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The notion of „recognition”
in Descartes concept of memory

This article is an attempt to re-visit Cartesian ideas concerning the concept of memory. According to Descartes memory can be divided into physical memory and intellectual memory (also referred to as automatic and pure memory). Both types of memory consist of three stages, namely – remembering a thought, retention of the information and its recollection/recall. Descartes however only considered recollection to be part of intellectual memory.

This article is an attempt to show that the process of remembering is also an aspect of this intellectual memory (pure memory). An important element in the process of remembering is the activity of recognition. While Descartes considers this to be part of physical or automatic memory, I have tried to apply it to intellectual or pure memory. As a consequence, both recognition and remembering become specific, spontaneous activities of the mind, and therefore in a sense part of the activity of thinking.