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Introduction

Andrew Kania

Trinity University, akania@trinity.edu

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Introduction

Andrew Kania

[This is an Accepted Manuscript of a book chapter published by Routledge in *Memento* in 2009:
<https://www.routledge.com/Memento/Kania/p/book/9780415774741>. Please cite only the published version.]

“Great story. Gets better every time you tell it.”

Teddy (A, 1:42:24)

To say that *Memento* (2000) is thought-provoking would be, at best, an understatement. One of the main reasons for this neo-noir’s popular success is that audiences were hooked by the very puzzles which make the film a challenging one. These puzzles occur at various levels. There is the initial question of what exactly the structure of the film is and, once this is solved, the much more difficult task of extracting the story – what actually happens in the film, and the chronological order of the fictional events – from the fragmented plot. At the same time, however, the film quite explicitly raises philosophical questions about what makes us who we are, both at any given moment in time and across time, with an emphasis on the role of memory.

One of the things that elevates *Memento* above other films that raise such issues is the interrelation of these puzzles. If you have a different view of memory from the person next to you, it might affect your view of the plausibility of the various interpretations of

the events presented in the film. Depending on how you think one's past informs one's present responsibility for one's actions, you may find Leonard more or less blameworthy for his bloody deeds. Thus, as with our understanding of the world itself, the typical viewer's understanding of *Memento* is constantly changing: figuring out that one of the characters is lying in a particular scene might lead to certain details in other scenes becoming more salient, which might lead to another interpretive breakthrough, and so on.

In this volume, a number of leading philosophers address a variety of the philosophical puzzles *Memento* raises. I don't think any of them would claim to have found the definitive answer to the puzzles they address, but I'm certain that anyone intrigued by these puzzles will benefit from the clarity with which these philosophers set out their own thoughts about them.

MEMENTO

Memento is the story of Leonard Shelby, a former investigator for an insurance company, who is on a quest to avenge his wife's murder. At some unspecified time before the main period covered by the film (a mere 48 hours), Leonard and Catherine Shelby's house was broken into. Catherine was apparently raped and killed, and Leonard suffered a blow to the head. However, Leonard believes, contrary to the official police report, that two people were involved in "the incident," one of whom, known only as "John G," escaped the scene of the crime without a trace. It is John G whom Leonard plans to find and kill in revenge for his wife's rape and murder. He is aided, or at least accompanied, in this task

by John Edward “Teddy” Gammell – a cop, or former cop, whose motives are unclear. What *is* clear, at least by the end of the film, is that neither Teddy, whom we see Leonard kill in the first scene of the film, nor Jimmy Grantz, whom we see Leonard kill in the last scene, are the John G he seeks.

Jimmy is a drug dealer Teddy is double-crossing. Teddy has framed him as Leonard’s John G in order to get him out of the way, leaving Teddy to pick up the \$200,000 Jimmy has brought to what he thinks is a drug deal. Unfortunately for Teddy, in the wake of killing Jimmy, Leonard uncovers Teddy’s ruse, and not only takes Jimmy’s car for his own, along with the cash in the trunk, but sets *himself* up to kill *Teddy* as John G. The main action of the film shows Leonard slowly hunting Teddy down, along the way enlisting the aid of Natalie, Jimmy’s girlfriend, and in turn helping her to get rid of Dodd, who is waiting for the drugs Jimmy was supposed to buy on his behalf.

Clearly, I am operating under the assumption that you have seen *Memento*, since none of this makes much sense without one key piece of information: The injury Leonard sustained during the incident left him with an impaired memory. As Leonard describes it, the condition he suffers from is “anterograde amnesia.” This means that although his memory functions perfectly well with respect to events that occurred *before* the incident, he is unable to form new long-term memories. (This condition is confusingly glossed as “short-term memory loss” throughout the film. In fact, Leonard’s *short*-term memory works perfectly well.)

Writer-director Christopher Nolan’s stroke of genius was to elevate Leonard’s condition to the structural principle of the film. Like Gaspar Noë’s *Irreversible* (2002), another revenger’s tragedy, *Memento* contains a series of scenes, shot in color, that are presented in reverse chronological order. In Noë’s film, this narrative structure, like the title, suggests a kind of determinism. But in *Memento*, the same structure serves the very different purpose of putting us in Leonard’s epistemic shoes. That is, just like Leonard, we do not know what events led up to the events we are witnessing at any given moment in the film. This, together with the film’s focus on Leonard’s point of view, plays a large part in our identification with Leonard.¹ Of course, unlike Leonard, we often know what will occur *after* the events we are viewing, and we can retain this information in memory (at least some of it!) in order to piece the story together by the end of the film.

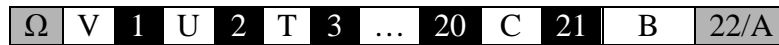
However, *Memento*’s structure is more complex than that of *Irreversible*, for it contains another sequence of scenes, shot in black and white, that are presented in normal chronological order, interleaved with the color scenes. All the black and white scenes occur in the fictional world of the story *before* any of the color scenes. So, numbering the black and white scenes 1-21, and the color scenes B-V, we can represent the film’s action, as it occurs chronologically in the fictional world, as follows (Klein 2001):



If we bend this chronology in the middle, folding it back on itself...

[HAIRPIN DIAGRAM]

...we can see why Nolan describes the structure of *Memento* as a “hairpin” (quoted in Mottram 2002: 33). The chronology of the film itself can thus be represented as follows:



The two scenes I have not yet described, Ω and 22/A, are perhaps the most cunning in the film. 22/A is the hairpin scene, where the two chronological series in the film – forwards and backwards, monochrome and color – come together. Scene 22 begins in Leonard’s motel room, where all of the black and white scenes have occurred, but follows Leonard as he leaves the room to go and kill Jimmy. Leonard takes a Polaroid of Jimmy, as he usually does when encountering a new person, though in this case he does so after killing Jimmy, presumably as a memento of having achieved his vengeance. As the Polaroid develops, in a close-up, color fades into not only the photograph but the whole shot, so subtly that many viewers miss the transition.² Scene A continues in color until the film ends, with the inexorable logic of its narrative structure, at the tattoo parlor where Leonard arrives at the beginning of the previous color scene (B).

The scene I label “Ω” is a color scene – the first scene in the film, but the last in the chronology of the fiction. It records Teddy’s death at the hands of Leonard. But it does so in a more literally backward fashion than the reversed narrative of the other color scenes in the film. As the image in a fresh Polaroid slowly *fades away*, blood oozes *up* the wall, until Teddy’s broken glasses tremble before flying onto his face, and Leonard’s gun leaps into his hand, the fatal bullet sucked back into its barrel, pulling Teddy’s brains back into

his skull. For the shooting of this scene, Nolan used a “reverse mag”: Basically, the film was loaded into the camera backwards, so that when it was processed and projected, the events it recorded would appear to be temporally reversed. The one exception was the shot where the shell casing begins to move on the ground (Ω , 0:02:28). Because this shot was such a tight close-up, it had to be filmed “forwards,” with Christopher Nolan on his hands and knees, blowing on the casing.³ Interestingly, the soundtrack of this scene consists of “forwards” sounds, that is, unlike the images the soundtrack has not been reversed. As Nolan puts it, “We can’t hear backwards sounds. I wanted people to watch it as a physical sequence. If you reverse the sound, the physicality is gone. I wanted a realistic physical scene that happens to be chronologically reversed” (Nolan, quoted in Mottram 2002: 133).

Due to *Memento*’s structural complexity, we have adopted the convention throughout this book of referring to scenes by means of the labels given above, the time elapsed, or both. I have also supplied, after this introduction, tables summarizing the action of the individual scenes, arranged in both the order in which they occur in the film, and their chronological order within the fictional world. Both tables are keyed to the two major DVD editions of the film for ease of reference.

The DVD editions of the film add another layer of complexity. They contain (as “extras”) the fictional material that first appeared on the official *Memento* website (still available at www.otnemem.com). This material derives from the time between the incident and the main action of the film – a period arguably not represented in the film – and includes

newspaper clippings about Leonard's crimes, censored excerpts from Leonard's medical file, and notes Leonard has written to himself. If taken into account, this material arguably has significant impact on one's interpretation of the film, as I discuss in my chapter in this volume.

The Limited Edition DVD of *Memento* makes considering the possibility that Leonard has spent time in a mental institution since the incident unavoidable. Its organizing conceit is that it is Leonard's file from a mental institution he has presumably spent time in since the incident. Not only is the box designed to look this way, but the DVD menus are little puzzles in themselves. In order to access the film, or any of the sub-menus on the disc, you must select the right word or image from a large array, including some dead ends. Selecting the right item presents you with more apparent psychological tests, and the way you complete some of them has an effect on what you end up accessing, while others are irrelevant. This can be very frustrating, especially since there are some worthwhile special features, such as a version of *Memento* re-edited to follow the chronology of the fictional world, that is, according to the first diagram above.

(Fortunately for us, Douglas Bailey has created a printable guide to navigating this DVD, available at http://world.std.com/~trystero/Memento_LE.html.) Watching the re-edited version of the film is, if nothing else, a very informative lesson in narrative theory. What you might think is a simplified version of the film is almost as difficult to follow as the original, not to mention that the pacing is very clunky, since, of course, the individual scenes were created with the actual structure of the film in mind. (For more on the narrative lessons to be learnt from *Memento*, see Noël Carroll's essay in this volume.)

I should also mention some apparent complexity at the other end of production. The penultimate opening credit claims that *Memento* is “based on the short story by [Christopher’s brother] Jonathan Nolan” (0:01:47), and in an interview included on the regular edition DVD, Christopher says that Jonathan’s story is “back-story” for the film. In fact, though, Jonathan Nolan had the original idea, and Christopher and Jonathan then worked on their projects relatively independently, as is evident from the huge differences between the resulting works.⁴

PHILOSOPHY AND FILM

It has become *de rigueur* when discussing the philosophical interest of a film to address the relationship between philosophy and film. In particular, there is heated debate over whether or not, and the extent to which, film can “do philosophy,” and the supposedly concomitant value of such work as the book you are now reading. Thus many such books or articles begin with an *apologia* explaining how it is that film can do philosophy, and by extension the (at least potential) value of the work defended.⁵ I will avoid such a defense, since it seems to me that even the sceptics about film’s ability to “do philosophy” claim nothing that would require such a defense. For example, the most that even Bruce Russell (2000) claims about texts on filmic philosophy, as opposed to the films themselves (and he is arguably the greatest sceptic about film’s philosophical potential) is that what philosophical value such texts have is to be attributed to their authors, rather than the film or its maker. The champions of philosophy through film, by

contrast, claim that the philosophical value of such texts is to be attributed, at least in part, to the films from which their insights have been gleaned, or those films' creators. What does not seem to be in dispute is the potential value of texts about philosophy through film. Thus such texts seem to require no apology, and it is such texts that constitute this volume.

***MEMENTO* AND PHILOSOPHY**

At the end of each color scene in *Memento*, we see something we have seen before – Natalie banging the lid of the dumpster behind the bar, or Teddy shouting “Lenny!” – which links the scene to its predecessor. (Its predecessor in the film, that is; its *successor* from a point of view within the fictional world). Nolan calls these moments of overlap “loops,” noting that the different context of each repeated event leads us to see it differently.⁶ The essays in this volume loop back over several issues in a similar fashion; each time the same topic is covered, the different context in which it is addressed sheds new light on the subject. The volume opens with Michael McKenna’s essay on the extent to which Leonard can be considered a moral agent, responsible for the actions he commits in the course of the film. In order to consider that question, McKenna finds he must address issues of scepticism, knowledge of the self and others, the limits of the human mind, personal identity, and the role that truth and narrative play in giving our lives meaning. Thus his essay also serves well as an introduction to several others in the volume, which take up different threads in the tapestry of questions McKenna sees *Memento* as raising.

The next three essays consider different aspects of memory – arguably the central concept *Memento* addresses. Joseph Levine discusses the way memory works epistemologically, that is, with respect to giving us knowledge. He argues that the “architectural approach” to the philosophy of mind (according to which the mind consists of a central processing unit connected to a number of modules dedicated to specific tasks and isolated from one another) can explain why Leonard’s system fails better than its main contenders, including the “extended mind hypothesis” (according to which Leonard’s mementos are simply part of his mind). John Sutton examines in detail the many different kinds of interrelated processes that we lump together under the single label “memory.” He argues that not only is *Memento* a remarkably detailed illustration of some of these overlapping processes, showing us things about memory we don’t usually notice, but that we can in turn use theories of memory to uncover aspects of the film otherwise easily missed. Raymond Martin, like Leonard throughout the film, considers the role memory plays in giving our lives meaning. Although Martin shows that memory has great instrumental and intrinsic value for us, he argues that even someone like Leonard can live a meaningful life, since there are many other things that contribute to a life’s meaning, which can compensate to some extent for even such terrible losses as Leonard’s.

Although, within Nolan’s oeuvre, memory is a theme unique, or at least uniquely central to *Memento*, there are other issues in which the filmmaker has an abiding interest.

Memento is the second film in what I see as an informal trilogy beginning with Nolan’s

first feature, *Following* (1998), and concluding with *The Prestige* (2006). All three films employ a fractured narrative structure, and all three take the nature of the self as a central theme. For instance, in both *Following* and *The Prestige* we encounter protagonists who let themselves be shaped by their perverse relationships with others, whether it is the protagonist's idolization of the slimy Cobb in *Following* or, in *The Prestige*, Angier's obsession with Borden, or the Borden brothers' perverse relationships to each other and those dear to them, all motivated by the magicians' desires to be the supreme illusionist. *Memento* is the mostly elegantly structured of the three, and is the most successful in integrating the narrative structure with the "content" of the film, both at the level of the story (where it mirrors Leonard's condition), and the deeper levels of meaning in the film (for example, in raising the question of the extent to which we are all like Leonard). But, as in the other two films, we see the protagonist being shaped by others. Leonard's beliefs, desires, and actions are diverted by Teddy, Natalie, and, most shockingly, Leonard himself.

Richard Hanley's essay grapples with an even more fundamental question about Leonard's personal identity: the question of whether Leonard's very self is compromised by his condition. Although we refer to "Leonard" throughout the film, is there really a single person whom that name picks out? Or is there really a series of "partial persons" inhabiting the same body? Though he refrains from providing a definitive answer, Hanley investigates various theories of what it takes for a person to survive various changes to their bodies and minds, the most promising being one that emphasizes memory, and other

diachronic psychological links. Finally, Hanley considers some cases of more radical personal reversal than that represented in *Memento*.

Noël Carroll looks closely at the reversed narrative structure that reflects Leonard's psychological fragmentation, and asks what *other* work it might be doing in the film. Carroll's answer is that *Memento*'s structure does not only teach us about the human self, but reflexively teaches us about the nature of narrative itself. More specifically, by employing a narrative structure that no viewer can comprehend "transparently," that is, without thinking about it explicitly, Nolan forces us to think about how it is that we understand not only films with *confusing* structures, but *any* narrative film. As Carroll notes, this concern with narrative film is clear in Nolan's preceding film, *Following*, the very title of which is a *double entendre* referring to both the protagonist's voyeuristic activities and the audience's attempts to piece the film together. It is also evident in *The Prestige*, where parallels are implicitly drawn between the desires that draw us towards the deception of both magic and narrative film as entertainments.

The last two essays in the book follow Carroll's lead in considering *Memento* not only for its fictional and thematic content, but from the outside, as it were, as a work of art.⁷ Deborah Knight and George McKnight consider *Memento* as a contemporary *film noir*, or "neo-noir." Their consideration of the ways in which *Memento* reconsiders various noir tropes is fascinating in itself, but Knight and McKnight argue further that it is precisely these aesthetic features of the film that lead to both (i) the narrative and thematic

questions raised by the film, and (ii) some of the constraints on how we might go about answering them.⁸

In the final essay in this volume, my own, I consider the nature of the viewer's detective work in attempting to uncover the truth of what happens in *Memento*. Many viewers are led to the suggestive material that originally appeared on the promotional website for the film, and has been reproduced on every DVD edition of it. I consider the status of this material, asking whether it should be considered a legitimate part of that artwork for interpretive purposes. I conclude that because of the mainstream-film tradition in which Nolan was working, and the lack of any clear indication that *Memento* is a hybrid work, this material should not be considered part of the work. *Memento* is in fact the ordinary kind of thing that most people take it to be – a film – although it is an extraordinary instance of its kind.

NOTES

¹ By “Leonard’s point of view” here, I do not just mean first-person camera angles, presenting things from the perspective Leonard would see them, which are not used too often. I mean a general approach that includes all sorts of techniques for keeping Leonard center-stage in the audience’s mind. Two such devices Nolan mentions in his commentary on the DVD are the tendency of the camera (i) to look over Leonard’s shoulder, particularly as he enters a new environment, and (ii) to be closer to Leonard than to other characters in general, even in classically symmetrical devices such as shot/reverse-shot dialogue scenes. Thus Leonard often quite literally looms larger than the other characters in the film.

² The transition is also prepared for by a number of color flashbacks within (black and white) scene 22.

One of the most interesting themes in Nolan’s commentary track on the Limited Edition DVD is his discussion of how, as the film progresses, the tone of the black and white scenes (which are initially very cool and objective, almost documentary) and the color scenes (initially more subjective) converges on the climactic scene in which the two sequences come together (22/A). Not only does this contribute to the seamless transition in the middle of that scene, it also adds to the sense of climax in this scene. One thing Nolan does not explicitly comment on is how the emotional tone is carefully modulated through the film across the black-and-white and color scenes, so that, for instance,

tension is kept high across the scenes of Natalie's deception of Leonard and his taking care of Dodd (16, G, 17, F) by making the intervening black and white scenes also high tension (in this case due to Leonard's discovery of his tattoo advising "NEVER ANSWER THE PHONE").

³ As it happened, in the confusion, the film was loaded backwards for this shot, too. "That was the height of complexity in terms of the film: an optical to make a backwards running shot forwards, and the forwards shot is a simulation of a backwards shot"! (Nolan, quoted in Mottram 2002: 133)

⁴ Jonathan's story, "Memento Mori," was originally published in *Esquire* magazine, and is available online (http://www.esquire.com/fiction/fiction/memento-mori-0301?click=main_sr). It is also reprinted (with some changes) in Mottram 2002: 183-95. The relation between the idea, short story, and film, is discussed in Mottram 2002: 158-75 and Nolan 2001: 233-4.

⁵ Michael McKenna and Noël Carroll each provide a brief apologia of this sort in their essays in this volume. Richard Hanley voices a more sceptical view.

⁶ In fact, Nolan's attitude to these loops is slightly puzzling. For one thing, he explains why these loops are *not* in fact literal repetitions, why he introduced slight differences between them, by appealing to the importance of context to interpretation. But, of course, if context affects interpretation, he does not need to introduce such differences. Perhaps

he means, rather, that he intends us to notice these differences and then wonder whether they are objective differences in the film or subjective impressions brought about by the different context. For another thing, these looped events are usually trivial markers, not items subject to interpretive dispute. But presumably Nolan intended them to prompt audiences to think more carefully about the objective status of more important events in the film.

⁷ Carroll's essay is actually a bridge between the earlier essays and these last two in this respect. According to Carroll, part of *Memento*'s content is a substantive thesis about narrative art.

⁸ I assure you that "Knight and McKnight" are the authors' real names, despite how perfect those names would look in gold leaf on the door of a noir detective agency!

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FURTHER READING

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Kania, A. (forthcoming) "Memento" in P. Livingston and C. Plantinga (eds) *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Film*, London: Routledge, pp. 650-60. (A short overview of the philosophical interest of *Memento*.)

Wartenberg, T. (2007) *Thinking on Screen: Film as Philosophy*, London: Routledge. (A defense of the idea that film can "do philosophy," including several case studies.)

SCENE TABLES

Throughout the book, we have adopted the convention of referring to scenes by means of the labels given below, the time elapsed in hours:minutes:seconds, or both (e.g., V, 0:03:10). All times given are approximate, and based on the American Special Edition DVD. The times on the regular DVD often differ by a few seconds, and on discs that use different formats (e.g., those released for the British market), times may differ by up to three minutes.

Plot (scenes listed in the order in which they occur in the film)			
Scene	DVD Chapter (Regular/ Special Edition)	Time	Story
	1 / 1	0:00	[Opening credits, which continue over scene Ω.]
Ω	1 / 1	0:43	Leonard shoots Teddy and takes a Polaroid of Teddy's body.
1	2 / 2	2:33	<i>FIRST SCENE OF DAY ONE: Leonard, in his room at the Discount Inn, describes the experience of waking up in a hotel room with his condition.</i>
V	2 / 2	2:57	Teddy arrives at the Discount Inn. He and Leonard drive to the derelict building. Leonard shoots Teddy.
2	3 / 3	6:24	<i>Leonard begins explaining his condition, his system, and Sammy Jankis's story.</i>
U	3 / 3	7:00	Leonard writes "KILL HIM" on Teddy's Polaroid. He goes down to the lobby, discusses his condition with Burt, and pays for his room. Teddy arrives.
3	3 / 3	10:12	<i>Leonard continues explaining his system and begins shaving his thigh. The phone rings, and Leonard answers.</i>
T	4 / 4	11:05	In the bathroom, Leonard sees his "remember Sammy Jankis" tattoo. He returns to the Discount Inn and, examining his evidence, infers that Teddy is John G. He calls Teddy, who says he'll come over. He writes "HE IS THE ONE / KILL HIM" on Teddy's Polaroid.
4	5 / 4	16:11	<i>On the phone, Leonard continues to explain Sammy's story, comparing it to his own.</i>

S	5 / 4	16:57	Leonard meets Natalie at a restaurant. She gives him a copy of Teddy's driver's license and registration. They discuss the point of Leonard's quest for a revenge he won't remember. Natalie gives Leonard directions to a derelict building as a place for Leonard to take John G. Leonard goes to the bathroom and sees his "remember Sammy Jankis" tattoo.
5	6 / 5	22:16	<i>Leonard continues explaining Sammy's story, including his role in it.</i>
R	6 / 5	22:54	As Leonard leaves Natalie's place, Teddy is waiting for him. Leonard and Teddy discuss the unreliability of memory over lunch. Leonard returns to the Discount Inn and discovers he's been checked in to two rooms. He discovers his note from Natalie and goes to meet her at a restaurant.
6	6 / 5	26:43	<i>Leonard continues explaining Sammy's story, including Leonard's first visit to the Jankis household and his suspicion that Sammy recognizes him.</i>
Q	7 / 6	28:28	FIRST SCENE OF DAY THREE: Leonard wakes up at Natalie's. She offers to find out about John G's license plate. They arrange to meet later in the day. When Leonard leaves, Teddy is waiting for him.
7	7 / 6	31:41	<i>Leonard continues explaining Sammy's story, including the distinction between "short-term memory" and "conditioning," and the tests Leonard orders.</i>
P	7 / 6	32:33	Leonard goes to Natalie's place to ask about Dodd. She explains and they discuss knowledge and memory. Natalie discovers Leonard's tattoos and explains her recent loss of Jimmy. They go to bed and Leonard muses about his loss.
8	8 / 7	39:24	<i>Leonard explains that the tests showed Sammy's problem to be "psychological" rather than "physical." He says that, unlike Sammy, he can learn by "conditioning."</i>
O	8 / 7	40:11	In Dodd's room, Leonard dreams of the incident. Teddy arrives and they decide to run Dodd out of town. Leonard goes to Natalie's place to ask about Dodd.
9	8 / 7	45:00	<i>As he begins to prepare his tattooing tools, Leonard tells the story of Sammy's desperate wife asking him his opinion of Sammy's condition.</i>
N	8 / 7	46:01	Finding himself in a bathroom, Leonard takes a shower. Dodd arrives and they struggle. Leonard knocks Dodd out, ties him up, puts him in the closet, and calls Teddy.
10	9 / 8	48:53	<i>In response to something Teddy says on the phone Leonard asks to be called back, and hangs up.</i>
M	9 / 8	49:21	Leonard escapes from Dodd and goes to Dodd's room at the Mountcrest Inn to surprise him, hiding in the bathroom.
11	9 / 8	52:02	<i>Leonard prepares to tattoo "FACT 5: ACCESS TO DRUGS" on his thigh.</i>
L	9 / 8	52:15	FIRST SCENE OF DAY TWO: At dawn, Leonard stamps out his fire and leaves. Dodd discovers him driving around and pulls him over. Leonard escapes and Dodd begins to chase him.
12	10 / 9	53:31	<i>Leonard continues his preparations. The phone rings; he picks up.</i>

K	10 / 9	53:43	Leonard leaves the Discount Inn with his wife's things. He drives to a deserted industrial spot and burns them, musing on how he "can't remember to forget" her. (There is an extended flashback of their discussing her re-reading a book.)
13	10 / 9	56:35	<i>On the phone, Teddy says something connecting John G with drugs, as Leonard tattoos Fact 5. Leonard checks the police file. He explains why the police aren't looking for John G.</i>
J	10 / 9	57:27	Leonard wakes up, discovers the escort in the bathroom, and leaves the Discount Inn with his wife's things.
14	10 / 9	59:27	<i>On the phone, Teddy suggests that John G is a drug dealer. Leonard changes Fact 5 to "DRUG DEALER."</i>
I	10 / 9	1:00:07	Leonard sets up his stuff at the Discount Inn (in a new room, unbeknownst to him) and orders an escort to re-enact the night of the incident.
15	11 / 10	1:02:37	<i>Leonard continues to tattoo and talk. He recounts telling Sammy's wife that he believes "Sammy should be physically capable of making new memories," as he begins to itch a bandage on his arm.</i>
H	12 / 10	1:04:53	Teddy is waiting for Leonard in the Jaguar. He tells Leonard not to trust Natalie, explaining how she helps Jimmy deal drugs. He suggests Leonard check in to the Discount Inn.
16	12 / 10	1:09:18	<i>Leonard uncovers his "NEVER ANSWER THE PHONE" tattoo. He asks "Who is this?" Teddy hangs up.</i>
G	13 / 11	1:09:52	Natalie returns to a frantic Leonard at her place, claiming Dodd beat her up, and convinces Leonard to run him out of town. When he leaves her house, Teddy is waiting for him in the Jaguar.
17	13 / 11	1:12:55	<i>The phone rings. Leonard picks up, immediately hangs up, then calls the front desk to ask Burt to hold his calls.</i>
F	13 / 11	1:13:20	Natalie returns to Leonard, who is waiting at her place. She says Dodd is after her, thinking she's got the \$200,000. She hides all the pens in the room and riles Leonard up, insulting him and his wife and saying she's going to use him. Leonard hits her. She leaves and Leonard frantically tries to find a pen to write a note before he forgets, but fails. She immediately returns, claiming Dodd beat her up.
18	14 / 12	1:17:13	<i>Leonard listens through the wall with a glass. Burt comes up, saying that a cop keeps calling. Leonard refuses to take the call.</i>
E	14 / 12	1:17:47	Natalie takes Leonard back to her place. He tells her his memories of the incident. She offers him her place for a couple of days. He takes her photograph and she returns to the bar. As Leonard settles down to watch TV, he sees his Sammy Jankis tattoo, and has a brief memory of flicking a needle. Natalie returns, claiming someone has "come already."
19	15 / 12	1:21:39	<i>The phone rings, then stops, then an envelope is pushed under the door. In the envelope is a Polaroid showing Leonard covered in blood, smiling and pointing to the empty space on his chest.</i>
D	15 / 12	1:22:25	Natalie serves Leonard a beer. He tells her that his last memory is of his wife dying. She gets him a fresh beer.

20	15 / 12	1:23:12	<i>Leonard takes the call and asks why the person keeps calling him, saying you shouldn't believe someone with his condition.</i>
C	15 / 12	1:23:35	Leonard goes into Ferdy's Bar. Natalie knows of him but has never met him, and tries to discover who he and Teddy are and what has happened to Jimmy. She tests his condition by serving him a polluted beer.
21	16 / 13	1:26:27	<i>Leonard says the truth of his condition is that "you don't know anything," especially why you feel the way you do. He recounts the story of the "final exam" Sammy's wife's set for Sammy and her death from an insulin overdose. (There is a flash of Leonard in Sammy's seat in the mental institution.) Leonard explains that he now knows that people with his and Sammy's condition fake recognition.</i>
B	16 / 13	1:30:03	Leonard gets Fact 6 tattooed on his thigh. Teddy finds him, gives him his old clothes, and urges him to get out of town, claiming he's a snitch and that a bad cop has been calling Leonard up. Leonard sees his note not to believe Teddy, and a coaster with a note to come by Ferdy's Bar, so he escapes out a back window. Arriving at the bar, Natalie recognizes the Jaguar, but plays it cool.
22	17 / 14	1:33:52	<i>On the phone with Teddy, Leonard discusses the plan to get Jimmy. He packs up his stuff and meets Teddy in the lobby. He takes Teddy's picture in the car-park and Teddy tells him to write "Teddy," since he's undercover. Teddy gives Leonard directions to the derelict building and tells him to "make him beg."</i> <i>Leonard arrives at the scene, taking a tire iron into the building. (In what follows, there are five color flashbacks of Leonard's wife.) Jimmy arrives, calling for Teddy. He recognizes Leonard as the "memory man." Leonard knocks him to the ground, makes him strip, and chokes him to death. He takes a Polaroid and begins to change into Jimmy's clothes.... (As the Polaroid develops, the shot fades into color, making the transition to scene A.)</i>
A	17 / 14	1:39:42	...Leonard finishes changing and drags Jimmy down to the basement. He thinks he hears Jimmy say "Sammy." Teddy arrives. Leonard worries he has killed the wrong guy and pretends he doesn't know Teddy. Teddy plays along, but Leonard confronts him about who Jimmy is. Teddy says a number of things, including that the story of Sammy Jankis is really about Leonard, and that Leonard has already killed John G. (There are contradictory flashbacks about Leonard's wife being diabetic.) Leonard throws Teddy's keys into some long grass to buy some time. He writes "DON'T BELIEVE HIS LIES" on Teddy's Polaroid, burns the Polaroids of himself and Jimmy, and writes a note for another tattoo: "FACT 6: CAR LICENSE SGI3 7IU." He takes a Polaroid of Jimmy's Jaguar, tosses his gun into the trunk on top of the cash for the drug deal, and takes the car. As he drives to a tattoo parlor, he muses on having to believe in a mind-independent world. (There are a few shots of his wife touching an "I'VE DONE IT" tattoo on his chest.)
	19 / 16	1:50:18- 1:53:19	[Closing credits.]

Story (scenes listed in the order in which they occur in the fictional world)			
Scene	DVD Chapter (Regular/ Special Edition)	Time	Story
1	2 / 2	2:33	<i>FIRST SCENE OF DAY ONE: Leonard, in his room at the Discount Inn, describes the experience of waking up in a hotel room with his condition.</i>
2	3 / 3	6:24	<i>Leonard begins explaining his condition, his system, and Sammy Jankis's story.</i>
3	3 / 3	10:12	<i>Leonard continues explaining his system and begins shaving his thigh. The phone rings, and Leonard answers.</i>
4	5 / 4	16:11	<i>On the phone, Leonard continues to explain Sammy's story, comparing it to his own.</i>
5	6 / 5	22:16	<i>Leonard continues explaining Sammy's story, including his role in it.</i>
6	6 / 5	26.43	<i>Leonard continues explaining Sammy's story, including Leonard's first visit to the Jankis household and his suspicion that Sammy recognizes him.</i>
7	7 / 6	31:41	<i>Leonard continues explaining Sammy's story, including the distinction between "short-term memory" and "conditioning," and the tests Leonard orders.</i>
8	8 / 7	39:24	<i>Leonard explains that the tests showed Sammy's problem to be "psychological" rather than "physical." He says that, unlike Sammy, he can learn by "conditioning."</i>
9	8 / 7	45:00	<i>As he begins to prepare his tattooing tools, Leonard tells the story of Sammy's desperate wife asking him his opinion of Sammy's condition.</i>
10	9 / 8	48:53	<i>In response to something Teddy says on the phone Leonard asks to be called back, and hangs up.</i>
11	9 / 8	52:02	<i>Leonard prepares to tattoo "FACT 5: ACCESS TO DRUGS" on his thigh.</i>
12	10 / 9	53:31	<i>Leonard continues his preparations. The phone rings; he picks up.</i>
13	10 / 9	56:35	<i>On the phone, Teddy says something connecting John G with drugs, as Leonard tattoos Fact 5. Leonard checks the police file. He explains why the police aren't looking for John G.</i>
14	10 / 9	59:27	<i>On the phone, Teddy suggests that John G is a drug dealer. Leonard changes Fact 5 to "DRUG DEALER."</i>
15	11 / 10	1:02:37	<i>Leonard continues to tattoo and talk. He recounts telling Sammy's wife that he believes "Sammy should be physically capable of making new memories," as he begins to itch a bandage on his arm.</i>

16	12 / 10	1:09:18	<i>Leonard uncovers his "NEVER ANSWER THE PHONE" tattoo. He asks "Who is this?" Teddy hangs up.</i>
17	13 / 11	1:12:55	<i>The phone rings. Leonard picks up, immediately hangs up, then calls the front desk to ask Burt to hold his calls.</i>
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Approximate total time of black and white scenes: 24:34			
A	17 / 14	1:39:42	<i>...Leonard finishes changing and drags Jimmy down to the basement. He thinks he hears Jimmy say "Sammy." Teddy arrives. Leonard worries he has killed the wrong guy and pretends he doesn't know Teddy. Teddy plays along, but Leonard confronts him about who Jimmy is. Teddy says a number of things, including that the story of Sammy Jankis is really about Leonard, and that Leonard has already killed John G. (There are contradictory flashbacks about Leonard's wife being diabetic.) <i>Leonard throws Teddy's keys into some long grass to buy some time. He writes "DON'T BELIEVE HIS LIES" on Teddy's Polaroid, burns the Polaroids of himself and Jimmy, and writes a note for another tattoo: "FACT 6: CAR LICENSE SGI3 7IU." He takes a Polaroid of Jimmy's Jaguar, tosses his gun into the trunk on top of the cash for the drug deal, and takes the car. As he drives to a tattoo parlor, he muses on having to believe in a mind-independent world. (There are a few shots of his wife touching an "I'VE DONE IT" tattoo on his chest.)</i></i>

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G	13 / 11	1:09:52	Natalie returns to a frantic Leonard at her place, claiming Dodd beat her up, and convinces Leonard to run him out of town. When he leaves her house, Teddy is waiting for him in the Jaguar.
H	12 / 10	1:04:53	Teddy is waiting for Leonard in the Jaguar. He tells Leonard not to trust Natalie, explaining how she helps Jimmy deal drugs. He suggests Leonard check in to the Discount Inn.
I	10 / 9	1:00:07	Leonard sets up his stuff at the Discount Inn (in a new room, unbeknownst to him) and orders an escort to re-enact the night of the incident.
J	10 / 9	57:27	Leonard wakes up, discovers the escort in the bathroom, and leaves the Discount Inn with his wife's things.
K	10 / 9	53:43	Leonard leaves the Discount Inn with his wife's things. He drives to a deserted industrial spot and burns them, musing on how he "can't remember to forget" her. (There is an extended flashback of their discussing her re-reading a book.)
L	9 / 8	52:15	FIRST SCENE OF DAY TWO: At dawn, Leonard stamps out his fire and leaves. Dodd discovers him driving around and pulls him over. Leonard escapes and Dodd begins to chase him.
M	9 / 8	49:21	Leonard escapes from Dodd and goes to Dodd's room at the Mountcrest Inn to surprise him, hiding in the bathroom.
N	8 / 7	46:01	Finding himself in a bathroom, Leonard takes a shower. Dodd arrives and they struggle. Leonard knocks Dodd out, ties him up, puts him in the closet, and calls Teddy.

O	8 / 7	40:11	In Dodd's room, Leonard dreams of the incident. Teddy arrives and they decide to run Dodd out of town. Leonard goes to Natalie's place to ask about Dodd.
P	7 / 6	32:33	Leonard goes to Natalie's place to ask about Dodd. She explains and they discuss knowledge and memory. Natalie discovers Leonard's tattoos and explains her recent loss of Jimmy. They go to bed and Leonard muses about his loss.
Q	7 / 6	28:28	FIRST SCENE OF DAY THREE: Leonard wakes up at Natalie's. She offers to find out about John G's license plate. They arrange to meet later in the day. When Leonard leaves, Teddy is waiting for him.
R	6 / 5	22:54	As Leonard leaves Natalie's place, Teddy is waiting for him. Leonard and Teddy discuss the unreliability of memory over lunch. Leonard returns to the Discount Inn and discovers he's been checked in to two rooms. He discovers his note from Natalie and goes to meet her at a restaurant.
S	5 / 4	16:57	Leonard meets Natalie at a restaurant. She gives him a copy of Teddy's driver's license and registration. They discuss the point of Leonard's quest for a revenge he won't remember. Natalie gives Leonard directions to a derelict building as a place for Leonard to take John G. Leonard goes to the bathroom and sees his "remember Sammy Jankis" tattoo.
T	4 / 4	11:05	In the bathroom, Leonard sees his "remember Sammy Jankis" tattoo. He returns to the Discount Inn and, examining his evidence, infers that Teddy is John G. He calls Teddy, who says he'll come over. He writes "HE IS THE ONE / KILL HIM" on Teddy's Polaroid.
U	3 / 3	7:00	Leonard writes "KILL HIM" on Teddy's Polaroid. He goes down to the lobby, discusses his condition with Burt, and pays for his room. Teddy arrives.
V	2 / 2	2:57	Teddy arrives at the Discount Inn. He and Leonard drive to the derelict building. Leonard shoots Teddy.
Approximate total time of color scenes: 1:23:06			
Ω	1 / 1	0:43	Leonard shoots Teddy and takes a Polaroid of Teddy's body.