisance, say), it isn't the case that these occasions are the sum total. For the rest, our forgetting just doesn't show up to us at all and we remain oblivious that those things which we may have once been able to remember have now been forgotten by us. A final difficulty regarding forgetting is that, thirdly, in most circumstances, we aren't able to watch our passive forgetting at work. Given that we cannot be aware of something when we have forgotten it, and in virtue of lack of awareness about our

forgetting (whether temporarily or more permanently) the *process* by which we forget is elusive too. Though, we might lament that we are no longer able to remember as many things as we did when we were younger, that we believe ourselves to be forgetting more than we used to, or to feel as though our memories for past experiences are becoming hazier with the passage of time, we cannot truly be said to experience the operation of our forgetting. The absence of our awareness in these three cases are vital for our forgetting to operate effectively. Were it not for our lack of awareness it would be difficult, if not impossible, to truly forget. Despite these surface issues for investigating the phenomena, and in contrast to more readily conscious aspects of our mindedness such as remembering, forgetting is beneficial for us overall. Indeed, an important motivation for this thesis is to explore how forgetting is not, as some interpretations would have it, merely and in all cases a mental error or hindrance. I'm seeking to argue that forgetting plays an essential, positive role in human existence.

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Forgetting as a Cognitive Virtue

Kourken Michaelian (2011) takes us part of the way in this direction when he conceptualises forgetting as a cognitive virtue that plays a vital epistemic role in the function of memory. His basic point is that a subject will necessarily face limitations on their cognitive capacities, and therefore, “forgetting is necessary to ensure appropriate levels of reliability, power and speed in memory.” (2011, 410). Having some instances of forgetting is a good thing because it offers a cognitive advantage. Michaelian articulates this in the following way. If a mental record (a memory) is inaccessible, it won't be retrieved in light of a relevant query: it will be forgotten. While forgetting may reduce the power of retrieval (overall, fewer records are accessed), forgetting also increases both the reliability and speed of retrieval; the more records that are

inaccessible, often outdated ones, the fewer inaccurate records will have to be sorted through to find the right one. (Michaelian, 2011: 413-15). Finally, the cognitive process of forgetting involves, in Michaelian's terminology, preferentially rendering inaccessible those records "that are irrelevant to the subject's [epistemic] interests". Ultimately, at least on this account, we forget in the service of maintaining the optimum functioning of our memory system by ensuring that our cognitive functioning is not slowed down or overwhelmed with useless, 'subjectively uninteresting' clutter. In other words, we discard memories of irrelevant experiences to avoid clogging up our memory system that would render it slow, inefficient and inaccurate. I want to build on this account. I think it isn't just the case that we preferentially forget to achieve smooth cognitive functioning. Michaelian's account lays the foundations for a closer investigation of the normativity at stake in our forgetting: it is rooted in the subject's 'interests,' as he refers to them. This helps us think through the broader remit of this thesis that forgetting is deeply tied to our care-based mindedness.

Given that Michaelian's account is of the reliabilist variety within virtue epistemology, it isn't the case that an individual needs to care about being epistemically virtuous for their cognitive process to display virtue. On this reading of virtue, one's cognitive virtue depends on how reliable one's cognitive processes are for achieving reliable knowledge. Accordingly, his view of forgetting is that it maximises the possibility of a reliable memory system and therefore counts as cognitively virtuous. However, alternative views within virtue epistemology (as we have seen in our opening chapter with Linda Zagzebski) dispute this picture (see Greco, 2000: 179-184). I will remain neutral on which side of the fence I will place my standard. What we can say regarding Michaelian's account is that *caring* about having a smoothly functioning memory system only makes sense within a broader existential project that pays heed to the way in which our mindedness is broadly centred on what we care about. Else, it wouldn't matter to

have a reliable memory system at all. It matters that we have a memory system that is reliable because of the wider implications that this will have on those things we care about, what Michaelian glosses as our “interests”. While Michaelian’s account itself doesn’t require the subject to care about her own cognitive virtue, I suggest that the impetus for us to justify the power that forgetting has for ensuring a reliable memory system implies that we care about the relationship between forgetting and getting things right about the past. We do so because getting things right about the past has an effect upon those things we care about. This idea mirrors that of my discussion in Chapter One. In order to say we truly care about something we will be epistemically conscientious about those things which will put what we care about at stake. Likewise, here, caring that we have a well-functioning memory system is indicative of being epistemically conscientious about the things that matter to us. Again, it matters to us to get things that we remember right because they relate to what we care about. According to Michaelian, the way to get things right when we remember is for our forgetting to do its job well.

As I have stated from the outset, I wish to elaborate on this relationship between our forgetting and our cares. Michaelian’s account provides us a useful dropping off point for this. We passively forget, I argue, not simply to ensure smooth cognitive functioning and reliable remembering. More broadly, we passively forget due to the relationship between what we have attended to and the cares that we have. Our passive forgetting, I will show, is broadly, though not perfectly, inversely correlated to what we care about. In other words, we forget things (passively) in light of the insignificance these things have for what we care about. Those things we previously attended to which bear little to no relevant relation to our cares are forgotten.

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An Inverse Correlation

In Chapter One, I argued that an approach to remembering (and forgetting) ought to take into consideration that our mindedness and experience of the world in terms of what we are presently up to and in light of what we care about. Forgetting, even passively, I argue, is no exception. In Chapter Two, I argued that in order for something to even be considered a candidate for our remembering or forgetting, we need to appropriately attend to those aspects of our broader experience. Our attention, I argued, can likewise be best understood within the framework of care such that those things which appear to us within our primary attention are attended to in light of what we care about. I argued that the appropriate way to characterise the form of attention that helps us to understand remembering and forgetting is that we attend to this or that *as* this or that. More precisely, that our pre-reflective engagement with objects and people is sufficient for an account of attention which provides a bedrock for future remembering or forgetting.

Now we need to get clearer on just how our cares play a role in shaping which of those potential candidates do become subject to our passive forgetting. The remainder of this section of the Chapter is, therefore, geared towards articulating the implications of the following claim: that those things we passively forget are strongly (though not absolutely) inversely correlated to what we care about. In other words, for the most part, we forget what we don't care about or what no longer serves our cares. I say 'for the most part' because the correlation is not perfect; we do forget things we care about, but this fact, as we shall see later, reinforces the view that forgetting generally works in service of our cares. Our passive forgetting, I will argue, works in the service of our care-directed mindedness by excluding (whether temporarily or more

permanently) those things do not bear upon what we care about now given our present context. The parts of our experience which passive forgetting happens to most readily are those parts which do not show up to us as things which bear on what we care about.

As highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, passive forgetting is an elusive phenomenon and tricky to pin down. For the vast majority of things that we experience and attend to in the relevant manner, we will eventually forget, and we are generally oblivious to our forgetting. Let me elaborate this further with some examples. Not only is it likely that we will forget the names of our old classmates or people we met on holiday, old locker combinations or phone numbers but we also forget complex past experiences. I suggest that for the vast majority of us, we will have forgotten many thousands of days of our lives. Not only do we forget those trivial days but even days where something notable occurred and we might have been paying more attention than usual. I suggest we would be hard pressed to remember in detail every single birthday we've had, every holiday taken, each conversation we've had with a friend. Furthermore, even while we may believe that we remember everything about a past experience, as noted earlier, we have no real way of knowing if that is the case because we may also be oblivious to things we have forgotten too. Indeed, even for those who believe themselves to have a very good memory, I claim that it's reasonable to say that we forget exceedingly more than what we remember.

Considering our forgetting in this way may be concerning for us. It's understandable to find this vast lack of awareness of our past bizarre or perhaps somewhat unnerving. However, my claim will be to show how, for the most part, our forgetting beneficially operates in the service of what we care about. I have claimed in previous chapters that we are boundless in the number, kind, and degree of things we can care about. Sometimes we care about things that spur us to

care about other things, often our cares are inscrutable to us, occasionally we believe ourselves to care when we perhaps don't, and other times claim not to care when perhaps we do. Despite the limitlessness of what we can care about, however, we remain finite in our capacity to adequately be responsive to all those things which our many cares demand of us. In line with Michaelian, I argue that forgetting is a phenomenon which allows us to jettison those things which lack relevance to our *epistemic* interests, however, I take the further step to claim it does so in order to support and maintain those things we care about by passively forgetting those things that are irrelevant to our cares more broadly. As I have suggested in earlier chapters, the view of mindedness as care-based allows us to encompass many different facets, including the epistemic, which support our life in consistent ways. To develop these ideas further I would like to turn to a few instances which appear to contradict the account that I am building that forgetting is, for the most part, inversely correlated to what we care about.

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Returning to Primary Attention

Let us turn to the first hurdle for streamlining an analysis of passive forgetting. I have claimed in Chapter Two that our attention is directed by what we care about. This leads us to attend to certain objects in the way that we do, with the quality that we do. If you care about your garden, then the rain shows up *as* a relief after a drought. Alternatively, if you care about enjoying another day in the blazing sunshine then the rain shows up *as* a disappointment. If you care about both, then you feel ambivalent about the rain. In *each* case the rain is attended to in terms of one's cares and therefore becomes a candidate for our remembering or later forgetting. Here is the crux of the problem: if all those things which we attend to are done so the way they are

thanks to what we care about, how can we make the claim that our forgetting is inversely correlated to what we care about?

Let me explain this potential snag further. As I have suggested in the previous Chapter, only those parts of our experience which we attend to primarily become possible subjects for our passive forgetting. Those things which remain only remarked by us secondarily as the background (and those things which we never attend to at all) cannot become subject to our passive forgetting since they are not experienced by us as something specific in terms of what we are up to. We appear to be stuck in a bind, as I have asserted two seemingly incompatible claims. On the one hand, things tend to become candidates for forgetting in virtue of them showing up as something because of what we care about; our primary attention is directed to things relevant for our cares. On the other hand, I wish to pursue the claim that things tend to be forgotten on the basis that they *aren't* aligned with our cares. How can both of these claims be true? If things tend to become candidates for forgetting in the first place because they align with that I care about, it seems that passive forgetting, which I claim tends to let go of things I do not care about, would have precious little to forget. Alternatively, if passive forgetting in fact allows us to forget a great deal, then we need to understand how things we once cared about become things we no longer care about. What's more, given that we sometimes forget things almost immediately, we need to understand how things we care about can quite suddenly become things we don't care about. To do so, it will be worth revisiting the claims I've made previously about attention.

Recall that our primary attention is directed in terms of what we are up to and how, given what we care about, we comport ourselves. It is possible to forget not only that your desk is dusty after, say, exclaiming it to yourself, but it is also possible to forget that you have a desk at all

(this is, of course, likely to be uncommon) even if you simply comported yourself to that desk *as*, say, a place to keep your books. This is one respect in which primary attention is broad: it is not limited only to those things we can explicitly bring into language. In line with this, those things which become candidates for our later remembering or forgetting are those which are attended to anywhere on a wide spectrum from pre-reflective to fully articulated propositional engagement.

Additionally, within just our pre-reflective engagement there are degrees of heightened awareness that are similarly broad. Our primary attention is not always confined to a precise central point of focus as it might be if we were, for example, threading a needle. Given that primary attention applies when we are meaningfully engaged in an activity – when we are up to something – it can encompass a wide net of partially attended to features within the horizon of our experience. Thus, not merely our highly acute focus. As I previously explained, our primary attention can therefore include fluctuations between a broad scan over a party full of guests taking in the multiple different features of that experience before snapping towards the smash of a broken glass nearby. The key feature is that, by primarily attending, parts of our experience register to us *as* this or that. Recall that we are often later able to remember minute details of things we only partially attended to. This is, I suggested, because our primary attention can operate pre-propositionally.

Finally, and most important for this section, is that primary attention is not solely occupied by things that ultimately *do* put what we care about at stake. Instead, our cares direct our attention in order to keep us broadly vigilant for those things that *might* put what we care about at stake. Often, caring about something is going to mean that many things need to show up to us. Think again about the party example. As a host who cares about throwing a great party that your

guests thoroughly enjoy, you need to be attentive to a vast array of things which may influence how great your party is. Among plenty of other things you need to be attentive to whether you need to replenish drinks and food, turn the volume of the music up or down, subtly gear the conversation away from a potentially incendiary topic, locate the broom to clean up that smashed glass. In order to attend to whether you and your guests are having a good time, you need to be receptive to a huge variety of things that can lead it to go wrong or to go very well. Indeed, we speak of a great host as someone who is appropriately *attentive* to their guests, and we are no doubt familiar with how stressful throwing a big party can be. Part of what it means to care is to be highly attentive to the various things which may prove to be relevant for what you care about. By caring about being a good host you will be vigilant for all the things that could put your hosting ability at stake. For this to happen, your attention needs to be broader than the scope of things which *actually do* put your hosting a great party at stake.

Now, what does all this mean for our understanding of forgetting? I suggest that in caring about things our attention will be broad enough such that many objects show up to us as relevant given what we are up to. Many of the things which register as potentially relevant, given what you care about, may turn out *not* to put what you care about at stake, or their relevance is only momentary. Moreover, while the example of caring about throwing a great party shows how we need to be attentive to a wide variety of things, we are often not solely occupied with a single care. Given that there may be a number of different things that we care about, it is also the case that we will need to be attentive to an even wider scope of things which may put any of those other things we care about at stake. Much of these attended to objects may turn out not to be ultimately relevant, or only momentarily relevant, and so our forgetting also aids us in discarding those too. The most important point here that must be elaborated is that what we care about and how deeply we care will fluctuate over time. This temporal dimension to caring

is a requisite to understanding how we end up forgetting those things which needed at least some minimal relevance to what we care about to have been attended to in the first place.

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Caring and Passive Forgetting

When we passively forget, then, those things which are no longer relevant for what we are now up to are discarded. Moreover, the process of this forgetting is necessarily opaque to us. In this way, our forgetting can be considered as inversely correlated to what we care about. Forgetting occurs for a number of reasons. I will discuss three ways in which this can occur, though it may be possible for there to be further ways in which our cares shape what we forget. It is, furthermore, plausible that these three ways might be co-present in some instance of passive forgetting. Accordingly, I am not offering a fully complete taxonomy of passive forgetting, rather I will present salient examples to help us to understand the phenomena further. The first concerns the fluctuation of caring and the irrelevance of some past moment for what you presently care about. The second has just been alluded to and concerns the persistence of what you care about when an object of your primary attention did not end up being relevant or doesn't put what we care about at stake any longer. Finally, I discuss forgetting of those things which we do not deem as relevant for the future (i.e., things we seem forget immediately).

The first way in which we can see how our cares play a role in which primarily attended to parts of our experience are forgotten is by looking at how our forgetting is responsive to the changing or diminishment of our cares. While we may have cares that span our lifetime, caring for the wellbeing of our parents, siblings or children, say, or a particular vocation or hobby

perhaps. For the most part many of the things we care for now were not something we may have cared about before and may not care for in the future. Forgetting facilitates the changing nature of our cares over time by allowing us to jettison things which are no longer relevant to the things we care about now. It also allows us, in the future, to jettison those things which we may presently hold on to, but which later will no longer elicit our caring. These changes in caring can happen gradually over a long period of time, or more rapidly.

To elaborate with an example, imagine a work environment in which you have to interact with a colleague who you'd really rather not have to. You find them dismissive, irritating, inexplicably hard to get along with. You don't care for this colleague, but you certainly care not to make your workday full of any more tension. Accordingly, you attend to the environment around you in such a way that will limit the possibility of any additional friction. In comporting yourself this way your attention will be drawn to various parts of your day-to-day experiences from which you may retain many memories. Now, let's say you move on from this particular job to something far more rewarding and where you work alongside a highly agreeable team. Over time, given your new context, your caring about avoiding a fraught relationship with your past colleague and the consequent anxiety to conduct yourself a certain way will dissipate. You don't care anymore. Correspondingly, you begin to passively forget much of those past experiences (save, perhaps, a few howlers that you now view as entertaining anecdotes). In years to come you might find it amusing to realise you can't even remember the name of the offending colleague.

Relatedly, we can think of pivotal moments in our life that force us to re-evaluate what we care about. Say something big happens in your life, something so momentous that the very idea of what you now consider to be petty or trivial things you cared about are pushed completely out

of the picture. You or someone close to you became very unwell, or you had to relocate, perhaps a birth, death or divorce, or some other life-altering event.¹ The cares that arise in virtue of the momentous life change can completely overhaul your outlook such that the prospect and importance of what you'd cared for previously either evaporates or is eclipsed by current cares that demand your attention. Importantly, our caring, and therefore our passive forgetting, is responsive to the ultimate contingencies that we face in our lives.

Despite the differences, these two examples share an important similarity: the shifting of one's caring down-prioritises the care that initially led you to attend to the world the way that you did. In response to this shift in your cares, you no longer attend to the things which would have done, and you forget about those memories which previously you clung on to. Passive forgetting, then, is responsive to the demands of our caring such that those things which are no longer cared about as deeply are discarded or jettisoned. This too helps us to make sense of the idea of an inverse correlation to what we care about: the less you care, the more you forget. In this way we can see how even though we initially attended to parts of our experience such that they became candidates for remembering, the shifting of our cares is accompanied by our passive forgetting of things associated with those things we no longer care about.

Another way to understand the possibility of forgetting those things which we attended to in light of our caring is similar to the first. However, here what we care about is ongoing but the things which we were attentive to initially are no longer relevant for this ongoing care. Let me elaborate this in relation to our forgetting with an example of taking your friend out for a delicious meal. Let's say that you care about paying your friend back for the last time they

¹ It's worth noting that what counts as a life-altering event will vary widely from person to person. I am talking here of anything that would lead a person to find themselves no-longer occupied primarily with the things they cared about beforehand.

footed the bill, this care might be nested in the broader care that you have that your friend doesn't resent you, and, ultimately, that you care about your relationship with them. Whatever the chain of cares that leads you to pay for the meal, it is in virtue of those cares that you will be primarily attentive to various parts of your experience when you go and settle the bill. Some of these things will become subject to your later forgetting. For instance, say you reach the counter and cannot find your purse. The object of your primary attention is the worrying absence of your purse. Given the context in which finding your purse may threaten your ability to do what you care about – paying back your friend – you may be subject to a series of negative emotional responses and find your primary attention drawn to further consequences, you may curse yourself for being careless, you might whip your gaze back to the table and be motivated to search more thoroughly in your bag. Attending in this way all makes sense within the context that you care about paying back your friend. But then, it's a false alarm, you find your purse, the mild panic subsides, and you pay for the meal. Let's say that later on you completely forget about this episode at the counter: that sheepish glance back at your friend, the rifle through your bag, the self-admonishment. It's plausible, I suggest, that the reason for your forgetting these parts of your experience which were at the forefront of your attention at the time, when caring about paying back your friend was paramount, later on are no longer relevant after all.² In finding your purse and paying for the meal, your moment of panic is no longer relevant to your ongoing care for your friendship and so you forget the episode and all the smaller details that make it up. It is not so much that the care for your friend *itself* is threatened by this situation: it isn't the case that not being able to pay for the meal will alter how much you care about your friend. Instead, within the broad care you have for them as a friend sat your narrower care of paying them back. Once you *have* paid them back, caring about 'paying them back' no longer

² Moreover, it is not the case, of course, that the missing purse shows up to you explicitly *as* threatening your ability to care for your friend for you to nevertheless experience the event *as* concerning.

shows up for you as a way to maintain what you care about overall: your friend and your relationship with them. Consequently, your care for your friend continues to direct your attention elsewhere – to offering to give them a lift home or to discussing when you should both meet again. Accordingly, the persistent cares that you have surrounding your friend redirect your attention to other salient aspects of your interaction. In line with this, you passively forget those things which are no longer relevant to your ongoing cares.

Another way that parts of your experience could be subject to passive forgetting is similar to the last: when we forget on the basis that we do not deem something attended to as something which we will need in the future. What might this look like? Returning to the meal example once again, you may partially primarily attend to whether you pay for some more drinks with a ten or a twenty, perhaps considering how much you'd like to tip the restaurant staff. You decide with a shrug and attend to the banknote you pluck from your purse indifferently, *as* merely enough to cover the bill. Any note would have been attended to *as* enough and it doesn't show up *as* something you'll need in the future. This isn't something that you anticipate needing to remember and not something you attend to in such a way that it is registered with any further degree of detail, so it gets forgotten, almost immediately. The banknote shows up as instrumentally relevant for what you are up to in the moment (*as* enough to cover those drinks) but quickly becomes irrelevant once that moment is over. Our attention follows this relevance by directing our attention away from those things we do not anticipate needing to remember and passively forgetting as a result. Like the previous case, what was attended to no longer holds salience for what you presently care about. Unlike the previous case, however, here our passive forgetting works upon those parts of our experience which we do not attend to as something we should remember. Here we aren't registering something *as* irrelevant for the future; instead, we simply *do not register* something as relevant for the future. Our

registering makes no reference to future relevance or irrelevance. I emphasise this because if we were to experience something *as* irrelevant, we would be making a kind of judgement that something might be worth forgetting later. We then are no longer strictly speaking about passive forgetting, but rather a more active kind that involves a higher degree of contemplative engagement which will be covered in subsequent Chapters. To be clear, here we are looking at how what we care about leads us *not* to see X as relevant for the future such that we forget it. I do not wish to claim that ‘not seeing X as relevant’ merely involves the absence of some propositional registering of something as relevant for the future. I am suggesting, instead, that ‘not seeing X as relevant’ can be understood as the absence of even pre-propositional registering. Sometimes we will attend to things as important and worth remembering and other times we don’t.

We can, of course, go wrong in not making an assessment that we should remember. Thinking in these terms will help to explain what I mean about ‘not experiencing as relevant’. Say you receive your change back from the cashier and something doesn’t feel right. You ask yourself: did I pay with a ten or a twenty? Is the cashier making a mistake, have they short-changed me? Here you’ve forgotten because the banknote’s value wasn’t something you anticipated needing to remember. This is wholly understandable given that we tend to and are disposed to trust that cashiers are honest (and that their being attentive to exactly how much change they should give is part of their job). Here the absence of considering the banknote’s value puts you in a tricky position. Though you had reasons not to consider the banknote’s value as relevant (whatever note you paid with would have been enough and you don’t distrust cashiers), you didn’t register that note as something that would show up in the future as relevant. This is not to say that we are always mistaken in not attending to something as relevant for the future and thereby forgetting about it. That we can occasionally make mistakes over what needs to be remembered

attests further to the general position advanced here that our forgetting is broadly inversely correlated to what we care about: else these kinds of momentary lapses of remembering wouldn't show up to us as errors. For the most part, it is reasonable that we forget those things we do not anticipate needing to remember because it ensures that our attention remains directed towards those things which do matter for what we care about.

Given these examples, where are we with regards to the initial question? How is it that we forget what we appropriately attend to, given our opening assumption that our forgetting is inversely correlated to what we care about, and given my claim that we only attend to things relevant for our cares? In short, we are temporal beings who are subject to fluctuations in the things we care about and the contingency of the world. Moreover, our primary attention is broadly responsive to a vast array of things which are relevant given what we are up to, this is to ensure that we are vigilant for those things which may put what we care about at stake. Accordingly, much of what we primarily attend to may not end up ultimately relevant for our cares – either because what we took to be relevant for now or the future turns out not to be, or because our overarching cares which led us to attend in the way we did have been displaced. It is, therefore, due to the fact of our caring that we only attend to some things rather than others, and that we attend to things as this or that (given what we are up to) which leads us to forget those parts of experience that are not relevant for what we care about. In the redirection of our attention, we passively forget what no longer aligns with our present cares.

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Cares and Dormancy

I have suggested the idea that we can gradually care less over time, but there is another way to conceptualise our cares changing over time that has not been discussed in the literature, but

which will help us to understand our forgetting and remembering further. Here I would like to propose the idea of cares becoming *dormant*. We can think of the dormancy of cares similarly to how the term is applied elsewhere. Dormancy can imply sleeping, the present inactivity of something which has the potential to awaken in the future. Think of volcanoes or diseases. Fortunately for us, dormant cares do not necessarily spell the same kind of negative connotations as these two examples, we can also think of dormant seeds or hibernating animals.

The benefit of viewing our cares as something that can become dormant helps us to make sense of cases of, for instance, recovered memories. Moreover, it alludes to a picture of caring that isn't as inflexible as an on/off binary. Let us think back to the example of forgetting that obnoxious colleague. The purpose of that example was to stress how in light of the sometimes contingent and changing circumstances of our lives, we find ourselves gradually and passively forgetting. In the example, forgetting is aligned with the emergence of new cares that sprung from changing your job. In contrast, in discussing the example of taking your friend out to lunch, your forgetting about the missing purse came about in light of that event no longer putting your persisting care to be equitable with your friend (part of what you take to be involved in your overarching care for your friend) at stake.

We may at times experience those life-altering events indicated above but rather than re-evaluate our past cares as trivial or inconsequential, thereby leading us to forget those things relevant to them, instead relate to those cares as no longer a priority. Imagine someone who, say, ardently cares for environmental issues. Their caring motivates them to attend rallies, campaign for climate justice, and importantly, educate themselves extensively on the various aspects of the climate crisis. Now let's say this person experiences a radical change in their life: they become a parent. In light of these new circumstances our new parent has far more that

they need to care about. Given the highly pressing cares that accompany such a life change as raising a new-born baby, for our individual, the cares they have regarding the environment are displaced. Accordingly, we can imagine in such a scenario that much of what our individual has attended to in virtue of their care for the environment is passively forgotten (though potentially, only temporarily). During this time, if asked, our individual may adamantly deny that they ‘no longer care about the environment,’ and fervently wish that they were able to recall the things that they previously could. Later on, years perhaps, taking care of their child is not quite such an overwhelming task and our individual finds themselves returning to the passionate care they had for the environment. They start pondering those earlier experiences and try to recapture much of what they learnt at that time.

It could be argued that instead of one’s cares becoming dormant and then rekindled, that our individual simply did not care about the environment during those earlier years of child raising. Once they had more time on their hands, they developed a new care for the environment which just so happened to bear a striking similarity to what they cared about before becoming a parent. Indeed, many people care deeply for something, stop caring, and never care for that thing again. While there is, of course, no way to adjudicate on specific cases we can make theoretical distinctions. I suggest it is more interpretatively plausible that we view these fluctuations in our cares on a continuum that is expressive of our agency over time. While we may indeed occasionally be mistaken about what we care about, it is worth paying heed to the idea that our individual considers themselves someone who truly does continue to care about environmental issues. This is attested by the frustration and disappointment with not being able to remember what they wish. This negative emotional response only makes sense in the context of caring about what they do not remember. After all, I have repeatedly suggested that being subject to both epistemic conscientiousness and emotional vulnerabilities are useful indicators of one’s

caring. Neither are sufficient but caring certainly encompasses these factors alongside many others.

Additionally, I suggest that viewing cares as having the possibility of becoming dormant helps us to make sense of two seemingly apparent counterexamples to the idea that our passive forgetting is inversely correlated to our caring. These two sets of examples seem, on the face of it, to be in tension with the overall discussion about the correlation between our cares and passive forgetting. Investigating these will help make further sense of the idea of dormancy and to reiterate that our remembering and forgetting are nevertheless not perfect. It will be best to attend to these here. Firstly, we most noticeably forget things we *do* in fact care about, and secondly, we remember many things which strike us as unremarkable, odd or do not match up with our cares.

The first cases strike us all too familiar and are the paradigm examples for most considerations on the topic of forgetting. In forgetting of this sort, we realise that we have forgotten something important that we ought to have remembered. Whether it's forgetting someone's birthday, forgetting to bring your keys or purse, forgetting the lyrics to a song, the answer to the pub quiz, forgetting to pick up something (or someone!) on the way home from work. In addition are those examples where you are aware that you have forgotten *something* but can't figure out *what*. These are all cases in which we both feel as though we ought to be able to remember and our realisation that we have forgotten is accompanied by a mixture of broadly negative emotions. When we forget this way, it can seem as if our minds are actively working against us or failing to adequately respond to what we want. This presents us with a partial challenge to the view that when we happen to forget in this context, we are passively engaged in a project of discarding things which do not align with our interests or cares. This invites an objection: if

what I'm suggesting about the inverse correlation is true, then we ought not to be faced with such blatant experiences of our forgetting working in a manner antithetical to our cares.

In many of these cases, I contend, the resultant frustration or similar emotions is potentially due to the consequence of not caring enough about what has been forgotten. Telling oneself repeatedly that the bins must go out tonight and nevertheless still forgetting to do so, for instance, is a case where there simply may be an absence of the relevant care which would motivate you remember and so to act. Our cares are not perfectly transparent—we often care about things without realising it and we sometimes don't in fact care about the things we insist we do care about. While we often take ourselves to care a great deal, sometimes our forgetting is a clue that we don't, in fact, care as much as we take ourselves to. However, there is a further way to interpret these situations. As argued above, it may well be the case that once our cares for certain things become dormant, we forget much of what we have attended to in light of those cares. Viewing cares as the kind of thing which have the potential to become dormant may indeed help us to understand great swathes of our forgetting. It is, after all, rather difficult to suddenly and truly stop caring about something that has played a significant role in directing our attention and the way in which we view our world. Proposing the view that our cares can become dormant provides us with the flexibility to understand how it is that we often do not remember all that we have cared for. Take this short example: you're at a quiz and wracking your brains for the answer to a question you *know* you once knew the answer to. Your striving for the answer makes sense in the context that you care about winning this quiz. Frustratingly, the care you previously had regarding the topic of this question has lain dormant: you haven't had to think about chemical symbols since school! In light of your care to win, caring about knowing the periodic table is rekindled and with it, perhaps, a flood of memories associated

with that time in your earlier life. Unfortunately, this time, your memory for the quiz answer does not resurface with them.

Overall, it would be prudent to suggest that there are still cases in which we forget something associated with a bone fide active care (one that isn't dormant) which would go against my suggestion of an inverse correlation. Ultimately, it must be stressed that throughout I have been committed not to the universal claim that our forgetting is perfectly and, in all cases, inversely correlated to what we care about. Mindedness is not, say, a perfect computer program, we are fallible beings and there are likely to be blips. Sometimes we do make mistakes, and our mental processing resists our better judgment.³ This is why I claim that, *for the most part* our forgetting correlates inversely to our cares.

As an additional consideration, the analysis of these cases in relation to the structure of care doesn't leave us empty-handed. While it is still possible to forget things which we do care about, the fact that we respond in these situations with negatively valenced emotions supports my claim that there is a plausible interpretive dimension between what we forget and what we care about. In fact, these are the few cases in which describing forgetting as an *error* is truly warranted. Much of the literature presumes forgetting is a cognitive mistake or processing error and yet it is only in light of the consideration that our forgetting can violate what we care about that this terminology has any real purchase. I will delve into this much further in the following Chapter where we will discuss the normativity of our forgetting in greater depth.

³ While I haven't the space to elaborate this fully here, I would suggest that in these situations where we forget things that are aligned with what we care about, our finding fault with ourselves stems not from viewing our forgetting as something we *did*, since passive forgetting is not an action, but rather from failing to actively remember and for failing to actively prevent our forgetting.

I turn now to the second apparent counterexample: remembering things which seem to have no bearing on anything we presently care about. If my suggestion that there is an inverse correlation between what we passively forget and our active cares, we would expect to remember only those things which directly align with those cares that direct our attention now. Despite this, we frequently remember a variety of seemingly irrelevant, bizarre and unhelpful things. To name a few, we remember old phone numbers, trivial facts and snippets of past experiences which seem to have no relation to present circumstances. Occasionally we remember especially unpleasant memories too.⁴

We can answer this similarly to how I have treated the above. As suggested, there is no necessity that we are continually aware and reflective upon the things that we care about. Perhaps we do care about things which lead us to seemingly spontaneously recall memories which we view as oddities. More likely, I suggest, these situations arise where we *used* to care about these things. At some time in the past, remembering these (now irrelevant) bits of information did have salience for us. The issue is that they don't matter to us any longer. What we care about in any given situation is liable to change, this can be a result of external factors. When viewing these instances in light of my suggestion that our cares can become dormant, it seems at least plausible that some temporarily forgotten past experiences may be similarly dormant too. Finally, as above, it is only in light of our cares that these things that we spontaneously remember show up to us *as* odd or out of place. Were our attention not receptive to things being more or less important or salient to a certain situation, these random intrusions

⁴ Remembering especially traumatic memories, for instance. Sadly, I cannot do justice to this complex phenomenon here. It is also worth noting that the analysis I am presenting in this chapter is not intended for the purpose of adjudicating precise instances in which remembering or forgetting is absolutely aligned with specific cares, nor to listing what these cares might be for each individual circumstance might be. I would also like to stress that I am *not* making ethical claims or moral judgements on whether forgetting or remembering in a certain situation is 'objectively' good or bad. My remarks pertain to how well or poorly the subject's forgetting aligns with *their* cares and is thus positive or negative for *them*.

of our memories wouldn't have their character of irrelevance. To reiterate further, we are not perfectly oiled machines and the process of discarding previously relevant knowledge and experiences will be subject to mistakes.

Dealing with these two examples sheds further light on the relationship between what we forget and what we care about. The evaluative dimension of caring is most pronounced in these examples, and it is in virtue of the violation of things we care about that we interpret our forgetting as negative (or our lack of forgetting as neutral). It should be noted that I am not attempting to present an exhaustive typology of all the interactions between our passive forgetting and our cares. My main impetus for presenting the examples I have is to offer both a more detailed portrait of the phenomenon of passive forgetting with its relation to our care-based mindedness and to intervene within the literature on caring to explore a potentially underacknowledged possibility, and the implications, of dormancy.

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Closing Remarks

In this chapter I have endeavoured to shine a light on the nature of passive forgetting. Building on the work of Michaelian I showed how we can conceive of a wider sense in which forgetting is beneficial for us beyond the purely epistemic goal of discarding irrelevant information. In holding a broadly inverse correlation to our cares, passive forgetting operates in the service of our care-based mindedness. To argue for this, I had to overcome a potential performative contradiction: that we forget what doesn't relate to our cares, but we attend to the world in virtue of them. Accordingly, it would seem that we would have precious little to forget. In response I returned and expanded the account of attention offered thus far to explain how we

take in *more* than just what is clearly relevant. Going forward I discussed the relationship between passive forgetting and caring in greater detail emphasising the responsiveness of forgetting to the changing of our cares over time and in the face of contingency. Later I explored the novel suggestion that cares have the possibility to become dormant. This notion of dormancy helped to bolster the account against the apparent counterexamples in which we forget what we need or remember what we do not. I suggested that it is in fact due to the way in which our cares shape our interpretative horizon such that these potential counterexamples are attended to with the quality that they are: peculiar or frustrating. Looking ahead, I would like to investigate more fully the ways in which, in virtue of aligning with our care-based mindedness that we ought to consider forgetting, in a sense, a success. It is that goal we will turn to in the next Chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCCESSFUL FORGETTING

In day-to-day life forgetting mostly shows up as an unfortunate occurrence. When we're consciously aware of forgetting (ours or someone else's), we may experience feelings of frustration, puzzlement or even fear. Someone forgets your birthday. You realise you've forgotten to pay your rent. You can't remember the premise to a brilliant joke you want to tell and remembering the punchline isn't any help. More serious cases of forgetting we associate with dementias are acute examples of how forgetting can be more than a just mild irritation or hindrance. When we forget something that we want to remember, we often go looking for it and the absence of that memory becomes conspicuous and obtrusive. Accordingly, theories of forgetting aim to capture these intuitions, and rightfully so: in many cases forgetting does show up to us a relatively negative phenomenon. In line with this, thoughts on the phenomenon of forgetting tend to invoke negatively valenced language: malfunction or error, memory failure, passive decay or interference of a neural trace. Preoccupation with the negative outcomes often leaves underappreciated those instances in which forgetting can be a good thing for us. Forgetting isn't always a mental failure; it can also be an activity we succeed at. This phenomenon can be integrated within a broader and more general account of forgetting and this is what I will hope to achieve by the end of this Chapter: a way of thinking about forgetting which pays heed to our intuitions of it as a failure, as something normatively neutral, or as something successful in character.

In order to make sense of the idea that forgetting can be successful we first ought to look at what I mean by 'success.' Success, like failure, is a normative term that can be applied to actions. If an action meets certain criteria, then we can say it is a successful instance of that

action. Similarly, not meeting certain criteria counts as failure. Let's think about remembering as a foil to clarify some early intuitions about the possibility of successful forgetting. We might be tempted to say that an instance of remembering is itself a success or failure. For example, you may fail to remember the location of your keys (and that you have forgotten). Conversely, you may succeed in remembering the answer to a quiz question (you have not forgotten). Importantly, while remembering and forgetting are often considered binary opposites, we would be mistaken to see the inverse of these two examples as equally characterised as 'succeeding to forget the location of your keys' or 'failing to forget the quiz answer'. These two descriptions do not characterise the situation correctly. Something else is going on when we apply the normative terms of success or failure to forgetting.

To aid us in thinking through the possibility of successful forgetting, I will articulate two ways in which we can think of success. The first I will term 'Basic Success' and the second 'Intentional Success.' As will likely be expected given the overall focus of our previous Chapters, I contend that the character of success or failure when applied to forgetting requires us to consider the phenomenon within the context of our care-based mindedness. I will suggest that the quality of Basic Success turns on whether our forgetting operates in the service of our cares and this conception will, therefore, rely heavily on the preceding discussion in Chapter Three regarding passive forgetting. 'Intentional Success,' by contrast, will involve a slightly more complicated picture of agency and our discussion towards the end of this Chapter will foreshadow and furnish a springboard for the discussion in our subsequent Chapter by laying an intuitive groundwork.

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Basic Success

Recall in Chapter One, I argued that in order for us to make judgements over whether some mental event counts as an instance of remembering, we need to pay heed both to what we care about and our context. This discussion is relevant again now. Both succeeding to or failing to forget occurs within the context where we would view forgetting as positive and remembering as negative. For instance, we ought to consider an instance of remembering as a failure to forget if we also view that remembering as negative. Conversely, an instance of forgetting as successful makes sense only if we would consider forgetting as positive. Likewise, succeeding to or failing to remember occurs within the context where we would view remembering as positive and forgetting as negative. Let me articulate in further detail what these terms mean in practice. On one hand, both succeeding to forget and failing to remember are ways to interpret an instance of forgetting (for example, you forget an embarrassing episode or cannot recall the location of your keys). On the other hand, succeeding to remember and failing to forget are ways to interpret an instance remembering (likewise, finding your keys and remembering that embarrassing episode).

Cast this way, we can begin to see some relevant oppositions. First off, succeeding to or failing to forget are in opposition. As are succeeding to or failing to remember. Secondly, that very possibility of success or failure in either case depends upon how we attend to our forgetting or remembering as positive or negative. This helps us to see why failing to forget is not the same as succeeding to remember. Failing to forget (say, an embarrassing episode) only makes sense in the context of remembering as negative. Succeeding to remember (where to find your keys) only makes sense in the context of remembering as positive. Furthermore, failing to remember (where to find your keys) only makes sense in the context of forgetting as negative. Succeeding

to forget (that embarrassing episode) only makes sense in the context of remembering as negative.

‘As a positive or as negative for what?’ one might ask. Unlike Michaelian, who we can assume would view success or failure in terms of their contribution to ensuring a smoothly functioning memory system geared towards speedy, reliable, accurate retrieval of memories, I argued previously that a view of minds as care-based encompasses and goes beyond adhering to epistemic interests. I suggest we view these instances of forgetting or remembering as succeeding or failing to align with what we care about, given the context in which we find ourselves. The character of success characterised by Basic Success is for instances of forgetting when our forgetting is passively beneficial to those things we do care about. Notably, I am not claiming that this beneficial character is something external to the specific cares that a person may have. For example, one might succeed to forget something which, in the grand scheme of things, may in fact be detrimental to their wellbeing. All that matters for this kind of success or failure is that one’s forgetting is aligned with what they care about.

As argued in Chapter Three, passive forgetting overall operates in the service of what we care about because it is inversely correlated to those cares we have. In short: the less we care, the more we forget. Not only does this benefit us epistemically (as we saw with Michaelian’s account of forgetting as a cognitive virtue), but more broadly by contributing to paying better heed to those things we care about most. Along these lines then, we can say that when our passive forgetting is in line with the overall maintenance of what we care about, we ought to consider that forgetting as a Basic Success. This success is Basic because it depends on a simple alignment between one’s passive forgetting and their cares. Indeed, as I claimed previously: this is why we do it. By forgetting things which don’t align with our cares we are able to be

more attentive to the things that matter to us without being endlessly bombarded with irrelevant memories. Notably, we can also fail to forget. We remember things which are neither in line with our cares or, worse, undermine our attempts to pursue, preserve, and protect the things we care about. In that instance we can describe this remembering as negative and therefore our lack of forgetting as a failure. Here we can see that paying heed to our cares helps us to understand that forgetting or remembering are not simple opposites in terms of success or failure.

Ultimately, however, I am reluctant to argue for a view in which forgetting is, in a sense, universally subservient to remembering; that forgetting is only positive if it enhances our memory retrieval. I wish, instead, to elevate the view of forgetting further. Its success doesn't always simply depend on the passive betterment of our cognitive memory system, nor only simply give us more cognitive bandwidth to attend to our cares. Rather, I wish to articulate how, occasionally, forgetting is successful because it requires the fulfilment of an intention. It can be, I suggest, an achievement. This is what I will aim to show by discussing the second kind of success that forgetting can achieve: 'Intentional Success.'

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Intentional Success

Thus far I have been describing the form of Basic Success attributable to our passive forgetting, namely, that when our passive forgetting aligns with those cares that we have by jettisoning irrelevant things we have previously attended to then we ought to consider this a success. Most important, for this kind of forgetting is it occurs with little to no effort on our part. Accordingly,

we can view our passive forgetting as a kind of passive cognitive process. Though forgetting subjectively uninteresting details of our past is desirable to ensure a well-functioning memory system, to some extent it may seem inaccurate to consider this (relatively passive) phenomenon a bona fide successful activity. I've termed it Basic Success to capture this intuition. It's a precondition for a virtuous – or successfully functioning – cognitive system. But it's largely something that we do spontaneously, effortlessly, and without any thought. Unlike this passive virtue of the mind that Michaelian so helpfully highlights, however, there are also instances of successful forgetting that involve a level of deliberated, effortful, and conscious control. The idea of control is not discussed in Michaelian's paper, but I suggest that there is space for it for a broader account of the phenomenon of forgetting.

I assume that not everything we experience is something we would like to revisit by remembering. I also suggest that what we do remember has an influence upon our current mental state. The intuition behind successful forgetting is straightforward enough. We want to avoid being routinely faced with, for example, a barrage of unpleasant or useless memories. Managing to forget, that is, succeeding to, can be crucial to coping with present and future circumstances. Indeed, we engage in activities to promote our forgetting: we might throw away belongings, move to a new house, delete bothering e-mails. While these activities are not themselves instances of successfully forgetting, by doing these things, we limit potential triggers, or we decrease the probability of aversive recollections, and so we facilitate our forgetting. Unlike Michaelian's account, I suggest, our ability to successfully forget doesn't necessarily entail the overall enhancement of our memory system. The interests involved in successful forgetting need not be strictly epistemic. When you successfully forget an embarrassing episode, for example, you succeed in so far as your forgetting alleviates, say, emotional challenges you would face were you not able to forget. These emotional challenges

are detrimental to a care we have for our own mental wellbeing. We may also care to get on with a task at hand which is disrupted by the intrusive thoughts of that embarrassing episode. One way to capture this claim is the potentially rather counterintuitive suggestion that, sometimes, successful forgetting involves getting something *wrong* about the past. Overall, successfully forgetting serves a wide variety of our cares and provides additional advantages beyond only those epistemic benefits like increased reliability and speed of retrieval.

In fact, it isn't always unpleasant memories we might try to forget. Though probably rarer, it might be necessary for us to forget past happy episodes of, for instance, a recently failed relationship in order to move on. Right now, after the break-up, those happy memories are influencing your better judgement, making it harder to move on, perhaps even preventing you from forming new relationships with others. It is the inability to forget these memories which is the problem. At least for now, you need to stop ruminating and forget that stuff. There are things which we have good reasons to forget, if we do try and manage to, I argue, we should consider our activity to be successful.

Thus far however, I have not indicated *precisely* what sets 'Intentional Success' apart from 'Basic Success.' After all much of the above neatly aligns with the kind of success we can attribute to the phenomenon of passive forgetting: forgetting contributing to the maintenance of our caring. And yet, as I have set out to describe, there are more complex instances in which we try to forget. Insofar as we are engaged in this kind of effortful activity, our forgetting cannot be described as passive in the same way. While the overall upshots will also be to operate in the service of our cares, the route to doing so is a little more fraught. *Trying to forget* not only implies a level of effort but also a different kind of possible failure. Moreover, this effort, which I have yet to articulate fully, involves a kind of intention. Accordingly, the term I have chosen

to explain of forgetting of this sort is ‘Intentional Success.’ To give an initial indication of this idea, I’d like to briefly consider some recent neuroscientific research.

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Motivated Forgetting

Cognitive science tends to describe forgetting as a passive process. A neural trace steadily decays. Interference leaves a memory obscured. However, recent developments in neuroscience push back against the prevailing assumption that forgetting is always a passive affair. Indeed, new empirical evidence suggests that forgetting can involve controlled effortful activity. Neuroscientists Michael C. Anderson and Simon Hanslmayr (2014) claim the following:

“The term ‘motivated forgetting’ ... refers to increased forgetting arising from active processes that down-prioritise unwanted experiences in service of creating or sustaining an emotional or cognitive state. For example, to sustain positive emotions or concentration, belief in some state of affairs, confidence, or optimism, it may be necessary to reduce accessibility of experiences that undermine those states.” (‘Neural Mechanisms of Motivated Forgetting’, 2014: 279)

Their paper presents a variety of evidence of the neural activity involved in forgetting. The evidence of inhibitory control is important for these researchers. In a lecture that Anderson gave at the British Academy for the Humanities and Social Sciences he offers the following illuminating example to explain inhibitory control: the parts of the brain involved in inhibitory control are those which ‘light up’ when you suddenly stop yourself from trying to catch that

prickly cactus you've knocked off the windowsill. Motivated forgetting, they found, involves these parts of the brain too. As Anderson and Hanslmyar explain, exercising inhibitory control can prevent both the initial encoding of information and the retrieval of previously encoded information which you intend to forget. With enough active suppression during retrieval, subjects eventually exhibit "suppression-induced forgetting": it becomes harder to retrieve the suppressed information compared to information they are trained to not suppress and to control information. Not only do reminders fail to sustain a memory (as might be expected by repeatedly being exposed to a cue), but they also contribute to actively rendering the memory more inaccessible to the subject: instead of cuing access, they cue inaccessibility. On top of this, retrieval suppression not only disrupts access to a record from one cue but from many: in other words, the record becomes more inaccessible in general.

Now, if the neuroscientific findings are correct, forgetting is not merely and always a passive and lamentable feature of our brains. Instead forgetting sometimes involves beneficial and controlled activity. This control is intuitive enough when we think of the motivations for avoiding remembering. Akin to the earlier examples, Anderson and Hanslmyar suggest several common-sense motivations. Among others, they suggest that we may be motivated to forget in the service of reducing negative emotional experiences that some memories may illicit. Being able to forget can also help us to justify or forgive our own misdemeanours or those of others (Anderson & Hanslmyar, 2014: 289). The authors conclude: "Forgetting does indeed happen due to forces beyond our control; but we are, without a doubt, conspirators in our own forgetting. We wield control over mnemonic processes, choosing, among life's experiences, winners and losers for the potent effects of attention, reflection, and suppression." (Anderson and Hanslmyar, 2014: 290). Accordingly, we do not always have an interest in remembering.

In the service of a variety of interests sometimes we try to remember, and sometimes we try to forget. We can fail or succeed at remembering, and we can fail or succeed at forgetting.

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Phenomenological Counterpart

This research on motivated forgetting offers us a springboard to discuss the additional kinds of success that I suggest can be applied to forgetting. This research indicates that we exercise some form of control when forgetting in this way. I would like, as Anderson has done with his cactus example, to think through the possible phenomenal character of these types of experience with regards to successful forgetting. This may be somewhat speculative, but it is intended to give a better sense of the kind of situation in which other forms of successful forgetting may take place.

Our discussion thus far has been concerning relatively simple cases in which our forgetting broadly correlates with what we do not care about (though we have also seen examples that run counter this trend). Successful passive forgetting, in other words, successful forgetting of the Basic kind may turn out to be the most ubiquitous variant of forgetting that we are likely to undergo but it is not the only one. In this section, we will be dealing with trickier cases in which our forgetting does not so neatly align with at least some of what we care about. Sometimes there are occasions where we want to forget, and we try to. Examples of this include wanting to forget a tremendously embarrassing episode, a traumatic experience, or hurtful encounters with others.

It is, of course, hard to capture the experience of successful forgetting generally: if you're conscious of something, you're not forgetting it, and if you're not forgetting it, you're not successfully forgetting. Nevertheless, I suggest we can imagine situations that are hopefully familiar in which we begin to remember unpleasant things faintly, as though these memories are not yet fully formed to us. Perhaps these vague memories will appear hovering at the edges of our mind, threatening to come closer and clearer. You don't want to think about that stuff and so you try to look away, banishing those looming negative memories from your consciousness.

This would be a visual metaphor, I suggest, of motivated forgetting. More importantly, though, I suggest that this would be an instance of successful forgetting too and one which achieves 'Intentional Success.' Here, as with Basic Success cases of forgetting, our forgetting operates in line with what we care about. Let me explain: this example deals with the threat of memories that are definitely unpleasant to us. This unpleasantness, I argue, is due to these memories' potential to threaten things we care about. Clearly, these unpleasant memories aren't going to physically harm you or your loved ones, but they may threaten a care you have to, say, not dwell on your past, to get on with the work of the present, or to lay some foundation for your future. Or, perhaps, these memories may upset the process of moving on from a period of turbulence in your life. It's in light of the cares that we have that we interpret or perceive things the way that we do. Accordingly, by banishing away the faintest whisper of a negative memory our forgetting serves our cares.

Hopefully, we acknowledge that there are intuitively plausible situations in which we either have a desire to forget or have formed a judgement that forgetting is for the best. Perhaps these examples are even familiar. Despite initial plausibility however, there are a few challenges we

face both to actually engage in these feats of forgetting, and to making sense of what is really ‘going on’ with the individual who forgets in these circumstances. So far in this project I have construed the relationship between our caring and forgetting as relatively straightforward: (passive) forgetting is inversely correlated to what we care about. We can fail to forget by remembering something detrimental to what we care about or fail to remember to the detriment of what we care about too. However, there is more going on. Unlike utterly passive forgetting which needs no conscious motivation, the example above illustrates the split-second moment in which we are partly and vaguely aware of some memory that threatens something we care about but nevertheless succeed to turn away. In the interests of what we care about, this turning away, I argue, is something we intend to do and then carry out. Insofar as we have an intention to forget and then manage to, we are engaged in an activity of trying to forget. If we make good on this trying, I claim, we achieve ‘Intentional Success.’ This is what separates passive forgetting from more complex instances of forgetting and in order to get clearer I suggest we must consider the nature of trying with particular focus on its relation to our care-based mindedness.

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Trying to Forget

The first point of departure with regards to the concept of trying is to consider a basic question: why might we try to forget? As explained above, we can be motivated to forget. This motivation may just be akin to the motivation that leads to us passively forgetting where our cognitive processes operate in the service of our cares. In instances where our forgetting is merely a passive process, however, there is no need to try. The explanation for this, I suggested, is that

our forgetting neatly aligns with what we (do not) care about. Passively, the memory dissolves with no effort or control on our part.

Indeed, when we try to forget we are also seeking to forget in the service of what we care about. However, there is something a little more complicated going on. Trying involves effortful activity and therefore the notion of trying implies an additional form of success and failure. The crux of normativity in trying and succeeding, here, involves the overcoming of some potential obstacle. We try because there is a possibility that we may not succeed to reach our goal. For instance, we try to remove a stubborn stain, we try to bowl a tricky spare, we try to get to the meeting on time despite the traffic. Using the term ‘trying’ in these cases makes sense because there is the possibility that we will not achieve what we intend to do. Likewise, when it comes to trying to forget, there is a possibility of our failure: a possibility that we will remember.

Not only is trying a matter of attempting to succeed at some goal, but it also (in the case of trying to forget) tracks an essential component of this kind of activity. Since trying is an overcoming of remembering, when we are trying to forget, we are doing so against ourselves. Accordingly, I argue, trying to forget does involve a level of self-directed effort and control. The source of our effortful activity is another vital component to the phenomenon: that in trying we have an intention to succeed. Unlike passive forgetting that faces no resistance, and which barely involves our activity, cases where we try to forget are those in which we have a specific intention to not remember. It is this intention to forget which can be frustrated. When we remember, we have failed to make good on that intention to forget.

The idea of intentionally forgetting might strike one as curious. One of the core features of forgetting is one is not conscious of whatever it is that has been forgotten. How is it, then, that one can intentionally forget? The problem can be framed in the following way: how could we succeed at doing something where success consists in not being conscious (having forgotten) if trying to bring about that state of affairs necessitates having an intention? Having intentions seem, at least on the face of it, to be something we consciously hold. Therefore, it seems that all the while we try to make good on our intention to forget we are not, and cannot be, forgetting. There is something deeply paradoxical about this kind of forgetting. Not only located within the activity but also located in the success. To truly succeed at forgetting, you will have no idea you've succeeded. Moreover, and in line with the Heideggerian spirit of this overall project, often the only way we can attest to the possibility of success is through a breakdown of our ability to do so: when we fail to forget.

A brief reflection might make us wonder if specifying that trying is intentional is a trivial, or even tautological, claim. It would be nonsensical to suggest that someone can try to bring about some state of affairs but without intentionally doing so. However, that we can intend to do something, or have an intention to act in a certain way, does not imply that we are, at the present moment, trying to act in that way. Were we merely to have the intention to forget some past event, this would amount to very little if holding the intention did not at least in some way bring about the intended outcome. To clarify, consider that in the duration between forming an intention to act in a certain way and engaging in that action, one might change their mind and so not be trying. Intending, therefore, is not sufficient for trying. In contrast, trying implies that a decision has already been made, an intention already set, and the act of bringing about the intended outcome already underway. Trying can be seen as requiring intending, therefore, but intending is not necessarily trying.

We can see our intention to forget as part of much broader intentions too (nestled one inside another, rather like Matryoshka dolls). One's intention to forget (and, therefore, their trying) makes sense within broader contexts of what is at stake in the forgetting, namely, what we care about. In the examples I have given above, and in many cases, our intention to forget is motivated by the negative emotional consequences of not forgetting. I will take it as given that most of us, for most of the time, seek to avoid these negative emotional consequences.

Likewise, when we try to forget we are not merely in the possession of an intention to forget. Rather, we often engage in various different smaller actions that facilitate our forgetting. In trying to forget about a neglectful friend's betrayal we may, for instance, reorient our attention to something less unpleasant whenever thoughts of them arise. Our trying to forget, moreover, is not purely expressed as a mental feat. As I mentioned above, we engage in all sorts of activities to encourage our own forgetting: replacing photographs, throwing away things we associate with that person, blocking them from contacting us. Many of these activities when considered within the context of trying to forget may involve both physical and mental exertions. We might take up a new sport to fill our evenings no longer spent with that friend, or practice 'mindfulness' techniques. It's plausible, I suggest, to see these activities taken together as instances of one's wider concern of trying to forget.

However, these activities nevertheless seem to fall into the scope of activities done consciously for the sake of forgetting and so we would be hard pressed to say we have truly forgotten when we are engaged in them. I suggest that we can overcome the potential snag that holding an intention to forget would make the fulfilment of that intention impossible to achieve by taking a longer temporal view. Specifically, that we can have an intention to forget in the future. We

can think of this analogously to the intentions we may set with regards to remembering or other actions: I intend to remember to take out the bins later, or that when the tennis ball reaches my racket, I intend to hit a drop-shot. Understood this way, we can envisage a separation between setting an intention to forget something and the subsequent, temporally later, making good on this intention.

What does it mean, then, to fail to forget when we have intended and tried to? Simply, that we remember. Now, it is plausible that our failure to forget, despite our intention, may just be a case of accidental, spontaneous remembering. After all, I have stressed in the previous chapter that we are not perfectly oiled machines and do occasionally make mistakes. In spontaneous and accidental remembering of something which we have earlier intended to forget we have, in a sense, failed to forget. Neither our intention nor our trying was successful in bringing about a state of forgetting due to the unfortunate and accidental blip of memory.

Nevertheless, there are further complex cases which more closely capture the kind of success or failure I wish to discuss here. We are complex beings with a wide variety of things that we care about, these cares may pull us in competing directions. As I have argued, not only our forgetting but our remembering operates largely in the service of what we care about. Being epistemically conscientious with regards to what we care about will require us to hold on to and remember things which put our cares at stake. Thus, we may have both a care that is satisfied by remembering some past detail or event and simultaneously a *conflicting* care that is satisfied by not remembering that same past detail. Here, making good on our intention to forget (which springs from something we care about) faces the more recalcitrant inner obstacle than the accidental blips of the mind: that we may at the same time have a conflicting care that motivates us to remember.

I suggest, therefore, that we can capture cases where our trying to forget is situated within an ongoing conflict between competing cares that motivate us in opposing directions. In this way, our own cares and memories are mutually sustaining, and these are what get in the way of forgetting. We are motivated in one direction to forget and motivated in another direction to remember. The sense in which ‘trying’ matters for the present discussion, therefore, is that it involves responding to this inner resistance. When we try to forget we are not only aiming at bringing about a state of forgetting that can either fail or succeed to align with something we care about, but this very attempt inherently involves overcoming the obstacle posed by a competing care that is sustained by remembering.

To get clearer on this and to give further clarity to the phenomenon of trying to forget, I turn to Shoemaker’s (2003) ‘Caring, Identification and Agency’ where he discusses the experience of a conflict of competing cares. I note here that the phenomenon of trying to forget is not specifically accounted for within Shoemaker’s framework. However, since cares play a central role in Shoemaker’s view, showing why our peculiar phenomenon bears similarity and difference to the discussion he provides will shed further light on the phenomenon of trying to forget. Moments of ambivalence, Shoemaker suggests, offer us the opportunity to critically reflect upon what it is that we care about since it is the paradigm case of a conflict between competing cares (2003, 110). In the experience of being pulled in competing directions we are receptive to the possibilities open to us were to act in line with either care. We reach a conclusion over which action is preferable through imagining each scenario in turn, sensitive to our emotional responses. Notably, as he mentions earlier in the paper, “what I am moved to do depends on what I care most about at the time of action” (2003, 103). Among our nexus of

cares, then, it is the strongest which wins out and provides the motivation for action when one is ambivalent about a course of action.

Given the fact that we can care for things which are in conflict we are further on the way to making sense of how intentional success can be understood when it comes to trying to forget. I suggest that we can make distinctions that will pick our three sources of successful intentional forgetting in addition to (1) the Basic Success of passive forgetting. I will therefore discuss cases of forgetting that involve (2) an ‘explicit’ reflective intention to forget and which align with Shoemaker’s analysis; cases that involve what we might call (3) an ‘implicit’ pre-reflective intention to forget; and finally, briefly consider a longer view of the phenomenon in which we take (4) a stance of acceptance towards our remembering such that we may eventually forget.

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Reflective Intentional Success

To relate these insights into our understanding of trying to forget, I suggest, we come to the first form of forgetting that opens up the possibility for Intentional Success. Here we see the role of deliberation come to the fore. I have, perhaps noticeably, said very little at this stage about the role of deliberation. In perhaps rare cases, we may well adopt the stance articulated by Shoemaker with regards to our forgetting. Deliberation here comes in when we are forming an intention to forget. In clocking that a memory is disruptive for us (in virtue of violating something we care about) we may eventually come to the conclusion in light of our emotional responses that this memory affords us that the best course of action would be to forget. In this

way we set a more or less explicit and reflective intention to forget. Notably, we can be wrong about whether this is the best for us overall, the point is that in relation to the analysis provided by Shoemaker, we are acting in accordance with what we care about most: the care that is being disrupted by our remembering.

Examples of this explicit intention making might be when we consider that we need to forget how horribly we performed in a previous exam or job interview in order that we don't threaten our chances in an upcoming similar situation. We may say to ourselves, or in some therapeutic setting, "I just need to put all this stuff behind me and forget." Recalling my previous claim that we can draw a temporal distinction between setting an intention to forget and a later state in which we have forgotten, then, we can see how in some cases we do intend to forget and can achieve later success.

Let's consider more detailed example to get a fuller picture of the first-personal experience of trying to forget. Newly single, a friend engages in a series of activities in order to redirect her attention away from the, at times intrusive, thoughts of her ex-partner. She is at least minimally aware of what she's up to when she's cleaning the house and taking care of all those odd jobs that have been on the to-do list for far too long: she's keeping herself busy. Something catches her eye, some forgotten memento from a happy day at the beach before the relationship broke down. She desires both to cherish that memory and banish it from her mind. She cares both about the memories she has but also acknowledges that dwelling on them will leave her plagued again by countless what-ifs. "Nope," she says, "not today," and drops the memento in the bin. For the rest of the day, she falters between dwelling on the beach day, pained by the break-up and complete absorption in her to-do list and oblivious to the earlier events. In moments where she experiences obliviousness to the earlier events, I argue, we ought to consider her intentional

forgetting to have been a success. It is, of course, not a total state of oblivion for all future times and I suggest that this is closer to the real experience of trying to forget. Ultimately, we are rarely going to intend to forget, and then continuously succeed to for all of our future. Nevertheless, the respite afforded to the friend when not reminded of the painful memory, and therefore the break-up overall, we ought to consider her forgetting as achieving the conditions for Intentional Success.

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Complications

Previous comments ought to indicate that I distinguish between deliberating about acting from the smaller activities that make up trying to act (at least for the case of trying to forget). Recall that what makes trying to forget different from merely holding an intention to forget is the necessary sorts of activity that this kind of trying implies. When we try to forget, I claimed, our mind is, in a sense, already made up. The activity of trying, in the case of trying to forget, cannot be an activity of conscious deliberation itself since this would involve a reflective weighing up of options for which action to take and in trying, that decision has already been made.

Thus far I have skirted around a problem raised earlier. I suggested that separating the moment of setting an intention to forget and the carrying out of that intention need not be contemporaneous. This was to ensure that we accurately make sense of the phenomenon of trying to forget which requires us to not be conscious at the moment when we are successful. In some respects, making this temporal distinction allowed us to get to grips with the more

highly deliberative cases of trying to forget in which we set an explicit intention. However, in another respect, this suggestion could be seen as moving the bump in the carpet. Even if we need not be aware of our intention to forget when we are forgetting, the operative act of trying to forget remains underspecified. I suggested that we might undertake various activities that would promote our forgetting (avoidant strategies, ridding ourselves of things that might spur us to remember, for example) but that these activities could not themselves be considered forgetting. Indeed, in order that we can make sense of the possibility of successfully intentionally forgetting we need not only to have an intention but that our trying to forget is not conscious to us. The role of deliberation in Shoemaker's account of the conflict of cares involves too explicit a consideration to lead us to set an intention to forget in all cases. While it is certainly the case that we might reflectively set an explicit intention to forget things which are detrimental to us with regards to some care that we have, often we just do not engage with our forgetting, or lack thereof, so consciously. While I by no means wish to downplay the significance of Shoemaker's analysis it seems that most cases under discussion here, that of trying to forget and being successful, do not sit quite so comfortably with the highly reflective decision-making that his account of ambivalence illustrates.

To clarify, while Shoemaker's description is certainly faithful to some experiences of ambivalence, it does not bear sufficient resemblance to all cases of conflicting cares within trying to forget. This is so for a number of reasons. Unlike ambivalence over an action that has yet to be executed, in trying to forget we are already partly engaged in the process. This, I suggest, is due to the fact that trying to forget is, comparatively, a more temporally extended phenomenon. The cares we have don't just tug at us during opportunities for decisive action but are always in the background directing our attention to this or that object and with it bring to mind a host of associations. We can only make sense of the idea that we try to forget if we

take a long view. Were we to chop up our trying to forget into distinct instances of being pulled one way and then pulled the other we would miss the overall trajectory that the endeavour of trying to forget is aimed towards. A second distinction between Shoemaker's ambivalence example and ours is that trying to forget appears much more emotionally fraught. A scenario in which we coolly critically reflect upon which action to take, finding ourselves eventually attracted to one option more than the other seems appropriate for some instances in which we cannot decide. Yet, this seems rather out of place in cases where we are spurred to forget and try to because of the deep emotional anguish that remembering affords us.

Moreover, crucially the successful character of Intentional Success comes from the trying. To make this clear we can think of something like an errant causal chain. Imagine that you set an intention to forget something painful, you make no effortful activity to try and bring about this state of affairs but just so happen to receive a bump to the head and experience amnesia over the troubling memory. It would be wrong to consider this a case of successful forgetting in either the Basic sense (where our cognitive processes passively operate in the service of what we care about), or the Intentional sense (where it is the fulfilment of our intention thanks to our trying). In order, then, for one's forgetting to be truly successful when we have intended to it must be due in part by our trying.

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Pre-reflective Intentional Success

To think this issue through, I suggest we return to the earlier analogy I gave from Anderson's view of motivated forgetting. There he drew a parallel between motivated forgetting and the almost automatic example of stopping oneself from catching a falling cactus. I suggested a possible phenomenological parallel to this experience but instead of stopping oneself from

catching a prickly cactus, we stop ourselves from coming face to face with an unwanted memory. I gave the example of being aware, only faintly, of some negative memory and which we mentally exert our attention elsewhere. This requires no deliberation on our part of the sort articulated above. Accordingly, I wish here to explore what I consider to be an example of trying to forget in which there is a far more implicit intention to forget, one in which our trying is pre-reflective. Importantly, while this forgetting operates under our radar, as it were, it nevertheless ought not to be confused for the kind of passive forgetting we covered at the outset of this chapter. Recall that passive forgetting operates effortlessly, as a basic cognitive process that allows us to discard and jettison those things which do not, or no longer, align with those things that we care about. The type of success afforded to passive forgetting, I claimed, was Basic; it is successful in the sense that it aligns with our cares overall. Unlike passive forgetting, however, the kind of success afforded to the pre-reflective intentional forgetting that I would like to discuss here has the main ingredients of successful intentional forgetting: that of having an intention and of effortful trying.

To elaborate these core features, let us think again about the source of tension that gives rise to the phenomenon of trying to forget in the first place. Faced with a conflict between attending to those things we care about, painful, irritating or nagging memories may disrupt our normally smooth engagements with the world. For the most part we are unreflective about our present activities. Casually we might say that we ‘just get on with it.’ We could reflectively comment on what we are up to but generally there is limited propositional acknowledgement of what we are doing when we are engaged in an activity. Trying to forget, I suggest, can operate along these lines too.

Unlike our earlier discussion of trying to forget where we deliberate and set an explicit, reflective intention to forget, much of our agency doesn't occur in this fashion. Of course, there are times in which we do consciously deliberate over which course of action to take, but it would be a deeply limiting view of agency in general if it were required that we always consciously deliberate over each and every action that we engage in. Similarly, our activity in trying to forget need not always be something deliberated over. Indeed, as I have earlier indicated, much of our effortful engagements are only visible to us in instances in which we are unable to act for some reason. This, then, implies that there is plausibility to the idea that we can pre-reflectively engage in both intending to and trying to forget. It is, I argue, in moments where we fail to forget that the possibility of successful forgetting becomes clear to us.

Ultimately, the way we go about trying to forget need not involve any conscious reflection upon the object of our forgetting. If we were to ask someone why they are nursing a drink at the bar, they might reply that they are "drowning their sorrows after a truly awful day." Here, there is no need for this person to precisely consider what they are aiming at forgetting. Overall, in trying to forget, I suggest, it is not strictly the case that we must be aware of what we are trying to forget. Indeed, we can elaborate the two ingredients of pre-reflective intentional forgetting by analysing the phenomenon in the reverse order to the discussion of explicit intentional forgetting. Recall that in cases where we are trying to forget, it is the instance of remembering showing up to us as a failure that we can attest to the fact we have been trying. Moreover, that we find ourselves trying to forget at all requires that we must presuppose an implicit intention. After all, as I have argued above, intending doesn't necessarily mean we are trying (we could intend to do something and make no effort whatsoever) but trying to fulfil something implies an aim for that trying: some intention. When we are trying to do something, as I claimed, we are already engaged in the activity of bringing about some intention.

For the sake of filling out the picture of this forgetting more fully, I would like to cover one, perhaps common, but counterintuitive example of trying to forget. It should be noted that when I discuss acting in the service of cares being successful, I am not talking about success in terms of external ethical or moral principles. To be clear, my intention here is to provide an extensive description of the phenomenon at hand. When our forgetting operates in the service of what we care about this ought not to be considered always strictly beneficial for us. For the majority of this discussion, I have been referring to examples in which we aim at forgetting the ‘bad’ memories, those that make us uncomfortable or disrupt our normal engagements. We can, I think, also understand the activity of trying to forget in a context in which someone, perhaps they suffer from depression, for example, will seek to forget those good things that would overall be beneficial for their wellbeing. There are times in which we, perhaps, may seek to dwell or ruminate upon harmful memories. In order to sustain a vision of themselves as unworthy or unlovable, to stave off hope and future disappointment, our imagined person may indeed cling only to those negative memories and banish any that might offer them emotional respite. Given that our depressed person tries to forget the good times, if they manage to, we ought to consider this an instance of successful forgetting.

This example leads us to the final kind of forgetting that I wish to briefly discuss and which takes a more circuitous route to successful forgetting. This route differs from the above instances of successful forgetting because it does not, broadly speaking, take an avoidant strategy. This kind of forgetting occurs, counterintuitively, through remembering. I argue that occasionally we do manage to successfully forget not by banishing or repressing harmful memories but by repeatedly reworking them with the overall aim of downgrading their recalcitrant quality. Working through the reasons why certain memories are those which we try

to forget is a common practice in therapeutic settings. Coming to terms with unpleasant events or parts of our lives, I suggest, can have the consequence in which we work through more or less explicitly what it is that we care about such that these memories continue to arise for us. Over time, the memories may lose their ‘stickiness’, the cares we have that give rise to these memories no longer pull on us so forcefully and, eventually, we are able to passively forget.

Overall, I have made distinctions between different kinds of forgetting and the types of success they imply, upon reflection it ought to be clear that over time we may engage in a combination of these different kinds. We may start out pre-reflectively trying to forget, ultimately not succeed to in this way and set ourselves a more explicit intention. We may, for example, go on to simply passively forget what used to be a particularly bothersome memory because we no longer care about whatever was thrusting that memory into our minds.

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A General Philosophical Account of Forgetting

I’d now like to integrate the idea of successful forgetting within a more general account. To this end I’ll enlist the help of Matthew Frise’s LEAD Theory (2018). Frise’s account taps into our commonly held intuitions about forgetting, one of which is that forgetting necessarily entails ‘failure’ - an intuition that, as I’ve already said, tends to obscure the phenomenon of successful forgetting. However, this doesn’t mean that we need to reject the theory. Instead, we can make some adjustments.

According to the LEAD Theory, for a subject, S, to be forgetting some mental content x, the following conditions must be met:

- “(1) S has learned x by t, and...
- (2) S fails to extent e to internally access x at t, and...
- (3) [either,] (a) at t, S intends to internally access x under some description by t, [and/] or
(b) x is internally inaccessible to S to extent e at t.” (Frise, 2018: 236)

Condition (1) is clear. To forget something, you must have previously learnt or experienced it. It's impossible to forget something you never encountered before. As long as we assume experiences are covered by the term 'learned', we can make sense of the idea that you can only forget the ending of a film, if you've seen it before. Conversely, you can't forget the ending to a film you haven't seen (or know nothing about). In Chapter Two I discussed this at length and argued that we can make sense of what is required for something to become a candidate for forgetting when we attend to things, people and aspects of our broader experience in the way that we do thanks to our cares. We attend to something *as* this or that in terms of what we're up to. In doing so we bring what we are attending to into our referential totality or action context. For my updated version of this theory of forgetting I will therefore stipulate that condition (1) be changed to '(1*) S has appropriately attended to x by t.'

Condition (2) is our departure point for a philosophical account of successful forgetting. For Frise, forgetting something previously learnt means we fail to access it. Thus, we can think of those familiar cases of forgetting your keys or someone's name. Putting to one side the nuances of the internality constraint and that forgetting can be 'to an extent', the notable aspect of condition (2) for our purposes is that forgetting necessarily involves failure to access. The problem for the LEAD Theory to accommodate successful forgetting starts here. It is possible that the normative implications for the term 'fails to access' are unintentional. Though I suspect they are not – the theory is intended to capture our commonly held intuitions about forgetting

(which, on the whole, we should consider a virtue of the theory). Nevertheless, in light of our preceding discussion of the phenomenon of successful forgetting, we ought to be wary of limiting forgetting to failure; the possibility of successful forgetting contradicts condition (2). When we successfully forget something unpleasant from our past it is not the case that we are failing to access that unpleasant event. Rather we are succeeding to not access it (at least, to not access it fully). Additionally, it is worth considering that we only fail to remember x when remembering x is our aim or intention and this intention is frustrated. Overall, in the paper, access failure is, I suggest, interchangeable with ‘not accessing’ to indicate non-retrieval and we should ensure a theoretical formulation reflects this. The choice of ‘fails to access’ is (perhaps unintentionally) laden with a degree of one-sided normativity and deserves to be rendered more neutral. For a more inclusive formulation of condition (2), I propose: ‘(2*) to extent e , S does not internally access x at t .’ This way we will still be able to capture cases where forgetting is a failure plus cases where it is a success.

However, we’re not finished yet. Frise recognises that simply fulfilling the first two conditions is too broad for a conception of forgetting. There are countless things which we have learnt and are not currently accessing which are not truly forgotten (2018, 233). In the terminology of the updated version of the theory there are countless things which we have appropriately attended to and are not accessing. For instance, most of the time you aren’t accessing your earliest childhood memory – but it would be a contradiction to claim you have forgotten it, after all, it’s your earliest childhood memory. So, Frise specifies a third, disjunctive condition. Either the subject intends to access that information (whether they intend to access it right now or form an intention to do so at some future time), or the subject must be disposed in such a way that the information is inaccessible to them.

Let's begin with "(3)(a) at t , S intends to internally access x under some description by t ,". This condition acknowledges cases which are likely to be most familiar. Most of the time, when we intend to remember something (the location of your keys, say) and do not manage to, our forgetting shows up to us. For example: imagine a new acquaintance at a conference is making a beeline for you from across the room. You're going to need to introduce them to your current conversation partner. They told you their name earlier that morning and you are trying (frantically) to remember it. You intend to access their name, at least by the time it comes offer introductions, the fact you recall their research specialism isn't going to cut it. But your memory fails you (you hope they'll introduce themselves and wish they'd worn their name badge). Here, you are forgetting since you intend to access something previously attended to but nevertheless do not do so. I suggest, we count our forgetting as failure due to that intention to access being frustrated. We ought to then reformulate the following: "(3)(a)* at t_1 , S intends to internally access x under some description by t_2 ." It is worth noting, too, that I have specified a distinction between t_1 and t_2 . This allows us to account for the temporal separation between the time in which an intention (either reflective or pre-reflective) is set and the time at which this intention is aiming towards in which the subject is forgetting.

How shall we understand "(3)(b) x is internally inaccessible to S to extent e at t ."? There are lots of things we do not access and have no current or standing intention to access either, but only some of these things are forgotten. The inaccessibility condition (3)(b) helps us to distinguish. To assuage epistemological worries about the source of your forgetting, this access must be 'internal' (Frise, 2018: 233). For Frise, it is important to specify that you could be forgetting, say, a car accident you were in even as you watch the CCTV footage of that very collision. That a memory is inaccessible means that we could not access that memory even with appropriate retrieval cues. I expect that memories for vast swathes of our childhoods fulfil

condition (3)(b). I suspect, were we to be presented with evidence for something we once attended to but which is now internally inaccessible to us, it would be as though we're encountering it for the first time. With regards to the developments that I have been making in this chapter, I would argue that this inaccessibility condition most neatly aligns with intuitions regarding the nature of passive forgetting. When we have passively forgotten, cues for previously attended to things just simply do not stimulate remembering.

On the LEAD Theory, you could fulfil all these conditions simultaneously. But condition (3) is nevertheless a disjunctive condition. So, neither inaccessibility nor having an intention are necessary conditions for all cases of forgetting: you need to only fulfil one of them. As it stands, our modified version of the LEAD Theory does not quite provide us with an account that includes successful forgetting. First of all, forgetting successfully is in direct contradiction with (3)(a). When we successfully forget we are certainly not intending to access past information. In cases of successful forgetting, we are trying to not access that information.

Simply negating condition (3)(a) is not going to do the job because then we'd have to fulfil (3)(b). The issue is subtle, but important. Specifying only that successful forgetting requires inaccessibility doesn't allow us to make sense of the distinctive character of success. In other words, we would not be able to distinguish between cases where you just happen to passively forget an outfit you wore 20 years ago, and the idea of success associated with purposely forgetting an embarrassing or upsetting episode. Even if it turns out that successful forgetting does necessarily require a degree of inaccessibility, there is more going on. We can achieve the general account we're aiming for not by writing off (3)(a), nor by rephrasing but by inserting another disjunctive condition: "(b) at t_1 , S intends to not internally access x under some description by t_2 ,".

The full and modified version of the theory can then be summed up in the following. For a subject, *S*, to be forgetting some mental content *x*, at time *t*₂ the following conditions must be met:

- “(1) *S* has appropriately attended to *x* by *t*₁, and...
(2) to extent *e*, *S* does not internally access *x* at *t*₂, and...
(3)
 (a) at *t*₁, *S* intends to internally access *x* under some description by *t*₂, or
 (b) at *t*₁, *S* intends to not internally access *x* under some description by *t*₂, or
 (c) *x* is internally inaccessible to *S* to extent *e* at *t*₂.”

Let me outline some examples that help illustrate the modified theory. When we a) intend to access something and do not manage to, it is right to say we have forgotten and can sometimes infer the sense of failure often felt (as when you forget someone’s name). When we b) intend to not access something that we have appropriately attended to, and we do not access it, it is also right to say we have forgotten, but here, the normative valance is one of success (you forget an embarrassing misstep). When we c) do not access something inaccessible and we have no intention to remember or forget that episode or information, our forgetting is neutral (your outfit 20 years ago).

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Inaccessibility

Now we have a better idea of the possibility of successfully forgetting, more needs to be said to the final condition (3)(c). The challenge for our modified version of the theory is whether successful forgetting involves accessibility or inaccessibility. In cases where we succeed to forget something unpleasant, it seems a little strange to say that all that is required is that we

don't access something we attended to and have a corresponding intention. Perhaps we only succeed to not access that record in light of that record being accessible to us. The quality of success comes from the possibility of failure. Against this, our discussion of Michaelian and the neuroscientists indicated that forgetting during retrieval necessarily involves inaccessibility. We preferentially render subjectively uninteresting records inaccessible. Or our inhibitory control during retrieval suppression reduces memory accessibility from a variety of cues.

I suggest we need to think carefully about what inaccessibility really entails at least in cases of forgetting successfully. This is where the important distinction I set at the outset between Basic and Intentional Success returns. Basic Success, I argued, amounts to our passive forgetting in line with our cares. Put simply, a state in which things previously attended to are inaccessible to us may come as a consequence of passive forgetting in line with our cares. In contrast, since our forgetting can occasionally also be an active mental accomplishment that achieved Intentional Success, it is so in light of intentions (we are motivated to fulfil a broad range of things which put our cares at stake). I suggest we see intentional successful forgetting also as a process by which we achieve a state where a past experience is, at least partially, and very often temporarily, inaccessible to us. Suppose you intend to not access a painful memory. Perhaps, your life takes a turn for the better and you just simply never access that memory – it just doesn't come up. Here, I think, we're hard pressed to consider your forgetting a success in an intentional sense. That memory is still accessible to you and any number of triggers could be just around the corner: so far, you've just been lucky. It needs to be the case that if you were to come across triggers of that painful memory, you would still not access it: it needs to be inaccessible to you. This, I suggest, can be either a consequence of our cognitive processes (Basic Success) or from more concerted activity which presupposes an intention and our trying

(Intentional Success). As claimed above, if you intend to not access some painful memory, then you receive a bash to the head and do not access that painful memory it doesn't seem that your forgetting is especially successful either in the Basic or Intentional senses. Though the memory is inaccessible due to your bash to the head, neither your cognitive processes nor your intention made any contribution.

Furthermore, when your intention is operative, the inaccessibility of a memory need not be final. Later, we might be able to access those memories: think back to the example of successfully forgetting 'happy memories' to alleviate the suffering of a break-up. While it might one day be comforting to look back upon "those good times we shared" and be glad to do so; for now, making those past moments temporarily inaccessible is the way to go. The inaccessibility we impose upon our memories only needs to persist for the duration of time in which our emotional state is at stake. In other words, when that memory may be detrimental to us given our cares. There are, I expect, likely to be many routes contributing towards inaccessibility. One of these has been the focus of this chapter: the activity of successful forgetting. Successful forgetting requires the reduction of access to memories – in the short- or long-term – brought about by either by our cognitive processes or our intentions both geared towards the fulfilment and maintenance of what we care about.

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Forgetting and Constructive Memory

To close, I'd like to consider a constructive account of memory: here our memory itself plays an active role in the constitution of what we actually experience when we remember. The

original LEAD Theory, Frise claims, is compatible with a generative view. For clarity, the generative view of memory suggests that instead of memory operating as a storage facility, instances of remembering are composed of generated mental content that simulates our own personal past. So long as the constructive work done by memory does not involve any changes to accessibility, Frise claims, we are not in the state of forgetting. “Accessing could be a generative process; accessibility could be a matter of generative power, and inaccessibility could result from generation troubles and not just storage troubles.” (2018, 236). This, I suggest, ought to give us pause. Why must it be the case that forgetting entails generation ‘troubles’, and moreover is excluded from the functioning of a constructive memory? When forgetting is the passive omission of certain details of past experiences then forgetting may appear as trouble with our generative power: we are not able to recall enough details of the event as we ‘should’, parts are just missing. But as I have claimed in this chapter, even the passive forgetting that we engage in can be seen as achieving Basic Success since it aligns with our cares.

Another question raised by Frise’s discussion of a constructive memory is how could something which is ‘missing’ contribute to the shape of what is ‘not missing’. As I think successful intentional forgetting makes most clear, the active, intended omission of aspects of our memories changes the overall shape of what we remember: indeed, this is why we do it. We omit details in order to construct a more desirable memory of events, the inaccessibility is purposive, it is active. Again, this version of events that we strive for is not necessarily always in all cases rosy-coloured. Indeed, as mentioned with the example of the depressed person, intentionally omitting positive memories maintains a bleak picture of the world to protect them from forming hopes that might be dashed. Let me suggest another example. There are times when we have a somewhat perverse tendency to relish dwelling on our own shortcomings. In

the service of dwelling upon feelings of embarrassment (and rehearsals of how you wished you had acted instead) you might actually successfully forget that your embarrassing behaviour was ultimately forgiven by the end of the night.

Forgetting then is not always trouble with our generative power, we strive to forget successfully to shape the memories we do have and the outlook we have upon the world. The aim for this chapter has been to rebalance our conception of forgetting to acknowledge the ways in which it operates in the service of our mindedness viewed in terms of cares. Often, it is thanks to some forgetting on our part that we remember as we do, and it is thanks to our forgetting that we can cope. We may, for example, look back on a relationship that turned sour, remember only the wrong done by our ex-partner and intentionally forget the vast majority of our, perhaps unreasonable, demands or tantrums. Those we do remember might be seen by us as exceptions to our usual behaviour rather than as the frequent occurrences they were. Here, the way we remember our own actions (as few, as justified, as less dramatic), is altered by how we've forgotten. Through forgetting we maintain a vision of ourselves as blameless and hard done by. Our forgetting shapes what it is that we remember in the service of sustaining some affective state. I suggest it is more appropriate to sometimes see forgetting as an ability that helps us to control what it is that we remember and how we remember it. By viewing forgetting as an activity of 'not accessing' our past by intentionally rendering some parts inaccessible, we achieve our overarching interests. Successful forgetting, therefore, involves the suppression and omission of aspects of past experience culminating in an altered (and often more palatable) version of events. Our subsequent and final Chapter, therefore, will delve into greater detail about the way in which our forgetting shapes not only our memories, but also the way we attend to the world, and what we care about too.

CHAPTER FIVE HOW FORGETTING SHAPES US

Consider the following example:

Imagine a person aiming to part ways with their image of themselves as an academic in order to become something else, say, a therapist or a legal professional. All the different types of forgetting can be at play in the endeavour of this person to change the course of their life. As they study for their new profession, much of what they learnt and experienced during their academic life will be passively forgotten. They reflectively and intentionally gird themselves against and banish the old fantasy they had of themselves one day becoming a highly respected academic. Pre-reflectively they do more of the same, perhaps they begin to comport themselves differently than they had previously, forgetting the way they used to dress or talk. In light of their new chosen life path, this person gradually cares less and less for their past image of themselves and instead begins to develop a new vision. Forgetting, I will argue in this Chapter, makes this change possible.

In the preceding Chapters I have been discussing the role of our caring in shaping what it is that we forget; that our forgetting follows an inverse correlation to those things we care about. This might lead us to conclude that the relationship between our cares and our forgetting is decisively one-sided. Up until this point we've been investigating passive forgetting as something that just happens to us as a consequence of our care-driven mindedness. Thus, it has been important to discuss at length how forgetting comes as a result of our attention being directed towards those things that matter for the sake of our cares and away from those things which are not relevant to our cares. In contrast, intentional forgetting of the either reflective or

pre-reflective kind arises in cases of conflict between those things that we care about. While I have in the previous Chapter mentioned the implications that this has for the self, I will delve more fully into the matter here. Specifically, as I show in this final chapter, how our forgetting plays a role in shaping what we care about too. Cast this way, the relationship between our caring and our forgetting is dyadic, dynamic and mutually reinforcing. Before I talk about how forgetting shapes our cares, I need to make a few points about the nature of forgetting and recall some arguments from earlier chapters, because in order to clarify how our forgetting shapes our cares, we need to understand the nature and scope of forgetting. In other words, there are many senses in which we can forget things, and those different ways of forgetting shape our cares in different ways.

A key feature of forgetting is, of course, that it involves not experiencing past experiences. The vast majority of experiences in which we direct our primary attention to this or that, we will forget. It is tempting therefore to consider forgetting solely in absolute terms as the complete, permanent erasure of experiences. Thinking more broadly of the phenomenon, however, I suggest we ought to consider how our forgetting can be partial and occur within moments of remembering. When remembering we may leave some details out. In addition to this observation, often we forget only temporarily and at a later point, occasionally to our surprise, remember. This is attested to most clearly in moments where we may exclaim something to the effect of “I’d forgotten that happened!” Overall, then, a view of forgetting as solely oblivion is too narrow. To expand this overall broad remit of forgetting further and to show how this impacts the way forgetting shapes what we care about, I would like to initially return to some of the arguments made in earlier chapters.

As I argued in Chapter One, the philosophical judgement over whether a mental event counts as remembering (as opposed to forgetting, misremembering, confabulating, or imagining) needs to be sensitive to both the context in which a subject finds herself and the things that she cares about. These two, the context and a subject's cares, play a pivotal role in setting the conditions on what is demanded of a mental event such that it can appropriately be described as remembering. If we were to follow the traditional view that supposes that forgetting is merely a failure of remembering, then all forgetting would be characterised by a failure to appropriately respond to the demands of one's context and cares. I, however, wish to move away from this restrictive view of forgetting to acknowledge that we can be forgetting when we are not recalling some past event, even if it is not demanded of by our context and cares. For instance, it would be fair to say that you have forgotten your childhood locker combination even if you're *not* trying and failing to remember it right now. After all, in our preceding Chapter I emphasised the way that forgetting can achieve the quality of success. The success of forgetting our locker combination is likely to be of the Basic kind and which benefits us to the degree that we aren't bothered by something so inconsequential to our present life.

In addition to having forgotten such discrete pieces of knowledge as a locker combination, we can forget both entire past experiences and parts of our past experience, even if these aspects are not crucial to the retrieval context. Let me give an example. In remembering a long summer evening meal that we shared with family, there are going to be plenty of aspects of that experience which we were attentive to at the time. The food, the conversation and jokes shared, the cooling breeze, maybe the tableware and the brief chaos while everyone pitched in to clean up something that spilt. There may also be plenty of things also primarily attended to at that time which we don't include when we remember the scene. We leave out that a debate got a little too heated, or we don't remember that someone who attended was there, or we don't recall

the colour of the tablecloth. It's reasonable, I suggest, to consider this episode remembered even if there are plenty of details that are left out. Moreover, we should consider those omitted details as having been forgotten. However, since there is no demand to recall the tablecloth or the late guest in order to remember that long summer evening, those left out details are not understood as 'forgetting' on the basis that we have *failed* to remember. We should say that we are forgetting about them simply because we do not include them in our memory of the scene. While it is true that some instances of forgetting should be considered a failure to remember, this definition is not all encompassing. If someone asked you which tablecloth was on the table and you couldn't say, *then* your forgetting would be a failure to meet the demands of your context; but if this question is never posed, your non-recalling of the tablecloth is an instance of forgetting simply in virtue of being an omission and its normative quality is neutral. So, our forgetting can be understood sometimes as a failure, sometimes a success, and other times neither. Our forgetting is not restricted to the oblivion of entire episodes of experience and can also occur within remembered episodes too. In other words, forgetting isn't always leaving out what you need, it can also be leaving out what you don't need.

Recalling in particular Chapter Two, it is our primary attention which sets those things which can be candidates for forgetting apart from the peripheral experiences which do not meet that threshold. For instance, I experience my desk *as* dusty in light of my present preoccupation with being a host but otherwise I never make this assessment while preoccupied with being an academic. In attending to the desk *as* dusty within the context of being a host, it becomes something that could be remembered or forgotten. I have emphasised too that primary attention is not restricted to those things which we experience propositionally. Our engagement within our primary attention can also be couched in terms of the comportment we take towards things given what we are up to. Accordingly, the dustiness of the desk isn't necessarily something I

need to articulate to myself for it to nevertheless be something I forget to deal with before my guest arrives. Framed this way we can acknowledge the vast scope of things we might forget.

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Forgetting Shaping Our Memories

Vitaly, I argue, what and how we remember will be partly shaped by those things we forget. More specifically, forgetting will contribute to how we experience parts of what we remember *as* this or that. While the shift in what we care about and the relation that those memories have to what we care about now will certainly influence the way in which we interpret and engage with parts of our remembered past, forgetting can also impact this too. We might forget an earlier instance of some event and then remember a later occurrence *as* the first time, we might forget how an event turned out and so remember that event *as* something we regret, we might forget some advice given to us and remember an error we made *as* unanticipated. We might forget someone's transgressions and only remember them fondly, or we might forget a promise we made and consequently not remember our failure to keep our promise *as* a failure. It is not possible to provide an exhaustive list of all the minute ways in which our forgetting will lead us to remember events in the way that we do, but it is hopefully clear that our forgetting isn't inconsequential for how we experience our remembered past or our present. We can generate countless examples of this kind by thinking hypothetically, in a kind of imaginative variation, about a) how our memories would be different if we had forgotten something earlier, or b) how our memories would differ if we hadn't forgotten something earlier.

But one might ask if there is a more concrete way to attest to the possibility that our forgetting shapes our memories this way. I suggest one way to think this through is by considering the

interpersonal dimension to many of the things we remember. Upon hearing an alternative version from someone else we may realise our opinion on that event changes. For instance, my supervisor reminding me of part of an academic paper I had forgotten about may lead me to reinterpret what I recall of that paper's argument. Alternatively, a friend may contest my version of some past event, telling me to "remember that they were going through a pretty hard time then" I may reassess the way in which I had previously viewed someone's conduct. It is, of course, not necessary for us to always explicitly clock when we are reminded of something that our forgetting had shaped the way we previously experienced that memory.

Taking this further, it isn't just our memories that will be shaped in various way by our forgetting. The reason that forgetting can do this for remembering is because our experience in general can be shaped by forgetting too. And *this*, ultimately, is how our forgetting shapes what we care about. The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to exploring various ways in which this works.

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Forgetting Shaping Our Interpretative Horizon

When we passively forget, we are, in a sense, discarding those parts of our experience which do not show up to us *as* broadly relevant for what we care about. Forgetting, then, is partly involved in refining our primary attention. The more we forget things that do not matter for what we care about, the better we will be able to attend to what we do care about. I am not claiming that what we experience in primary attention is fundamentally *determined* by what we forget. The scope of influencing factors for the way we experience the world is far broader.

What I am claiming, though, is that forgetting makes an important contribution to shaping the experiences we have. Exploring this will ultimately help us to see how our forgetting shapes our caring in various ways too.

The first way forgetting shapes our experience has been detailed earlier. Notably, I argued in Chapter Four that we engage in intentional forgetting to overcome the conflict that arises from being motivated by conflicting cares. We are motivated to forget, I argued, in order to prevent, for example, the disruption of our attention by nagging memories. By engaging in feats of forgetting and succeeding to do so, we refine our attention such that we are better able to respond to those things we care about most. I suggested that instances in which we, say, manage to forget toxic workplace environments upon starting a new job, or forgetting painful memories of a relationship breakdown, enables us to overcome the challenges of our present moment without being repeatedly disturbed by things we experienced in the past. In other words, forgetting helps us to function well in the present by allowing us to forget the past and to focus our attention on the things that matter to us now.

In addition to enabling our focus on the present, forgetting also plays a role in shaping our interpretive horizon. In forgetting something from our past, the way in which we relate to those objects we primarily attend to in our present may be different than if we weren't forgetting. This will be familiar to anyone who has forgotten the birthday or significant date of a loved one. In forgetting a special date, you are likely to register that day when it comes *as* unremarkable, or in terms of other commitments you have for that day instead - you might register this day *as* stressful if you have a big presentation to give, for instance. Furthermore, you might register the behaviour of your loved one *as* oddly curt. After all, they are enraged that you have forgotten their birthday or anniversary, and to top it off you are completely

oblivious to your forgetting. Accordingly, your forgetting influences which of the things that you care about will be at the forefront of shaping your primary attention. Instead of planning the perfect surprise for your loved one, you will primarily attend to those things which show up in light of your commitment to acing the big presentation. Forgetting, then, foregrounds certain ways of registering objects within one's interpretive horizon and so, as I will argue more fully later, will play a role in shaping which things that you care about will take centre-stage.

Within the cognitive sciences, forgetting is often measured by the absence of a remembering response to what are usually termed 'cues.' Cues are those things that we attend to and which *ought* to stimulate a remembering response provided that nothing has 'gone wrong' with our memory processes. In experimental contexts where remembering is the goal set for study participants, it makes sense that any not-remembering of some past attended to object would lead us to interpret that forgetting as a failure. I have stressed, however, that this view of forgetting is too normatively limited and fails to account for cases where our forgetting is not universally a failure. Nevertheless, there is some use to the idea of not responding to cues as a way to think about forgetting. When we are forgetting, things that we encounter do not elicit potentially relevant or associated moments of our past experience. For instance, you may see an asterisk on your calendar – intended as a reminder – and nevertheless not recall what you were trying to remind yourself of. Given that this asterisk *was* intended to be a reminder then your forgetting in this case is a failure to remember. It is having forgotten the meaning of this asterisk that it shows up to you in the way that it does. Allow me to elaborate. You might initially experience the asterisk *as* curious, and not *as* a reminder at all. You may eventually register this asterisk *as* a reminder for *something* but nevertheless still be forgetting just what that something is. The critical point to make here is that in forgetting the meaning of the calendar asterisk your attention is shaped in a way that it wouldn't be had you immediately

remembered what it was intended to remind you of. Consequently, we may attend to memories we might have for when we drew that asterisk, we might scan the calendar for other clues that might reveal the meaning of the asterisk, we might chastise our past self for not writing our reminders more clearly. Of course, an asterisk on a calendar is quite clearly intended as a cue. But cues aren't restricted to things that we intentionally design for the purpose of remembering. Anything that we attend to primarily may stimulate associated memories. When we are forgetting, something that would typically operate as a cue to remembering does not facilitate remembering. We can notice this in situations where we are unable to remember something we need or want to but, usually, as we are generally oblivious to our own forgetting we simply won't realise when we do not respond with associated memories to potential cues.

Overall, this discussion is intended to demonstrate what I take to be the relatively straightforward but perhaps underappreciated observation that having forgotten will lead us to attend to the world in a way we would not if we hadn't forgotten. Forgetting shapes our attention and the interpretative horizon in terms of which we attend to things. The examples I have given thus far may appear rather narrow, but I suggest that it is reasonable to view the influence our forgetting has on our attention in a much broader way. As is often the case with investigating forgetting, the influence it has is hard to capture not least because we are, for the most part, oblivious to having forgotten. Nevertheless, taking these observations in our stride, we are better placed to see the full scope of forgetting's influence as we turn now to the core question of this chapter, namely, how our forgetting shapes what we care about too.

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Forgetting Shaping Our Cares

Returning to the example of the asterisk on the calendar, how might we relate this to our caring? We can expand this example in two ways. Initially, it was because you cared about something that led you to mark the calendar in the first place. In other words, you cared at the time of drawing the asterisk that you would be able to adequately respond to the demands of this care in the future. Furthermore, this action of marking the calendar presupposes that you anticipate caring about what you do now into the future. Your forgetting, however, obstructs the possibility of you adequately responding. We can say, then, that due to your forgetting about the intended meaning of the asterisk, you are not able to appropriately respond to whatever led you to write the asterisk on the calendar in the first place. Indeed, as indicated above, the frustration or peculiarity you might experience about your inability to recall the meaning of the asterisk can be understood as a failure to adequately respond to whatever care led you to mark the calendar in the first place. In more general terms, forgetting can lead us to be unable to fulfil those things that would be demanded of us if we remembered. Moreover, forgetting can, under circumstances similar to the calendar, be considered a failure to live up to the demands of what you care about. Crucial too is the fact that we need not be aware of what it is that we care about and tend not to consciously reflect upon what we care about for our forgetting to obstruct us. Though we may never explicitly acknowledge the care in question, forgetting something which would contribute to the maintenance or wellbeing of that care would amount to failing to appropriately act in accordance with that care.

In light of your inability to recall the meaning of the asterisk on the calendar you may at turns be annoyed at your present self for being unable to recall, or at your past self for not leaving a clear enough reminder. Something similar happens when we realise that we've forgotten to do something important after we were supposed to do it. We can think of any time we've forgotten to send a reply to an urgent e-mail. In consequence to cases of this sort, if they happen regularly,

we might be concerned that we are becoming a forgetful person. We may develop new things that we care about: we might care about making what we need to do clearer to our future self. We might try harder to remember next time. Again, it is not necessary for us to consciously reflect on our newly developed cares for our care to nevertheless motivate us to, say, be more precise with our reminders. Generally speaking, then, when forgetting leads us to experience ourselves *as* in some way deficient or failing to respond to what we need to, the acknowledgement of our forgetting may cause us to care more about not failing this way in the future. Accordingly, we may attend more closely to those things which appear to us as things we *might* forget, in order to avoid the forgetting which threatens those things we care about. This way that forgetting shapes what we care about, and how we care, is noticeably causal.

Meanwhile, as I have argued previously, caring requires us to be epistemically conscientious with regard to those things we care about. It might be the case that our forgetting is not simply a failure to live up to what we care about but an indication that we do not, in fact, care as strongly as we might take ourselves to. Not remembering something could be interpreted as a failure, as in the case of forgetting the meaning of your calendar asterisk. Conversely though, when we are forgetting something more general even in the face of potential cues, this may instead be a sign that we do not care and have forgotten accordingly. Despite there being innumerable things that we could care about, we are ultimately finite. Caring is no different. We are limited in what we can reasonably be said to care about overall. As I have stressed previously, caring is exemplified by, among many other things, being emotionally at stake over the fortunes of what we care about, being motivated to act in accordance with what we care about, directing our attention to those things that are relevant for what we care about and passively forgetting those things which are inversely correlated to what we care about. I have, however, said very little about the way in which caring can fluctuate in intensity. There are

things and people that we may care very deeply for: religious or political commitments, career paths or pastimes too. Furthermore, I stressed early on that caring can be a source of smaller cares. Caring about a friend involves caring that you don't upset them. Making sense of the way in which our forgetting shapes our cares requires us to take a temporally-extended perspective on our cares, one that allows us to appreciate the waxing and waning of things we care about over time. Our care for this or that can diminish over time or be eclipsed by cares that are more pertinent. Forgetting, I suggest, facilitates this ongoing temporal movement of our caring.

Navigating a human life requires us, sometimes, to put certain cares on the back burner while we attend to others. I might deeply care about planning my future career after completing my doctorate but right now I need to focus on the care I have to complete my work to the best of my ability. For the moment, thoughts of the future are distracting and so it is necessary to forget those things in the short term. Short-term forgetting facilitates this necessity. Short-term forgetting enables us to set certain cares aside while we attend to other more salient cares that currently require our attention. By short-term forgetting we are able to direct our attention to what matters now. If we manage to forget in this way, we benefit our short-term *memory* for the pressing task at hand and, therefore, benefit ourselves. Here we see that, unlike a restricted view that places memory and forgetting in stark opposition, forgetting can operate hand in hand with remembering too.

The above cases – of forgotten dates or tasks or obligations – offer the most straightforward examples for the kinds of influence that our forgetting can have over our interpretive horizon, the way in which forgetting *can* partially fail to operate in the service of the things we care about, and initial hints at how forgetting shapes our cares. Our forgetting certainly isn't limited

to calendar dates, birthdays, and tasks though. As I have suggested, when we forget about something that has happened, we may register the repetition of this event *as* unfamiliar, *as* new, perhaps *as* either unexpected or unanticipated: not *as* a recurring, possibly predictable, event. Here our forgetting stops us from developing the ability to recognise patterns of events. Think of the possibility that we repeatedly forget the bad things a friend has done. On the face of it, this seems to be a solely negative consequence of our forgetting. In forgetting about their routine misdemeanours, we prevent ourselves having a view on our friend such that we might care about them changing (or treating us better). Due to our forgetting, we may have no motivation or grounds on which to encourage them to do better, and we may be blind to the fact that they have a tendency towards treating others poorly. Assuming on this basis that forgetting is wholly bad and completely at odds with what we care about, however, would be a mistake. It is also plausible that forgetting about our friend's bad behaviour works in the service of caring about them and building a sense of solidarity. Caring about them *might* mean looking past their flaws and we may be in a better position to do this if we forget the bad things they've done. Framed this way, our forgetting is aligned with what we care about most, and it ensures that the other things that we could also care about (that we take our friends to be good people) are side-lined. Forgetting then helps to prioritise certain things that we care about over others.

A further way in which our forgetting can shape our interpretive horizon is in terms of the consequent registering of something *as* salient, when in fact it isn't. In light of our forgetting, we might end up motivated to act in accordance with something we care about but which does not need to be taken care of. If I forget that my housemate says that they'll go food shopping this afternoon, the need to head out to buy essentials is something that will show up to me *as* important. Perhaps I'll also register this thought and the shopping trip *as* an irritating distraction

from the work that I care about completing. In forgetting what my housemate says, the day in general will show up differently to me than it would have done had I not forgotten. More precisely, forgetting what my housemate said leads me to care about things (going shopping, restocking the fridge, etc.) that I simply would not care about otherwise. In this way, therefore, forgetting contributes to the creation of cares. It is in virtue of having forgotten about some information that we then engage with our environment in accordance with something that we now care about. Had we not forgotten, we wouldn't care at all, and we would engage with our environment differently.

Much of the way that our forgetting shapes our interpretive horizon, such that certain parts of our experience appear salient for what we are up to, are more neutral with respect to our cares. Importantly, too, is the fact that our forgetting isn't *always* an issue for us. A final way forgetting can shape what we care about that I will discuss here bears some similarity with the last. In making certain significant life decisions we may have to make compromises and let go of various commitments which are not compatible with the decision we have made. In orienting ourselves to the decision we have made, we are likely to forget things which we associate with the given-up commitment. In doing so we allow ourselves to formulate new commitments and so caring about these may further diminish the cares we used to have. For instance, you might acknowledge that you are not going to pursue a career path that you have been intensely committed to and so, perhaps with some reluctance, you decide to follow a different path. Perhaps you decide to end a long-term relationship which isn't working out. In order to be open to these new paths, you will need to let go of the ways of attending that you had previously relied upon, you will need to forget the kinds of things that you used to aspire to. Here, forgetting helps us to be better attuned to the new way of living our lives and provides us with a path for new cares to develop. If we did not forget, or if we struggle to forget, then we

wouldn't be able to let go of those things we care about and so might not be able to bring ourselves to care for our new path. Our ability to forget, then, it is in the service of making possible *new* cares and so new ways of attending to the world around us.

Another aspect that follows from the above. I will suggest that our cares exist in a loosely defined hierarchy – some are more important than others and so will shape our lives more than others. Again, taking a temporally extended perspective on our cares, we can see how forgetting about certain cares for a stretch of time can change the shape of this hierarchy. For example, a close family member gets sick, and I need to care for her for a long stretch of time. During that stretch I forget all about my interest in pursuing my art. When that stretch of time comes to an end, I might very well find that that interest no longer occupies a central place in my hierarchy of cares. Forgetting can not only suppress cares, then, but it can also cull them too.

Lastly, consider again the earlier discussion in Chapter Four where I described the possibility of a conflict of cares. Sometimes responding to something you care about violates something else that you care about. This leads to an internal tension. Relevant for us is a case where there is a care served by forgetting something and we struggle to forget that something because it supports another care. You might care deeply about moving on after the breakdown of an intimate relationship and care about your own wellbeing but nevertheless still care for that person and the relationship you had. If caring for this person is stifling the possibility of taking care for your own wellbeing and ability to move on, then there is inner conflict. I argued that in situations of this sort we may set an intention, either reflectively or pre-reflectively, to forget that which is causing you strife. If we really do succeed to forget, over time this is likely to help you to diminish the care you had for that person. By forgetting much of the bad and the good, I argue, you will eventually care less. I mean this in the sense that forgetting about things

leads you to no longer be thinking about them and therefore occupies less and less of your attention. Key to the idea of caring is that it directs your attention in various ways. If your attention is not drawn in a way that is related to that care, it's fair to say that you no longer really care about it.

Overall, then, we can see that even our passive forgetting plays a role in shaping the things we care about and how we care about them. By shaping our interpretive horizon such that we experience objects *as* this or that, our forgetting regulates those things that we can care about. In some cases, this is a matter of making various cares no longer salient, and in other cases, it allows certain cares to come to the forefront. While our forgetting is responsive to our cares, it also has influence over our primary attention and so over what we can and do care about. In shaping our caring, forgetting alters the various ways we may be disposed in light of our caring. Forgetting thus influences what we may be motivated to do, how we emotionally respond to those things we attend to, whether certain things appear to us *as* desirable and it may shape the beliefs we form: in short, all those things that caring disposes us towards. Acknowledging this is important because it emphasises that even passive forgetting sits within a dyadic relationship to our cares. Both have influence over the other. Cast this way, it is clear that a view of forgetting which merely equates it to little more than a failure to remember will miss the expansive way in which even passive forgetting makes us who we are.

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Caring, Forgetting and The Self

Having elucidated the mutually influential relationship between our forgetting and our caring, we might stop for pause. There are many examples of thinkers who situate caring at the core

of who we are, providing the foundation for a core sense of self. The description I have offered above of the dyadic, dynamic relationship between forgetting and caring might lead one to something of an existential worry: in virtue of being shaped by forgetting our cares and therefore our self is to some degree untethered, contingent, and uncannily path-dependent. We might be concerned that the influence that our forgetting can have on what we care about leads to a view of the self as ultimately arbitrary and unnervingly fluid. Allow me to elaborate this issue further. In Chapter Four, I made a distinction between passive forgetting and the more intentional forgetting that can be either reflective or pre-reflective.

The problem, I suggest, stems from passive forgetting. I have characterised passive forgetting as a basic cognitive process that operates in the service of what we care about by jettisoning those things which are not relevant for what we care about. Notably, I termed the kind of success attributable to passive forgetting as Basic Success. Passive forgetting, when successful in this way, is successful because it broadly aligns with our cares. The worry here, however, is that this kind of forgetting doesn't involve any agency on our part. We are not making informed decisions about what to forget here. Rather, as I suggested in Chapter Three, passive forgetting just happens to (or within) us. On this basis, we might be concerned that this kind of forgetting ends up shaping us in ways that are, in a sense, out of our control. The threat I'm articulating is that given just how much we passively forget – recall that I suggested we forget vastly more than what we remember – this forgetting may have a dramatic impact on what we care about and, therefore, our self.

There are, I suggest, two ways of that passive forgetting putatively shaping our cares. The first is when our passive forgetting operates normally, as it should, by discarding things related to what we don't care about. The second is when our passive forgetting 'goes wrong' and we

passively forget things which *are* relevant to what we care about. The two have different implications and so I will detail them in turn.

When we passively forget in the service of our cares, we jettison what we don't care about. In doing so we benefit ourselves such that we are able to better attend to things that do matter. One might worry that this leads to something of a snowball effect on our cares. As we passively forget, we refine our attention more and more narrowly to only to those things that we care for. Ultimately, this may present us with a view that we are deeply static and blinkered in a way that is out of our control. Over time, one might worry, in virtue of our passive forgetting orienting our attention, that we have no way to pay heed to new things that might provide us with new cares, that we will be less open to the diverse range of things that might otherwise matter to us. The problem, then, is akin to worries about belief polarization: situated in a like-minded milieu, our beliefs tend to ossify and become more extreme, because people around us consistently confirm what we already believe, enhancing our self-confidence and diminishing the sort of uncertainty that fuels epistemic humility. Analogously, if our cares shape what we forget, it would seem that outlook and interests might become increasingly narrow via a non-agential cognitive process over which we cannot even in principle exercise control. While we still care about this or that and will respond as we do when we care: by being emotionally vulnerable, by desiring for things and being motivated to act in certain ways, this picture suggests that at bottom what we care about is rather arbitrary. Moreover, it would seem to set the self on an ever-narrower path in which it could get stuck with no realistic route to change.

On the other side of the worry, if passive forgetting 'goes wrong', we end up forgetting much of what is relevant for what we care about. This presents the possibility that we end up unable to adequately respond to those things we care about. But, furthermore, it may passively lead us

to lose those cares. The idea is that if our passive forgetting goes wrong and we jettison what does matter to us (likely, without us realising it) then we lose something crucial to who we are. This avenue offers a view that our own cognitive processes can damage the self by inadvertently discarding things we care about. Having done so we are in a position where our self is subject to the smooth operation of a cognitive process out of our control. Real life scenarios can demonstrate the most destructive form of this ‘going wrong.’ When we consider the impact that illnesses like Alzheimer’s disease can have on a person’s self, we are faced with the stark picture of what happens when forgetting is out of our control. The development of neurodegenerative diseases is so traumatic for both the person who is suffering and for those who are close to them, in part precisely because the rapid forgetting strips the person of so much of what makes them who they are.

How ought I to respond to these concerns? Overall, my response to these worries is to acknowledge that there are real risks to the self. The normal functioning of passive forgetting of our cares can narrow our outlook and dull our edges, errant passive forgetting can damage the self in various ways, and together both phenomena do constitute yet another cord of contingency that runs through the heart of human existence.

However, I suggest that for the most part, in most cases, this situation is not dire. Plenty of things will shape who we are that we have little to no control over. Our upbringing, our health, our opportunities will influence what we care about and so who we are. Examples of cognitive features that we may have little to no control over might be implicit biases or cognitive distortions. Contingency is an inescapable feature of finitude. What’s more, we should not allow worries about contingency to overshadow the fact that we do exercise significant control of who we become. As I have been detailing throughout this project, it is generally the case

that our forgetting follows our caring. For one example, we can also engage in intentional forgetting. With this in mind we may be less concerned over the possibility that forgetting shapes who we are as a threatening prospect. After all, intentional forgetting springs from what we care about and involves a degree of agency over what we intend to forget. Here, though forgetting does involve omitting, discarding or editing our view of the past, we engage in it with a level of activity. We engage in intentional forgetting for the very reason that it will shape the way we attend to the world and ourselves to best align with what we care about most.

What's more, we can mitigate the worry about passive forgetting unduly narrowing our perspective on what matters by cultivating a concern to remain open-minded and open to new experiences. In other words, if we care about being open-minded and open to new experiences, then we need not worry too much about the narrowing of our interests via non-conscious mechanisms of passive forgetting, because our open stance will keep us open to new possibilities. Passive forgetting cannot condemn those who care about openness to a narrow existence.

Another way to look at this is to consider a narrative view. While I am not advocating the view that the self *is* a narrative or consists in the narrative we have, I do think the idea that many of us offer ourselves and others narratives is useful. Often, it matters to us how we wish to portray ourselves; we care about our life story. Forgetting, clearly, will do a lot of work in shaping this narrative. By telling a story about our past we will rely enormously on the memories we have and, as I discussed above, forgetting significantly shapes the way we attend to those memories. Here we can strike a balance between, on the one hand, a commitment to having a truthful narrative: one that is not inaccurate and, potentially, on the other hand a narrative of our past that satisfies what kind of view of ourselves we care about having. This vision doesn't need to

be rosy, either. We can imagine the person who cares about maintaining a rather dismal view of themselves and dwells only on their past flaws. Recall that in Chapter Four I suggested the somewhat counterintuitive position that, sometimes, successful forgetting involves getting something wrong about the past for the sake of what we care about. In strictly epistemic terms, this may strike us as a failure. But from the perspective of what we care about, we succeed.

Lastly, analogy to think about the question of how what is ‘missing’ shapes what is ‘not missing’ with regards to the narrative we may tell ourselves is the process of making a paper snowflake. We trim away at the folded paper, snipping little shapes into the corners and opening it up to reveal a snowflake. Forgetting is a little like this too. If there was no snipping, we would be left with a blank circle. Importantly, in trimming the edges in various shapes we don’t just make a piece of paper with holes in, we make a snowflake. Like this, forgetting doesn’t just leave us with memories with (mostly, invisible) holes in. Instead, contributes to the overall picture of one’s life.

*

Closing Remarks

Some people depend on a life narrative to make sense of their lives as they currently are. When such people enter a phase of life that does not square with their over-arching narrative, they can experience a sense of despair and disconnection. How is this my life? How did I end up here? What sometimes helps people in such a state is something like a life-story edit – one that foregrounds new themes and backgrounds others. Forgetting can also play a crucial role in this life-editing process, erasing or eroding elements of an old story, making room for new elements

and changing the shape of the whole. In this way, a new life story can come into view, one that allows a person to make sense of a new phase of life as part of the whole.

Ultimately, what I have attempted to show in this chapter is that even what appears to be an innocuous feature of our mindedness, forgetting contributes to the overall shape of who we are. It does this through influencing the way we view our past and therefore altering the degree and direction of our caring. Reconsider our opening example: the person who decides to leave academic life to pursue new goals. In the process of this happening the various forms of forgetting that I have been describing all operate to facilitate that change. While our forgetting generally follows on from our caring, sometimes we need to forget in order to change. Intentionally our forgetting provides us with the ability to shape who we are by providing us with a way to overcome conflicting cares that we may face. I have acknowledged the possibility that, on this picture, there is a degree of instability at the core of who we are in light of passive forgetting. However, I claimed, we shouldn't consider the threat to be too severe. We are, on the whole, significantly in control of who we are, and forgetting ensures this too.

CONCLUSION

Discussions in the philosophy of memory have foregrounded remembering as key. This, I have argued, leaves underappreciated the multiple ways forgetting plays a vital role in our mindedness too. In making this argument, I have stressed throughout that a view of our mindedness centred on care helps us to draw out crucial facets of the phenomenon of forgetting.

To this end, we began in Chapter One investigating how an analysis of our care-based mindedness allowed us to make certain clarifications over what is required to make ‘remembering judgements,’ i.e., judgements over whether a mental event *counts* as remembering. Against the prevailing view that treats remembering (and, by extension, forgetting) as a purely epistemic affair, I argued that in order to make these remembering judgements we ought to pay heed both to what we care about and the context in which we find ourselves. This involved an extensive discussion of what I mean by caring. Making use of developments from Husserl and Heidegger in the phenomenological tradition, I highlighted the role that caring plays in directing our attention to this or that object and furnishes us with the quality with which we attend to what we do. This led to discussions of primary attention and the influence of our caring on our interpretative horizon, i.e., a discussion of caring’s role in the constitution of intelligible experience. Later developments in theorising about care dovetail with discussions of agency and from these theories, especially from Jaworska and Shoemaker, I emphasised the dimensions of caring that involve emotions, desires and judgements. These claims offered a springboard to draw on Zagzebski’s work in virtue epistemology. I argued that if caring places a certain epistemic demand on us in the realm of those things we care about, then we ought to view remembering in this fashion too. By applying these insights to prevalent

theories in the philosophy of memory, preservationism and simulationism respectively, I argued that an exclusive focus on the epistemic dimension leaves under-theorised the importance of what we care about. By situating remembering in relation not only to our context but also to what we care about, thus paying heed to the broadly existential matters, we are better placed to make judgements over whether something counts as remembering. This initial analysis of caring not only serves as a springboard to launch the investigation of forgetting but it also informs the entire outlook of the project.

In Chapter Two, I turned to the question What Becomes a Candidate for Forgetting? Numerous accounts of remembering have sought to capture precisely what it is that makes something available for future remembering (and implicitly for forgetting). I posed the problem that, externally, we can make little distinction in character between someone who has genuinely forgotten something they previously experienced and someone who never adequately experienced something in the first place. The basic criterion required to make this distinction seems rather elusive upon inspection. Some theories suggest having learnt X, having perceived X, or having witnessed X suffice to enable this distinction. I argued that we can best discover the relevant criterion by appealing to the phenomenological tradition. I argued that having appropriately attended to X is what makes something not only a candidate for our remembering but, most importantly for my purposes, for our forgetting too. The appropriateness of our attention encompasses not merely highly acute or propositional engagement but is broader to include even our pre-reflective comportments in the world. It is enough for something to show up to us *as* this or that with the character it does in light of both what we care about and the interpretative horizon this affords us when we are engaged in some activity. Providing this analysis put us in a position to make sense of those things we experience in a broad sense and to make distinctions between those things which do and those things which do not become a

candidate for our forgetting in the first place. Having discussed the nature of attention at length, specifying its scope, direction and temporality, we were then in a position to detail what I have claimed to be likely the most pervasive form of forgetting.

Chapter Three discussed the nature of what I have termed passive forgetting. Developing an account of forgetting further, I argued that forgetting is not solely a kind of mental error or mistake in cognitive processing. Drawing on and developing Michaelian's view that forgetting is a cognitive virtue, I argued that forgetting is deeply tied to our care-based mindedness. I argued that passive forgetting generally operates in the service of what we care about by jettisoning those things which are not or are no longer relevant for what we care about now. Achieving this, forgetting not only furnishes us with a passive epistemic virtue but allows us to attend appropriately and respond to those things we care about most. To make sense of this we had to overcome the potential obstacle that if forgetting was aligned with what we do not care about and my earlier claim that it is caring that provides the direction of attention: what gets forgotten? By expanding the relationship between attention and caring I offered a number of explanations that showed how we do indeed end up forgetting inversely to our cares despite it being our cares that directed our attention. In addition, I suggested a novel aspect of caring which seems to have been overlooked in the literature, namely, the possibility of dormancy. Specifically, I argued that passive forgetting temporarily allows us to dial down the force with which certain cares claim us. I also discussed two potential counterexamples to the claim of the inverse correlation: firstly, that we do sometimes forget what we care about, and secondly, that we often do not forget seemingly bizarre details. I responded that these examples do not ultimately undermine my position, because we are not perfectly oiled machines who never make mistakes. Indeed, we should expect a properly functioning system to make occasional

mistakes. What's more, the frustration with which we respond to these situations, I argued, attests to the fact that we attend to the world in the way we do thanks to what we care about.

In Chapter Four I sought to discuss the relationship between our forgetting, our agency and normativity. When passive forgetting operates in accordance with our cares, I argued, then it achieves Basic Success. I argued that in addition to this form of success, we can also engage in more agential forgetting. I then highlighted research in neuroscience that indicates that forgetting is not solely a passive feature of our cognition. Sometimes we exercise control over the process of forgetting. Building on this, I aimed to provide a phenomenologically-informed counterpart to this research. Intentional Success, I stressed, involves either the reflectively or pre-reflectively setting an intention to forget and trying to realise that intention. If we make good on this intention and do manage to forget, then we have successfully forgotten, achieving Intentional Success. Success in this case, I emphasised, denotes an agential achievement. According to my analysis, situations in which we may set an intention to forget arise from the conflict between competing cares. Occasionally something we care about motivates us to remember while something else motivates us to forget. Finally, having argued for this view of forgetting I turned to Frise's LEAD theory to see how we might be able to rebalance the oft-assumed negative connotations of forgetting. I argued that a theory of forgetting ought to be responsive to the idea that at times our forgetting is successful. Forgetting is not in all cases a failure; in many cases, it constitutes a kind of success.

In the final Chapter I asked how and to what extent our forgetting shapes us. I claimed that forgetting, for the most part, works in the service of our caring, but I stressed that forgetting can also have an influence over what we care about. Thus, the relationship between what we care about and what we forget works in both directions. I began by showing how not only our

memories and our interpretive horizon but, ultimately, what we care about and how we care is shaped by our forgetting. This led to a concern that in virtue of our cares being shaped themselves by something ostensibly out of our control (passive forgetting), I would be advocating for a self that is untethered, arbitrary and mercurial. My response to this worry is to accept that the self is open to risk and contingency on my view, and yet I want to emphasise that, ultimately, we are in a position to exercise significant control over who we are and what we care about. Intentional forgetting aids us here.

Having detailed the Chapters above, I would like to briefly discuss the wide-reaching implications for this evaluation of forgetting. The phenomenon has, I suggest, been vastly under-appreciated in the field of the philosophy of memory and I have sought to rebalance this. Accordingly, this project offers the first standalone, extended treatment of the phenomenon of forgetting (one that does not centre on moral philosophy). I have shown that, unlike the commonly held intuition of forgetting as merely a failure, error, cognitive mistake or a hindrance, forgetting actually plays a vital positive role in making us who we are. By paying heed to a view of mindedness that places caring centre-stage, we are able to conceive of forgetting's place alongside remembering as two deeply interconnected phenomena. I have argued that an analysis of care illuminates what it is that we mean when we say we remember and what makes something a candidate for forgetting in the first place. I have explored how our passive forgetting supports and maintains our cognitive functioning both as an epistemic virtue but more broadly concerned with our self. I have also shown how this care-based view allows us to redress the normative intuitions about forgetting, to show how it can be a success in both Basic and Intentional senses.

This is, of course, a limited project and there are far more avenues required establish a bona fide 'philosophy of forgetting' to complement the existing 'philosophy of memory.' In light of the extensive investigations into the phenomenon of forgetting there are numerous further questions that may benefit from a more thorough philosophical investigation. I will detail three.

Firstly, given the role that forgetting plays in shaping who we are, I contend there are likely profitable overlaps with the development of research on collective memory. I have limited myself in this project to prioritising the influences of forgetting for individuals however there is a growing body of research in disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, politics and history that seeks to conceptualise the nature of a collective memory held by a group of individuals. If forgetting has the power to shape the cares that we have and, as I suggested, the life narratives we tell ourselves, it is likely that this activity of forgetting may play a significant parallel role in the formation of collective memories. While I do not wish to draw an identical picture between an individual and a collective, I contend that it is plausible that forgetting may operate in a similar fashion to maintain certain visions of a group. For example, it could be philosophically profitable to consider the influence of group forgetting and the undoing of this forgetting for the sake of decolonial theory.

Another avenue that this project has had to leave for future research is a fuller appreciation of the interpersonal dimension to forgetting. One key question I was unable to address in this project is the implications of being forgotten by another. Alive in much of the phenomenological tradition is the important role of others in making us who we are, either contesting or confirming our sense of self. The experience of being forgotten, I contend, has a deeply significant impact on the self. For us to be who we are, I would argue, means to be who we are for others. In radical cases, being forgotten by another is tantamount to extinguishing a

way of your being in the world (a way of being for that other who has forgotten you). Research in the cognitive sciences is beginning to consider the impact on relatives and carers of those who suffer from neurodegenerative diseases that distort and reduce memory. Developments in philosophy would do well to supplement this existing research.

Finally, of the limited research that *is* dedicated to forgetting much of it foregrounds an ethical or moral position. I have striven in this project not to make these judgements regarding one's forgetting. While I have claimed that forgetting can be a success or a failure, good or bad for us, I have done so only in terms directly related to the cares that that individual has. I have sought not to make claims over whether one's forgetting is blameworthy or ethically laudable. It is completely plausible, I have suggested, that one can succeed to forget something that may from some ethical position be considered blameworthy, but this has not been my focus. Hopefully, further research in this field will pay heed to the more complex balance between forgetting in the service of what we care about and external ethical principles.

Ultimately, in this project I have aimed to open up a space for a more complicated picture of the relationship between our forgetting and our remembering, and, through this, the relationship between our forgetting and our self. While there may be potential contentions with a variety of claims and arguments I have made in this project, these are to be welcomed in the spirit of getting clearer on the central question of how forgetting makes us who we are.

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