Connerton, Paul. How Societies Remember. Cambridge; New York. Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Selecations: Introduction and "Social Memory."

Introduction

We generally think of memory as an individual faculty. None the less, there are a number of thinkers who concur in believing that there is some such thing as a collective or social memory. (1) I share that assumption, but tend to diverge over the question as to where this phenomenon, social memory, can be found to be most crucially operative.

Accordingly, the question to which this book is addressed is: how is the memory of groups conveyed and sustained? The term group is here being used in a generously capacious sense and with some flexibility of meaning, to include both small face-to-face societies (such as villages and clubs) and territorially extensive societies most of whose members cannot know each other personally (such as nation-states and world religions).

Readers might reasonably expect that the question thus posed ˇ˝ how is the memory of groups conveyed and sustained? ˇ˝ might lead to a consideration, either of social memory as a dimension of political power, or of the unconscious elements in social memory, or both. In what follows these issues are occasionally touched upon, but they are intentionally not addressed in an explicit and systematic way. The value of addressing such issues, I take it, can hardly be doubted. For it is surely the case that control of a societyˇ˝s memory largely conditions the hierarchy of power; so that, for example, the storage of present-day information technologies, and hence the organisation of collective memory through the use of data-processing machines, is not merely a technical matter but one directly bearing on legitimation, the question of the control and ownership of information being a crucial political issue. (2) Again, the fact that we no longer believe in the great ˇ˝subjectsˇ˝ of history ˇ˝ the proletariat, the party, the West ˇ˝ means, not the disappearance of these great master-narratives, but rather their continuing unconscious effectiveness as ways of thinking about and acting in our contemporary situation: their persistence, in other words, as unconscious collective memories.(3)

If neither the politics nor the unconsciousness of memory is explicitly

addressed in this book, that is not, therefore, because of any doubts entertained by the author as to their importance, but because what is here being advanced is a different

argument: an argument that is not incompatible with holding the positions just indicated, but one which is susceptible of independent investigation. What that investigation intends can perhaps best be indicated by noting at the outset two points that are taken as axiomatic. One concerns memory as such, the other concerns social memory in particular.

Concerning memory as such, we may note that our experience of the present very largely depends upon our knowledge of the past. We experience our present world in a context which is causally connected with past events and objects, and hence with reference to events and objects which we are not experiencing when we are experiencing the present. And we will experience our present differently in accordance with the different pasts to which we are able to connect that present. Hence the difficulty of extracting our past from our present: not simply because present factors tend to influence˘˝some might want to say distort˘˝our recollections of the past, but also because past factors tend to influence, or distort, our experience of the present. This process, it should be stressed, reaches into the most minute and everyday details of our lives. Thus Proust shows us how Marcel˘˝s memories of seeing Swann˘˝s face were freighted with further memories. For the Swann who in Marcel˘˝s youth was a familiar figure in all the fashionable clubs of those days differed largely from the Swann created by Marcel˘˝s great-aunt and hence ˘˝seen˘˝ by Marcel when he appeared in the evenings at Combray; Swann, who was elsewhere in those days so sought after, was treated by Marcel˘˝s great-aunt with the rough simplicity of a child who will play with a collector˘˝s piece with no more circumspection than if it were some cheap object. From the Swann that Marcel˘˝s family had constructed for themselves they had left out, in their ignorance, many details of his life at that time in the fashionable world, details which led other people, when they met him, to see all the graces enshrined in his face. Into this face divested of all glamour Marcel˘˝s family implanted a lingering residue made up of their leisurely and companionable hours spent together. Swann˘˝s face, his ˘˝corporal envelope˘˝, had been so well filled out with this residue of reminiscence that ˘˝their own special Swann˘˝ had become to Marcel˘˝s family a ˘˝complete and living creature˘˝. Thus even so seemingly simple an act as that which we describe as ˘˝seeing someone we know˘˝, Proust reminds us, is to some extent an intellectual process; for we pack the physical outline of the person we see with all the notions we have already formed about them, and in the total picture of them which we compose in our minds those notions have the principal place. In the end ˘˝they come to fill out so completely the curve of his cheeks, to follow so

exactly the line of his nose, they blend so harmoniously in the sound of his voice as if it were no more than a transparent envelope, that each time we see the face or hear the voice it is these notions which we recognise and to which we listen˘˝.(4)

Concerning social memory in particular, we may note that images of the past commonly legitimate a present social order. It is an implicit rule that participants in any social order must presuppose a shared memory. To the extent that their memories of a society˘˝s past diverge, to that extent its members can share neither experiences nor assumptions. The effect is seen perhaps most obviously when communication across generations is impeded by different sets of memories. Across generations, different sets of memories, frequently in the shape of implicit background narratives, will encounter each other; so that, although physically present to one another in a particular setting, the different generations may remain mentally and emotionally insulated, the memories of one generation, locked irretrievably, as it were, in the brains and bodies of that generation. Proust shows us the disconcerting alienation-effect, the sense of a mental jolt, that results from the intersection of incommensurable memories. He shows this in the experience of Marcel, when he returns to fashionable society after a long absence and tries to engage for the first time in conversation with a young American woman who had heard a lot about him from the Duchesse de Guermantes, and who was regarded as one of the most fashionable women of the day but whose name was entirely unknown to Marcel. Conversation with her was agreeable, but for Marcel rendered difficult by the novelty to his ears of the names of most of the people she talked about, although these were the very people who formed the core of polite society at that time. And the converse was also true: at her request Marcel narrated many anecdotes of the past, and many of the names which he pronounced meant nothing to her, she had for the most part never even heard of them. This was not merely because she was young; because she had not lived in France for long and when she first arrived had known nobody, she had only begun to move in fashionable society some years after Marcel had withdrawn from it. Their conversation was unintelligible because the two of them had lived in the same social world but with an interval of twenty-five years. Thus although for ordinary speech she and Marcel used the same language, when it came to names, when it came, we might say, to their seeking to exchange a socially legitimate currency of memories--their vocabularies had nothing in common..(5)

Thus we may say that our experiences of the present largely depend upon our knowledge of the past, and that our images of the past commonly serve to legitimate a present social order. And yet these points, though true, are as they stand insufficient when thus put. For images of

the past and recollected knowledge of the past, I want to argue, are conveyed and sustained by (more or less ritual) performances.

In seeking to show how this is the case I shall begin by considering a paradoxical example: that of the French Revolution. It is a paradoxical case because if there is any where you would not expect to find social memory at work it must surely be in times of great revolutions. But one thing that tends to get forgotten about the French Revolution is that like all begin-flings it involved recollection. Another is that it involved the severing of a head and a change in the clothes people wore. I believe that there is a connection

between these two things, and that what we can say about that connection is generalisable beyond the particular instance. I believe, further, that the solution to the question posed above ˇ˝ how is the memory of groups conveyed and sustained? ˇ˝involves bringing these two things (recollection and bodies) together in a way that we might not have thought of doing.

One might not have thought of doing that because, when recollection has been treated as a cultural rather than as an individual activity, it has tended to be seen as recollection of a cultural tradition; and such a tradition, in turn, has tended to be thought of as something that is inscribed. More than two millennia indeed, the whole history of explicit hermeneutic activity operates in favour of this presupposition. It is true that, for a long time now, the unity of hermeneutics has been seen as residing in the unity of a procedure which is in principle applicable to any object and any practice capable of bearing a meaning. Legal and theological texts, works of art, ritual acts, bodily expressions ˇ˝ all are possible objects of interpretative activity. Yet, although bodily practices are in principle included as possible objects of hermeneutic inquiry, in practice hermeneutics has taken inscription as its privileged object. It arose from and in the course of its history it has constantly returned to the kind of relationship with tradition which focuses on the transmission of what has been inscribed, on texts, or, at the very least, on documentary evidence which is held to have a status comparable to texts, to be constituted, as it were, in the image and likeness of a text.

It is against this antithetical context that I shall seek to give an account of how practices of a non-inscribed kind are transmitted, in and as a tradition. The reader should perhaps be warned as to how this end will be approached. What follows is cast not so much in the form of a treatise as rather in that of an analytical quest; the method is cumulative. Despite the variety of topics that will be discussed, a close logical connection obtains among them. That connection can be expressed by saying that it involved a progressive narrowing of focus. If there is such a thing as social memory, I shall argue, we are likely to find it in commemorative cermonies;

but commemorative ceremonies prove to be commemorative only in so far as they are performative; performativity cannot be thought without a concept of habit; and habit cannot be thought without a notion of bodily automatisms. In this way I shall seek to show that there is an inertia in social structures that is not adequately explained by any of the current orthodoxies of what a social structure is.

Social memory

1

All beginnings contain an element of recollection. This is particularly so when a social group makes a concerted effort to begin with a wholly new start. There is a measure of complete arbitrariness in the very nature of any such attempted beginning. The beginning has nothing whatsoever to hold on to; it is as if it came out of nowhere. For a moment, the moment of beginning, it is as if the beginners had abolished the sequence of temporality itself and were thrown out of the continuity of the temporal order. Indeed the actors often register their sense of this fact by inaugurating a new calendar. But the absolutely new is inconceivable. It is not just that it is very difficult to begin with a wholly new start, that too many old loyalties and habits inhibit the substitution of a novel enterprise for an old and established one. More fundamentally, it is that in all modes of experience we always base our particular experiences on a prior context in order to ensure that they are intelligible at all; that prior to any single experience, our mind is already predisposed with a framework of outlines, of typical shapes of experienced objects. To perceive an object or act upon it is to locate it within this system of expectations. The world of the percipient, defined in terms of temporal experience, is an organised body of expectations based on recollection.

In imagining what a historic beginning might be like, the modern imagination has turned back again and again to the events of the French Revolution. This historic rupture, more than any other, has assumed for us the status of a modern myth. It took on that status very quickly. All reflection on history on the continent of Europe throughout the nineteenth century looks behind it to the moment of that revolution in which the meaning of revolution itself was transformed from a circularity of movement to the advent of the new. (1) For those who came after, the present was seen as a time of fall into the ennui of a post-heroic age, or as a permanent

state of crisis, the anticipation, whether hoped for or feared, of a recurrent eruption.(i) Revolutionary imagining reached beyond the European heartland; since the late nineteenth century we have lived the myth of the Revolution much as the first Christian generations lived the myth of the End of the World. As early as 1798, Kant remarked that a phenomenon of this kind can never again be forgotten. (3)

Yet this beginning, which provides us with our myth of a historic beginning, serves also, and all the more starkly, to bring into relief the moment of recollection in all apparent beginnings. The work of recollection operated in many ways, explicitly and implicitly, and at many different levels of experience; but I mean to single out here for specific comment the way in which recollection was at work in two distinct areas of social activity: in commemorative ceremonies and in bodily practices.

2

The beginning which was sought in the trial and execution of Louis XVI of France exhibits this circumstance in a peculiarly dramatic way. The leaders of the Revolution who sat in judgement on Louis faced a problem that was not unique to themselves; it was a problem that confronts any regime, for instance that inaugurated by the Nuremberg Trials, which seeks to establish in a definitive manner the total and complete substitution of a new social order. The regicide of 1793 may be seen as an instance of a more general phenomenon: the trial by fiat of a successor regime. This is unlike any other type of trial. It is different in kind from those that take place under the authority of a long-established regime. It is not like those acts of justice which reinforce a system of retribution by setting its governing principles once more into motion or by modifying the details of their application; it is not a further link in a sequence of settlements through which a regime either achieves greater solidity or moves towards its ultimate disintegration. Those who adhere most resolutely to the principles of the new regime and those who have suffered most severely at the hands of the old regime want not only revenge for particular wrongs and a rectification of particular iniquities. The settlement they seek is one in which the continuing struggle between the new order and the old will be definitively terminated, because the legitimacy of the victors will be validated once and for all. A barrier is to be erected against future transgression. The present is to be separated from what preceded it by an act of unequivocal demarcation. The trial by fiat of a successor regime is like the construction of a wall, unmistakable and permanent, between the new beginnings and the old tyranny. To pass judgement on the practices of the old regime is the constitutive act of the new order. (4)

The trial and execution of Louis XVI was not the murder of a ruler but the revocation of a ruling principle: the principle according to which the dynastic realm was the only imaginable political system. It had indeed been possible to envisage regicide within the terms of that system. For centuries kings had been killed by would-be kings; by private assassins in the pay of would-be kings; or, more rarely, by religious fanatics like the murderers of Henri III and Henri IV of France. But whatever fate might befall individual

kings, the principle of dynastic succession remained intact. Whether they died through natural causes or through foul play, the death of kings and the coronation of their successors were comprehensible episodes in the continuum of lineage. Why did the murder of kings leave the institution of kingship untouched? Because, as Camus succinctly put it, none of the murderers ever imagined that the throne might remain empty. (5) No new rulers, that is to say, had ever thought it to be in their interests that the institution of monarchy should be called into question; once crowned, they sought to preserve for themselves the royal authority of the person whose death they had instigated. This form of regicide left the dynastic system unchallenged: the benchmarks of time were still the phases of dynastic rule. The death of a king registered a break in that public time: between one king and another time stood still. There was a gap in it ˇ˝an interregnum ˇ˝ which people sought to keep as brief as possible. When Louis XVIII of France dated his accession to the throne from the execution of his predecessor, it was to this dynastic principle that he remained true; he was thinking of regicide as it has always been thinkable within the context of the dynastic realm, a context in which assassinations could always be accommodated as episodes within the narrative of dynastic continuity, a context indeed in which assassination was not so much a threat to the power of dynasty as rather an implicit homage to it. Assassination left the principle of the dynastic realm intact because it left unviolated the king as a public person.

The whole point of Louisˇ˝ trial and execution lay in its ceremonial publicity; it was this that killed him in his public capacity by denying his status as king. The dynastic principle was destroyed not by assassination nor by imprisonment or banishment but by putting Louis, as the embodiment of kingship, to death in such a way that official public..abhorrence of the institution of kingship was actually expressed and witnessed. The revolutionaries needed to find some ritual process through which the aura of inviolability surrounding kingship could be explicitly repudiated. What they thus repudiated was not only an institution but the political theology that legitimated that institution. (7) That political theology, the belief that the king united in one person his natural body as an individual and his representative body as the king, was most clearly expressed in the coronation

ceremony. It was expressed not in the act of crowning alone but also in the anointing by a bishop of the church, with the all-important phrase announcing that the anointed king rules ˇ˝by the grace of Godˇ˝. It was this double component that gave the coronation rite its quasi-sacramental character. For a thousand years the kings of France had received at their coronation the holy oil as well as the crown upon their heads, after the manner of the apostlesˇ˝ successors. The effect was to transform the enemies of royalty into apparently sacrilegious persons. This was the effect that the public regicide of Louis sought to undo. Here was the oxymoronic element of this regicide: Louis was to be given a royal funeral

to end all royal funerals. The ceremony of his trial and execution was intended to exorcise the memory of a prior ceremony. The anointed head was decapitated and the rite of coronation ceremonially revoked. Not simply the natural body of the king but also and above all his political body was killed. In this the actions of the revolutionaries borrowed from the language of the sacred which for so long the dynastic realm had appropriated as its own. Their victim well understood that this was an event in the demise of political theology; Louis XVI, like Charles I of England, explicitly identified himself with the God who died when he spoke of his defeat as a Passion.(8) The proceedings at the trial and execution ceremonially dismantled the sense of sacrilege that had surrounded the murder of kings. One rite revoked another.

A rite revoking an institution only makes sense by invertedly recalling the other rites that hitherto confirmed that institution. The ritual ending of kingship was a settling of accounts with and giving of an account of what it repudiated. The rejection of the principle of the dynastic realm, in this case the ritual enactment of that rejection, was still an account of, and a recalling of, the superseded dynastic realm. The problem here is similar to that which arises over the question of the institution of property. Some people steal from others or defraud them or seize their product. In all these ways they may acquire possessions by means not sanctioned by the prevailing principles of justice in regard to possessions. The existence of past injustice and the continued memory of that injustice raises the question of the rectification of injustices. For if past injustice has shaped the structure of a societyˇ˝s present arrangements for holding property in various ways ˇ˝ or analogously if it is held that past injustice has shaped the structure of a societyˇ˝s arrangements for founding its sovereignty ˇ˝ the question arises as to what now, if anything, ought to be done to rectify these injustices. What kind of criminal blame and what obligations do the performers of past injustice have towards those whose position is worse than it would have been had the injustice not been perpetrated? How far back must you go in taking account of the memory of past injustice, in

wiping clean the historical record of illegitimate acts? To construct a barrier between the new beginning and the old tyranny is to recollect the old tyranny.

The styles of clothing characteristic of the revolutionary period celebrated, if not so definitive a beginning, then at least a temporary liberation from the practices of the established order. They mark the attempt to establish a new set of typical bodily practices. The participants in the revolution exhibited a form of behaviour that was not unique to themselves:

behaviour that is to be found in all carnivals which mark the suspension of hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions.(9) Styles of clothing in Paris passed through

two phases during the revolutionary period. During the first, which dominated the years 1791˘˝4, clothes became uniforms. The culotte of simple cut and the absence of adornments were emblematic of the desire to eliminate social barriers in the striving for equality: by making the body neutral, citizens were to be free to deal with one another without the intrusion of differences in social status. During the second phase, which dominated the years of Thermidor beginning in 1795, liberty of dress came to mean free bodily movement. People now began to dress in such a way as to expose their bodies to one another on the street and to display the motions of the body. The merveilleuse, the woman of fashion, wore light muslin drapery which revealed the shape of the breasts fully and covered neither the arms nor the legs below the knees, while the muslin showed the movement of the limbs when the body changed position. Her male counterpart, the incroyable, was a man dressed in the form of a cone with its tip on the ground; very tight trousers led up to short coats and ended in high and exaggerated collars, brightly coloured cravats and hair worn dishevelled or cut close in the style of Roman slaves. While the style of the merveilleuse was intended as a liberation in fashion, that of the incroyable was meant as sartorial parody; the incroyable parodied the Macaronis, stylish dressers of the 1750s, by using lorgnettes and walking with mincing steps. This was a moment in the history of Paris when inhibitory rules were suspended; when, as in all carnival, the people acted out their awareness that established authority was, in reality, a matter of local prescription.(10)

If the revolutionaries rejected the practices of bodily behaviour dominant under the ancien rÈgime, that was because they knew that a habit of servitude is incorporated in the behaviour of the servile group by way of their own habits of bodily deportment. This was the point that the deputies of the Third Estate were making when in May 1789 they remonstrated, first at their humiliating official costume, and then, when that had been changed, at the very idea of a costume distinguishing them from the deputies of the nobility. In a pamphlet of 2 May 1789 they attacked the

convention requiring the deputies to wear different costumes emblematic of their estate; such a practice, they asserted, perpetuated ˘˝an unacceptable inequality, destructive of the very essence of the Assembly˘˝. What it perpetuated was inequality in an incorporated form: that tradition of bodily practice in accordance with which the upper ranks of society appeared on the street in elaborate costumes which both set them apart from the lower orders and allowed them to dominate the street, a tradition further upheld by sumptuary laws which assigned to each social stratum in the hierarchy a set of appropriate dress and forbade anyone to wear the clothing officially and publicly pronounced suitable for another social rank. The representatives of the Third Estate wanted a licensed transgression, a transgressive act which derived its point not simply from a premeditated beginning for future political activity, but from the exercise of retrospective imagination which recalled a time and a form of social order when appearances on the street were precise indicators of social hierarchy." It has been argued ˘˝ Burke is the preeminent

spokesman of such a view and Oakeshott a recent exemplary exponent ˇ˝ that political ideology must be understood ˇ˝not as an independently premeditated beginning for political activityˇ˝, but as knowledge, in an abstract and generalised form, ˇ˝of a concrete manner of attending to the arrangements of societyˇ˝; that ideologies, as expressed in the form of political programmes or official maxims, can never be more than abbreviations of some manner of concrete behaviour; and that a tradition of behaviour is unavoidably knowledge of detail, since ˇ˝what has to be learned is not an abstract idea, or a set of tricks, nor even a ritual, but a concrete, coherent manner of living in all its intricatenessˇ˝. (12) Such an insight, it is frequently claimed, is exclusive to the true Conservative; but the representatives of the Third Estate, in assigning such importance to the details of everyday dress, showed themselves as aware as their opponents that clothes had the function of saying something about the status of the wearer and, what is equally important, of making that statement a habitual one.

To read or wear clothes is in a significant respect similar to reading or composing a literary text. To read or compose a text as literature, and as belonging to a particular genre of literature, is not to approach it without preconception; one must bring to it an implicit understanding of the operations of literary discourse which tells one what to look for or how to set about composing. Only those who possessed the requisite literary competence would be able to proceed to make sense of a new concatenation of phrases by reading them as literature of a certain type; analogously, only those who possessed the requisite social competence would be able to read the dress of the incroyable as a parody of the Macaroni. Just as one group has internalised the grammar of literature which enables

them to convert linguistic sentences into literary structures and meanings, so likewise has the other internalised the grammar of dress which enables them to convert clothing items into clothing structures and meanings. Anyone who does not possess such competences, anyone unfamiliar with the conventions by which fictions are read or people clothed, would, for example, be quite puzzled if confronted with a lyric poem or a person dressed in the style of an incroyable. In reading literature one assigns the object in question to a genre; in interpreting clothes one proceeds likewise. An individual literary feature, or an individual clothing feature, possesses meaning because it is perceived as part of a whole cluster of meanings; and, in each case, this type of whole must be a more or less explicit guess about the kind of utterance or the kind of dress that is being interpreted. Unless interpreters make a guess about the kind of meaning they confront they have no way of unifying their transient encounters with the details. And this subsumption of the particular experience under a type or genre is not simply a process of identifying certain explicit features. It also entails a set of expectations by virtue of which one believes that many of the unexamined features in the new experience will be the same as features

characteristic of previous experience; or, if they are not the same, that they are describable in terms of their degree of divergence from that set of expectations. This structure of implicit expectations is always a component of a type ˇ˝ a type of literature or a type of clothing ˇ˝ because it is by virtue of them that a new instance can be subsumed before it is completely known. (13)

In the two cases just looked at ˇ˝ that of ceremonial trial and execution, and that of newly developed practices of clothing ˇ˝ we find a common feature. The attempt to break definitively with an older social order encounters a kind of historical deposit and threatens to founder upon it. The more total the aspirations of the new regime, the more imperiously will it seek to introduce an era of forced forgetting. To say that societies are self-interpreting communities is to indicate the nature of that deposit; but it is important to add that among the most powerful of these self-interpretations are the images of themselves as continuously existing that societies create and preserve. For an individualˇ˝s consciousness of time is to a large degree an awareness of societyˇ˝s continuity, or more exactly of the image of that continuity which the society creates. I have suggested, with respect to the French Revolution, that at least part of this deposit is to be found in repeated commemorative acts and at least part in culturally specific bodily practices. That deposit was composed, in regard to the ceremony of regicide, of feelings with respect to the king, or rather towards his kingship, that bore the mark of ancient beliefs with roots in old religions and ways of thought that left behind a sense of the inviolate and inviolable; that is why the public execution of Louis was felt by all his contemporaries to be

so awesome an event. And it was composed, in regard to the clothing practices of the early revolutionary period and Thermidor, of hierarchic prescriptions that were incorporated in habitual bodily practices; that is why the new fashions of the 1790s were experienced by the participants as such a heady release. Regicide was a ritual revocation, sartorial licence was a carnival liberation. In both types of action we see people trying to mark out the boundaries of a radical beginning; and in neither case is that beginning, that new image of societyˇ˝s continuity, even thinkable without its element of recollection ˇ˝ of recollection both explicit and implicit. The attempt to establish a beginning refers back inexorably to a pattern of social memories.

We need to distinguish social memory from a more specific practice that is best termed the activity of historical reconstruction. Knowledge of all human activities in the past is possible only through a knowledge of their traces. Whether it is the bones buried in Roman fortifications, or a pile of stones that is all that remains of a Norman tower, or a word in a Greek inscription whose use or form reveals a custom, or a narrative written by the witness of some scene, what the historian deals with are traces: that is to say the marks, perceptible to the senses, which some phenomenon, in itself inaccessible, has left behind. Just to apprehend such marks as traces of something, as evidence, is already to have gone beyond the stage of merely making statements about the marks themselves; to count something as evidence is to make a statement about something else, namely, about that for which it is taken as evidence.

Historians, that is to say, proceed inferentially. They investigate evidence much as lawyers cross-question witnesses in a court of law, extracting from that evidence information which it does not explicitly contain or even which was contrary to the overt assertions contained in it. Those parts of the evidence which are made up of previous statements are in no sense privileged; a previous statement claiming to be true has for the historian the same status as any other type of evidence. Historians are able to reject something explicitly told them in their evidence and to substitute their own interpretation of events in its place. And even if they do accept what a previous statement tells them, they do this not because that statement exists and is taken as authoritative but because it is judged to satisfy the historianˇ˝s criteria of historical truth. Far from relying on authorities other than themselves, to whose statements their thought must conform, historians are their own authority; their thought is autonomous vis-‡-vis

their evidence, in the sense that they possess criteria by reference to which that evidence is criticized. (14)

Historical reconstruction is thus not dependent on social memory. Even when no statement about an event or custom has reached the historian by an unbroken tradition from eyewitnesses, it is still possible for the historian to rediscover what has been completely forgotten. Historians can do this partly by the critical examination of statements contained in their written sources, where written sources mean sources containing statements asserting or implying alleged facts regarding the subject in which the historian is interested, and partly by the use of what are called unwritten sources, for example archaeological material connected with the same subject, the point of describing these as unwritten sources being to indicate that, since they are not texts, they contain no ready-made statements.

But historical reconstruction is still necessary even when social memory preserves direct testimony of an event. For if a historian is working on a problem in recent history and receives at first hand a ready-made answer to the very question being put to the evidence,

then the historian will need to question that statement if it is to be considered as evidence; and this is the case even if the answer which the historian receives is given by an eye-witness or by the person who did what the historian is inquiring into. Historians do not continue to question the statements of their informants because they think that the informants want to deceive them or have themselves been deceived. Historians continue to question the statements of their informants because if they were to accept them at face value that would amount to abandoning their autonomy as practising historians. They would then have relinquished their independence of social memory: an independence based on their claim to have the right to make up their own mind, by methods proper to their own science, as to the correct solution of the problems that arise in the course of that scientific practice.

Despite this independence from social memory, the practice of historical reconstruction can in important ways receive a guiding impetus from, and can in turn give significant shape to, the memory of social groups. A particularly extreme case of such interaction occurs when a state apparatus is used in a systematic way to deprive its citizens of their memory. All totalitarianisms behave in this way; the mental enslavement of the subjects of a totalitarian regime begins when their memories are taken away. When a large power wants to deprive a small country of its national consciousness it uses the method of organised forgetting. In Czech history alone this organised oblivion has been instituted twice, after 1618 and after 1948. Contemporary writers are proscribed, historians are dismissed from their posts, and the people who have been silenced and removed from their jobs

become invisible and forgotten. What is horrifying in totalitarian regimes is not only the violation of human dignity but the fear that there might remain nobody Who could ever again properly bear witness to the past. Orwell˘˝s evocation of a form of government is acute not least in its apprehension of this state of collective amnesia. Yet it later turns out ˘˝ in reality, if not in Nineteen Eighty-Four ˘˝ that there were people who realised that the struggle of citizens against state power is the struggle of their memory against forced forgetting, and who made it their aim from the beginning not only to save themselves but to survive as witnesses to later generations, to become relentless recorders: the names of Solzhenitsyn and Wiesel must stand for many. In such circumstances their writing of oppositional histories is not the only practice of documented historical reconstruction; but precisely because it is that it preserves the memory of social groups whose voice would otherwise have been silenced.

Again, the historiography of the Crusades is eloquent testimony to the role of historical writing in the formation of political identity. Medieval Muslim historians did not share with medieval European Christians the sense of witnessing a great struggle between Islam and Christendom for the control of the Holy Land. In the extensive Muslim historiography of that time the words ˘˝Crusade˘˝ and ˘˝Crusader˘˝ never occur. The

contemporary Muslim historians spoke of the Crusaders either as the Infidels or as the Franks, and they viewed the attacks launched by them in Syria, Egypt and Mesopotamia, between the end of the eleventh and the end of the thirteenth centuries, as being in no way fundamentally different from the former wars waged between Islam and the Infidels: in Syria itself in the course of the tenth century and before, in Andalus throughout the Spanish Reconquista, and in Sicily against the Normans. A history of the Crusades cannot be found in the Muslim historical writing of that time; it contains at most only fragments of what such a history might be, embedded in treatises on other subjects. Medieval Muslim historiography is only incidentally a history of the Crusades. But in the period since 1945 an expanding body of Arabic historical writing has taken the Crusades as its theme. The Crusades have now become a code word for the malign intentions of the Western powers. Muslim historians have come to see a certain parallelism between the period of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and the last hundred years. In both cases the Islamic Middle East was assailed by European forces which succeeded in imposing their control upon a large part of the region. From a Muslim viewpoint, the Crusades have come to be seen as the primary phase of European colonisation, the prefiguration of a long-term movement which includes the Buonaparte expedition, the British conquest of Egypt, and the Mandate system in the Levant. That movement is seen as culminating in the foundation of the

state of Israel: and with each ensuing struggle ˇ˝ the Arabˇ˝Israel War of 1948, the Suez War, the Six Day War ˇ˝ the Muslim study of the Crusades gained momentum. Muslim historians now see in the rise and fall of the Crusader principalities parallels to contemporary events. The Crusaders, who crossed the sea and established an independent state in Palestine, have become proto-Zionists. (15)

A more paradoxical case still is that presented by the transformation of historical writing in the nineteenth century. The paradox lies in two antithetical yet equally essential aspects of this process as it was interpreted by those who were caught up in it. One view of this intellectual enterprise fastens attention upon the privileged status of the historical sciences. This way of seeing things depends upon isolating the practice of methodical understanding that takes place in the historical sciences from a more all-embracing phenomenon, the processes of interpretation that occur implicitly and everywhere in the course of everyday life. And this leads on to a sense that the practice of historical research is creating a new distance from the past by setting people free from the tradition that might otherwise have guided their assumptions and behaviour. A historically tutored memory is opposed to an unreflective traditional memory.(16) And yet another sense of this same enterprise acknowledges that it is unthinkable outside its setting within the broader context of a struggle for political identity. It is part of the history of nationalism. For the transformation of the writing of history is in large part the work of the great German scholars, Niebuhr and Savigny, Ranke and Mommsen, Troeltsch and Meinecke, all of whom were intimately involved with the life of the political society to which they

belonged. They rejected any form of political universalism and in particular the principles of 1789 which claimed to establish rules of common life and of participation in the activities of the state which were valid, in principle, for all peoples; and they affirmed, in opposition to this, the value of treating law, not as socially constructed machinery, but as the embodiment and expression of a nationˇ˝s continuity. Whether they were writing about their own times or about distant cultures, it is this political commitment of these major figures of the historical school which imparts to their work the sense that, in constructing a canon of historical research, they are at the same time participating in the formation of a political identity and giving shape to the memory of a particular culture. (17)

In these cases, whether the activity of historical reconstruction is systematically repressed or whether it flourishes expansively, it leads to the production of formal, written histories. There is, however, a phenomenon more procedurally informal and more culturally diffused than the activity of producing histories understood in this sense. The production of more or

less informally told narrative histories turns out to be a basic activity for characterisation of human actions. It is a feature of all communal memory.

Consider the case of village life. What is lacking in a village setting is not simply the physical space but the performative space which we habitually negotiate in an urban context. We are accustomed to moving in a milieu of strangers where many of the people who witness the actions and declarations of others usually have little or no knowledge of their history and little or no experience of similar actions and declarations in their past. This is what makes it difficult to judge whether, or how far, a particular person is to be believed in a given situation. If we are to play a believable role before an audience of relative strangers we must produce or at least imply a history of ourselves: an informal account which indicates something of our origins and which justifies or perhaps excuses our present status and actions in relation to that audience.ˇ˝8 But this presentation of the self in everyday life is unnecessary when, as is the case in the life of a village, the gaps in shared memory are much fewer and slighter. In Proustˇ˝s village of Combray a person whom one ˇ˝didnˇ˝t know from Adamˇ˝ was as incredible a being as a mythological deity, and on the various occasions when one of these startling apparitions had occurred in the Rue du Saint-Esprit or in the Square, no one could remember exhaustive inquiries ever having failed to reduce the fabulous creature to the proportions of a person whom one ˇ˝did knowˇ˝, if not personally then at least in the abstract, as being more or less closely related to some family in Combray. (19) The Return of Martin Guerre highlights the same feature from a reverse angle. The startling apparition of the chief protagonist, who can do no more than pretend to belong, is the ultimate anomaly in a setting where deceit is rare and never on a large scale because the space between what is generally known about a person and what is unknown about them is too slight for self-interest and guile to

lead to the performance of a role. What holds this space together is gossip. Most of what happens in a village during the course of a day will be recounted by somebody before the day ends and these reports will be based on observation or on first-hand accounts. Village gossip is composed of this daily recounting combined with lifelong mutual familiarities. By this means a village informally constructs a continuous communal history of itself: a history in which everybody portrays, in which everybody is portrayed, and in which the act of portrayal never stops. This leaves little if any space for the presentation of the self in everyday life because, to such a large degree, individuals remember in common. (20)

Or again, if we consider the political education of ruling groups, we cannot fail to be struck by the distinction between their political records and their political memories. The ruling group will use its knowledge of

the past in a direct and active way. (21) Its political behaviour and decisions will be based on an investigation of the past, especially the recent past, conducted by its police, its research bureaux and its administrative services, and these investigations will be carried out with an efficiency which is later occasionally revealed to those concerned when documents come to light following a war, a revolution, or a public scandal. But one of the limitations of documentary evidence is that few people bother to write down what they take for granted. And yet much political experience will have been built up about ˇ˝what goes without sayingˇ˝, and this may be particularly easy to observe in a fairly technical sphere like that of diplomacy or in the dealings of a close-knit governing class. In this sense, and it is an important one, the political records of the ruling group are far from exhausting its political memory. The distinction becomes particularly evident when its leaders have to take decisions in crises which they cannot wholly understand and where the outcome of their actions is impossible to foresee; for it is then that they will have recourse to certain rules and beliefs which ˇ˝go without sayingˇ˝, when their actions are directed by an implicit background narrative which they take for granted. Thus throughout the eighteenth century statesmen went on believing that, above all things, they must prevent any further power from ever achieving an ascendancy like that of Louis XIV; and they would remind themselves that nothing like the old wars of religion must be allowed to recur. (22) Throughout the nineteenth century it was common to interpret every violent upheaval in terms of the continuation of the movement begun in 1789, so that the times of restoration appeared as pauses during which the revolutionary current had gone underground only to break through to the surface once more, and on the occasion of each upheaval, in 1830 and 1832, in 1848 and 1851, in 1871, adherents and opponents of the revolution alike understood the events as immediate consequences of 1789. (23) Again, if we are to understand the assumptions of 1914, we need to appreciate the links between the values and beliefs inculcated at school and the presuppositions on which politicians acted in later life; it is to the ideas of a generation earlier that we must attend if we are to appreciate how literally the doctrine of the struggle for existence and

the survival of the fittest was taken by many European leaders just before the First World War.(24)

Or consider the case of life histories. After all, most people do not belong to ruling elites or experience the history of their own lives primarily in the context of the life of such elites. For some time now a generation of mainly socialist historians have seen in the practice of oral history the possibility of rescuing from silence the history and culture of subordinate groups. Oral histories seek to give voice to what would otherwise remain voiceless even if not traceless, by reconstituting the life histories of individuals. But to

think the concept of a life history is already to come to the matter with a mental set, and so it Sometimes happens that the line of questioning adopted by oral historians impedes the realisation of their intentions. Oral historians frequently report the occurrence of a characteristic type of difficulty at the beginning of their conversations. The interviewee hesitates and is silent, protests that there is nothing to relate which the interviewer does not already know. The historian will only exacerbate the difficulty if the interviewee is encouraged to embark on a form of chronological narrative. For this imports into the material a type of narrative shape, and with that a pattern of remembering, that is alien to that material. In suggesting this the interviewer is unconsciously adjusting the life history of the interviewee to a preconceived and alien model. That model has its origin in the culture of the ruling group; it derives from the practice of more or less famous citizens who write memoirs towards the end of their lives. These writers of memoirs see their life as worth remembering because they are, in their own eyes, someone who has taken decisions which exerted, or can be represented as having exerted, a more or less wide influence and which have visibly changed part of their social world. The ˇ˝personalˇ˝ history of the memoir writer has confronted an ˇ˝objectiveˇ˝ history embodied in institutions, or in the modification or transformation or even overthrow of institutions: a programme of educational training, a pattern of civil administration, a legal system, a particular organisation of the division of labour. They have been inserted into the structure of dominant institutions and have been able to turn that structure to their own ends. It is this perceived capacity of making a personal intervention that makes it possible for the writers of memoirs to conceive their life retrospectively, and frequently to envisage it prospectively, as a narrative sequence in which they are able to integrate their individual life history with their sense of the course of an objective history. But what is lacking in the life histories of those who belong to subordinate groups is precisely those terms of reference that conduce to and reinforce this sense of a linear trajectory, a sequential narrative shape: above all, in relation to the past, the notion of legitimating origins, and in relation to the future, the sense of an accumulation in power or money or influence. The oral history of subordinate groups will produce another type of history: one in which not only will most of the details be different, but in which the very construction of meaningful shapes will obey a different principle. Different details will emerge because they are inserted, as it were, into a different kind of narrative home. For

it is essential in perceiving the existence of a culture of subordinate groups to see that this is a culture in which the life histories of its members have a different rhythm and that this rhythm is not patterned by the individualˇ˝s intervention in the working of the dominant institutions.

---20---

When oral historians listen carefully to what their informants have to say they discover a perception of time that is not linear but cyclical. The life of the interviewee is not a curriculum vitae but a series of cycles. The basic cycle is the day, then the week, the month, the season, the year, the generation. The remarkable success in the United States of Studs Terkelˇ˝s Working no doubt stems from the fact that it does justice to this alternative cyclical form and can be read as popular epic as well as social research. Here is a different narrative shape, a different socially determined structuring of memories. (25)

Even so fundamental a question as what the shape of the twentieth century looks like will depend crucially upon what social group we happen to belong to. For many people, but especially for Europeans, the narrative of this century is unthinkable without the memory of the Great War. The image of the trenches from the Channel to the Swiss border is engraved in modern memory. Whereas in the Second World War the common experiences of soldiers was dire long-term exile at an unbridgeable distance from home, what makes the experience of the Great War unique, and what gives it a special burden of irony, is the absurd proximity of the trenches to home. This entrenched experience, of which the first day on the Somme is emblematic, stands like a narrative archetype. Paul Fussell has vividly evoked this primal scene and suggested that it is its particular ironic structure, its dynamic of hope abridged, that makes it haunt the memory. (26) And yet ˇ˝ this is the remarkable thing ˇ˝ it is possible to imagine that the members of two quite different groups may participate in the same event, even so catastrophic and all-engulfing an event as a great war, but still these two groups may be to such a degree incommensurable that their subsequent memories of that event, the memories they pass on to their children, can scarcely be said to refer to the ˇ˝sameˇ˝ event. Carlo Levi has given a remarkable insight into this phenomenon.(27) In 1935 he was exiled as a political prisoner to the remote village of Gagliano in Southern Italy. On the wall of the town hall there was a marble stone inscribed with the names of all the villagers of Gagliano who had died in the Great War. There were almost fifty names; directly or through ties to cousinship or cornparaggio not a single household had been spared; and besides, there were those who had returned from the war wounded and those who had returned safe and sound. As a doctor, Levi soon had occasion to talk to all the villagers, and he was curious to learn how they viewed the cataclysm of 1914ˇ˝18. And yet, in all his talks with the peasants of Gagliano, nobody ever mentioned the war, to speak of deeds accomplished or places seen or sufferings endured. Not that the subject was taboo; when questioned on the matter they answered not only briefly but with indifference. They neither remembered the war as a remarkable event nor spoke of its dead.

---21---

But of one war they spoke constantly. This was the war of the brigands. Brigandage had come to an end in 1865, seventy years before; very few of the peasants were old enough to remember it, as participants or eyewitnesses. Yet everyone, young as well as old, women as well as men, spoke of it as if it were yesterday. The adventures of the brigands entered easily into their everyday speech and were commemorated in the names of many sites in and around the village. The only wars the peasants of Gagliano spoke of with animation and mythic coherence were the sporadic outbursts of revolt in which the brigands had fought against the army and the government of the north. But of the motives and interests at play in the World War they were barely conscious. The Great War was not part of their memory.

Thus we may say, more generally, that we all come to know each other by asking for accounts, by giving accounts, by believing or disbelieving stories about each other˘˝s pasts and identities.28 In successfully identifying and understanding what someone else is doing we set a particular event or episode or way of behaving in the context of a number of narrative histories. Thus we identify a particular action by recalling at least two types of context for that action. We situate the agents˘˝ behaviour with reference to its place in their life history; and we situate that behaviour also with reference to its place in the history of the social settings to which they belong. The narrative of one life is part of an interconnecting set of narratives; it is embedded in the story of those groups from which individuals derive their identity.

4

There is a striking disparity between the pervasiveness of social memory in the conduct of everyday life and the relatively scant attention, at least as regards explicit and systematic as distinct from implicit and scattered treatment, that has been paid to specifically social memory in modern social and cultural theory. (29) Why is this so?

The answer is a rather complicated one, and we must begin by noting that one of the chief difficulties in developing a theory of memory as a form of cognition has to do with the variety of kinds of memory claims that we make and acknowledge. The verb ˘˝remember˘˝ enters into a variety of grammatical constructions and the things that are remembered are of many different kinds; and if memory as a specifically social phenomenon has suffered relative neglect, that is at least in part because certain types of memory claims have been privileged as the focus of certain types of extended attention. It

will be helpful, then, to distinguish in particular between three distinct classes of memory claim.

---22---

There is, first, a class of personal memory claims. These refer to those acts of remembering that take as their object one˘˝s life history. We speak of them as personal memories because they are located in and refer to a personal past. My personal memory claims may be expressed in the form: I did such and such, at such and such a time, in such and such a place. Thus in remembering an event I am also concerned with my own self. When I say ˘˝I arrived in Rome three years ago˘˝, I am in a certain sense reflecting upon myself. In making that statement I am aware of my actual present, and I reflect on myself as the one who did this and that in the past. In remembering that I did this and that I see myself, as it were, from a distance. There is a kind of doubling: I, who speak now, and I, who arrived in Rome three years ago, are in some ways identical but in some ways different. These memory claims figure significantly in our self-descriptions because our past history is an important source of our conception of ourselves; our self-knowledge, our conception of our own character and potentialities, is to a large extent determined by the way in which we view our own past actions. There is, then, an important connection between the concept of personal identity and various backward-looking mental states; thus, the appropriate objects of remorse or guilt are past actions or omissions done by the person who feels remorseful or guilty. Through memories of this kind, persons have a special access to facts about their own past histories and their own identities, a kind of access that in principle they cannot have to the histories and identities of other persons and things. (30)

A second group of memory claims ˘˝ cognitive memory claims ˘˝ covers uses of ˘˝remember˘˝ where we may be said to remember the meaning of words, or lines of verse, or jokes, or stories, or the lay-out of a city, or mathematical equations, or truths of logic, or facts about the future. To have memory knowledge of this kind one˘˝s knowledge must in some way be due to, must exist because of, a past cognitive or sensory state of oneself; (31) but ˘˝ unlike the first class of memory claims ˘˝ we need not possess any information about the context or episode of learning in order to be able to retain and use memories of this class. What this type of remembering requires is, not that the object of memory be something that is past, but that the person who remembers that thing must have met, experienced or learned of it in the past.

A third class of memories consists simply in our having the capacity to reproduce a certain performance. Thus remembering how to read or how to write or how to ride a bicycle is in each case a matter of our being able to do these things, more or less effectively, when the need to do so arises. As with experiential and cognitive memory claims, it is part of the meaning of remembers˘˝ that what is remembered is past; ˘˝remembers˘˝, we might say, is a past-referring term. But as regards this third class of memories, we

frequently do not recall how or when or where we have acquired the knowledge in question; often it is only by the fact of the performance that we are able to recognise and demonstrate to others that we do in fact remember. The memory of how to read or write or ride a bicycle is like the meaning of a lesson thoroughly learned; it has all the marks of a habit, and the better we remember this class of memories, the less likely it is that we will recall some previous occasion on which we did the thing in question; it is only when we find ourselves in difficulties that we may turn to our recollections as a guide.

Philosophers have acknowledged the existence of this class of memory claims and have grouped them under the heading of ˇ˝habit-memoryˇ˝, in contrast to personal and cognitive memory. But they have normally paid little attention to memory claims of this type. They have often argued or assumed that in ˇ˝trueˇ˝ memory the remembering itself, as well as what is remembered, is always a certain kind of event; remembering is frequently said to be a ˇ˝mental actˇ˝ or ˇ˝mental occurrenceˇ˝. Thus Bergson distinguishes two sorts of memory, the kind that consists of habit and the kind that consists of recollection. He gives the example of learning a lesson by heart. When I know the lesson by heart I am said to ˇ˝rememberˇ˝ it; but this only means that I have acquired certain habits. On the other hand, my recollection of the first time I read the lesson while I was learning it is the recollection of a unique event which occurred only once, and the recollection of a unique event cannot wholly be constituted by habit and is radically different from the memory that is habit. This leads Bergson to conclude that the memory of how to do something is simply the retention of a ˇ˝motor mechanismˇ˝ and that this ˇ˝habit-memoryˇ˝ is radically different from the recollection of unique events that is ˇ˝memory par excellenceˇ˝; this type of recollection alone is said to be memory proper.(32) Russell follows Bergson in distinguishing between ˇ˝habit-memoryˇ˝ and ˇ˝true memoryˇ˝, the latter being cognitive while the former is not. He does indeed acknowledge that it is more difficult to apply this distinction in practice than it is to draw it in theory. The reason for this is that habit is an intrusive feature of our mental life and is often present where at first sight it appears not to be. Thus there can be a habit of remembering a unique event; when we have once described the event, the words we have used to do so can easily become habitual. Nevertheless, Russell wants to insist that the distinctive characteristic of memory is that it is a certain special kind of belief. What Constitutes ˇ˝knowledge-memoryˇ˝, he argues, is ˇ˝our beliefˇ˝ that ˇ˝images of past occurrences refer to past occurrencesˇ˝. He speaks of this as ˇ˝trueˇ˝ memory in order to distinguish it from mere habit acquired through past experience.(33) Here again, it is the sense of ˇ˝rememberˇ˝ in which remembering is a cognitive act that is taken to be of philosophical importance.

It is perhaps easier to appreciate the significance of the range of behaviour commonly assigned to the class of habit-memories by examining cases of amnesia in which such memory capacities no longer operate effectively, rather than by noting the more or less smooth operation of such capaciti in the course of everyday life. And we are fortunate in having a study, I the distinguished neurophysiologist Luria, which reports one remarkable case of such amnesia and which, in documenting this, demonstrates just how extensive and vital habit memory is.(34) It concerns the history of a bra wound suffered by a Russian soldier, Zazetsky, of the state of psycholocal disorder in which he was forced to live after irreparable damage has been done by a bullet that penetrated his brain and of his struggle to pie together an account of his state of psychological disarray and to combat it.

He suffered a devastating loss of personal memory. During the wee immediately after his injury he was unable to remember his first name, his patronymic, the names of his close relatives or the name of his home tow and he had a great deal of trouble remembering anything about his recent past ˇ˝ even what life had been like at the front.

Equally devastating was his loss of cognitive memory. He had difficulty in identifying things in his environment. When he saw or imagined things ˇ˝ physical objects, plants, animals; birds, people ˇ˝ he could not immediately recall the words for them. And vice versa: when he heard a word could not remember right away what it meant. This cognitive loss was syntactic as well as semantic. We express relationships through certain parts of speech ˇ˝ prepositions, conjunctions, adverbs, and so on ˇ˝ so if simple phrases like ˇ˝the basket under the tableˇ˝ and ˇ˝the cross above the circleˇ˝ are perfectly obvious to us because we assume the faculty necessary to master such forms: the ability to remember grammatical elements and perceive, quickly and simultaneously, the relationships of individual words and images which they evoke. But Zazetsky no longer had the capacity for such instantaneous grasp of patterns; and there were some grammatical patterns ˇ˝ for instance, inversions like that in the distinction between ˇ˝motherˇ˝s brotherˇ˝ and ˇ˝brotherˇ˝s motherˇ˝, or referred genitives in ˇ˝fatherˇ˝s brotherˇ˝ ˇ˝ that he could no longer grasp at all.

A third area of loss had to do with habitual patterns of behaviour. While he was in hospital he discovered that he had to relearn what had once be commonplace: to beckon to someone or to wave goodbye. He was lying bed and needed the nurse. How was he to get her to come over? Suddenly he remembered that you can beckon to someone and he tried to beckon the nurse: that is, to move his left hand lightly back and forth. But s walked past and paid no attention to his gesturing. He realised then that he had completely forgotten how to beckon to someone. It appeared that he had even forgotten how to gesture with his hands so that someone

could understand what he meant. When a doctor wanted to shake hands with him, he did not know which hand to extend. When an instructor gave him a needle, a spool of thread, and some material with a pattern on it, and asked him to try to stitch the pattern, he simply sat with the needle, thread and material considering why he had been given these; when the instructor later returned and told him to thread the needle, he took the needle in one hand and the thread in the other, but could not understand what to do with them. When he went to a workshop to learn shoemaking, the instructor explained everything to him in great detail; but all he learnt to do was to drive wooden nails into a board and pull them out again. If later he wanted to do some simple everyday task around the house, and he was asked to chop wood, or mend the fence, or fetch some milk from the storeroom, he found he did not know how to proceed. If we are to give a name to this drastic area of loss, what can we call it but habit-memory?

5

Of the three types of memory that I have distinguished, the first two, personal and cognitive memory, have been studied in detail but by quite different methods, while the third, habit-memory, has for important reasons been largely ignored.

Central to the study of memory as understood in psychoanalysis is the distinction between two contrasting ways of bringing the past into the present: acting out and remembering. (35) Acting out consists in a type of action in which the subject, in the grip of unconscious wishes and fantasies, relives these in the present with an impression of immediacy which is heightened by the analysandˇ˝s refusal or inability to acknowledge their origin and, therefore, their repetitive character. The behaviour of acting out generally displays a compulsive aspect which is at odds with the rest of the analysandˇ˝s behaviour patterns. Often it takes the form of aggressive behaviour which may be directed against others or against the self. From the explanatory point of view, the crucial point is that acting out, whether violent or subdued, whether directed against others or against the self, and whether it occurs outside or within the relationship between analyst and analvsand, is evidence of the compulsion to repeat. It is as a result of this compulsion to repeat that analysands deliberately place themselves in distressing situations: in this way repeating an old experience. But in compulsive repetition the agents fail to remember the prototype of their present actions. On the contrary, they have the strong impression that the Situations in which they are ˇ˝caught upˇ˝ are fully determined by the circumstances of the moment. The compulsion to repeat has replaced the capacity to remember. ˇ˝The patient repeats instead of remembering and

repeats under the condition of resistanceˇ˝: the formula occurs in a text crucial for analytic technique, Freudˇ˝s 1914 essay on ˇ˝Remembering, repeating, and working throughˇ˝.(36)

It is at this point, in his essay of 1914, that Freud introduces the topic of transference: a phenomenon which he discusses mainly in terms of the relation between analyst and analysand because, although certainly not confined to this relation, the behaviour of acting out is observable directly and in great detail within the analytical space. He describes transference as the main instrument ˇ˝for curbing the patientˇ˝s compulsion to repeat and for turning it into a motive for rememberingˇ˝. Why should transference have this effect? If remembering is to be made free to occur, this, says Freud, is because the transference constitutes something like a ˇ˝playgroundˇ˝ in which the patientˇ˝s compulsion to repeat ˇ˝is allowed to expand in almost complete freedomˇ˝. Extending this analogy of the playground, he says that the transference sets up ˇ˝an intermediate realm between illness and real life through which the transition from the one to the other is madeˇ˝. This intermediate realm consists to a very large extent of narrative activity: the analysands tell of their past, of their present life outside the analysis, of their life within the analysis. Freud never explicitly discussed this narrative character of the analytic experience; but later writers, for instance Sherwood and Spence, have pointed to its central importance and have shown the ways in which the psychoanalytic dialogue seeks to uncover the analysandˇ˝s efforts to maintain in existence a particular kind of narrative discontinuity. (37) The point of this narrative discontinuity is to block out parts of a personal past and, thereby, not only of a personal past, but also of significant features of present actions. In order to discard this radical discontinuity, psychoanalysis works in a temporal circle: analyst and analysand work backwards from what is told about the autobiographical present in order to reconstruct a coherent account of the past; while, at the same time, they work forwards from various tellings about the autobiographical past in order to reconstitute that account of the present which it is sought to understand and explain. Accordingly, there is a rule of thumb in Freudˇ˝s technical writings which advises the analyst to direct attention to the past when the analysand insists upon the present, and to look for present material when the analysand dwells on the past. One set of narratives is deployed to generate questions about another set of narratives. To remember, then, is precisely not to recall events as isolated; it is to become capable of forming meaningful narrative sequences. In the name of a particular narrative commitment, an attempt is being made to integrate isolated or alien phenomena into a single unified process. This is the sense in which psychoanalysis sets itself the task of reconstituting individual life histories.

Central to the study of cognitive memory, that is to say memory as understood by experimental psychologists, is the notion of encoding.(37) They have shown that literal recall is very rare and unimportant, remembering being not a matter of reproduction of

construction; it is the construction of a ˇ˝schemaˇ˝, a coding, which enables us to distinguish and, therefore, to recall. Three major dimensions of mnemonic coding are known to experimental psychologists today. The semantic code is the dominant dimension; like a library code, it is organised hierarchically by topic and integrated into a single system according to an overall view of the world and the logical relationships perceived in it. The verbal code is the second dimension; it contains all the information and programmes that allow the preparation of a verbal expression. The visual code is the third dimension; concrete items easily translated into images are much better retain than ahstract items because.such conrete items undergo a double encoding in terms of visual coding as well as verbal expression. Experimental psychologists explain failures of memory in terms of the operation of such coding processes; and this explanation holds for pathological as well as for normal cases. As an example of normal forgetting we might consider those cases where events and situations of a repetetive nature are not easily recalled. Any time I go to buy bread is like the last time, except for the day; in such situations only the first and the last experiences will be remembered, so that the ability to recall any given instance typically assumes the shape of a U-curve; all intermediate instances will be forgotten because their labels are practically identical. As an example of pathological forgetting we might consider the case of patients who suffer amnesia concerning the names of colours.(39) The fact that patients who suffer from colour amnesia are unable to ˇ˝see at a glanceˇ˝ which colour samples presented to them ˇ˝go togetherˇ˝ is a specific manifestation of a more general disorder; it is a sign of the fact that they have lost the general ability to subsume a sense datum under a category. For to name a thing is to see it as representative of a category. Hence it would be wrong to say that people manifesting colour amnesia move from one principle of classification to another because they are unable to adhere to a given principle of classification; in reality, they never adopt any principle of classification.

Experimental psychologists have been concerned to understand the phenomena of remembering and forgetting as part of a deliberately scientific enterprise: the quest for a fundamental understanding of the brain and sensory apparatus viewed as a system capable of selecting, organising, Storing and retrieving information. They take the view that the foundations of such understanding are to be laid through rigorously designed experiments carried out under highly controlled and thus, on the whole, highly artificial conditions. Thus in the course of experiments on memory

the experimental subject is generally presented with material belonging to two main groups: verbal and non-verbal material. Verbal material will commonly include series of names, adjectives, verbs, prose passages, poems and stories. Non-verbal material will commonly include geometrical shapes such as circles, squares and rectangles, as well as drawings, paintings and photographs of people, objects and scenes. In order to be able to describe and classify the performances of their experimental subjects, cognitive psychologists will place those subjects in experimental situations which have been as far

as possible emptied of specific cultural content. Cognitive psychologists can indeed acknowledge, without prejudice to their premises, that the memories of people in different cultures will vary because their mental maps are different. The semiotic code, which is the key to the whole operation of memory, is a mental map acquired in childhood, and, as such, it is a code that is shared collectively. Thus it can be readily admitted that in most cultures the memories of men and women will vary because their education and occupations are different; and it can be as easily conceded that witnesses from sharply differing cultures will inevitably differ in their recollections of the same event, particularly if that is a complex event like most of those to which oral traditions allude. In making such acknowledgements experimental psychologists are admitting the possible application of their findings to socially variable object-domains. But what their research has basically been concerned to explore is the existence and universality of basic cognitive structures; what they seek to identify are ˇ˝fundamental structuresˇ˝, ˇ˝primary processesˇ˝, ˇ˝universalsˇ˝, mental faculties that are essential to human nature.

Here, then, we have two heavily colonised territories. Psvchoanalvsts have studied personal memory in the course of investigating the life histories of individuals, whereas psychologists have studied cognitive memory in the course of investigating the workings of universal mental faculties. Habit-memory, by contrast, appears to be an unoccupied or even non-existent space. Or perhaps it would be better to say that the intellectual space that might be occupied by a theory of habit is already occupied. The ground which it might cover appears to be already occupied by contemporary conventionalisrn. For if they now agree on little else, everyone agrees that social worlds are defined by their ruling conventions. With the idea of convention we explain to ourselves the notion of an order of objective rules at whose base lies a tacit social dimension, a world taken to be the world that it is because the rules that make it what it is are intersubjectively agreed. And language has become for us the archetypal model for all other forms of intersubjectivity, because language has its roots on the one hand in the nature of formal order and on the other handˇ˝

in that common implicit consent that underlies the possibility of any communication at all.

The point to seize hold of for the purposes of the present investigation is that most forms of contemporary conventionalism have proceeded in such a way as to eliminate habit as an isolable object of inquiry. Some combination of personal and cognitive memory is what the hermeneuticists have standardly been trying to recover and interpret, whereas habitual memory is what they have tended to ignore. I can perhaps best indicate what I mean by this with references to two particular texts. They are Winchˇ˝s The Idea of a Social Science and Sahlinsˇ˝ essay ˇ˝La PensÈe Bourgeoise: the American Clothing Systemˇ˝. A considerable number of other texts could of course have been chosen instead; I choose these two because they are culturally symptomatic. The approaches they

exemplify may be taken as representative of styles of thinking that have been widely adopted in modern social and cultural theory.

The explicit elimination of the notion of habit is evident in that approach to social theory which views particular instances of behaviour as the application of social rules. It is well known that Winch takes his point of departure in The Idea of a Social Science (40) from John Stuart Mill˘˝s contention that social science might be modelled on natural science. What is less often remarked, but more pertinent to the present discussion, is that in the course of his argument Winch pointedly takes issue with Oakeshott˘˝s distinction between two forms of moralitv.(41) Qakeshott distinguishes between a type of morality which is ˘˝a reflective application of a moral criterion˘˝ and a type of morality which is ˘˝a habit of affection and behaviour˘˝(42) The first form, the reflective application of a moral criterion, may appear as ˘˝the self-conscious pursuit of moral ideals, or as ˘˝the reflective observance of moral rules˘˝; in either case, it is a form of moral Tile in which a special value is attributed to self-consciousness, whether individual or social. Not only is the rule or the ideal the product of reflective thought, but the application of the rule or ideal to any particular situation is also a reflective activity. This form of moral life therefore entails a particular type of training. It requires a training in the appreciation of moral ideals themselves, a training ˘˝in which the ideals are separated and detached from the necessarily imperfect expression they find in particular actions˘˝; and it requires a training ˘˝in the application of ideals to concrete situations˘˝, and in the art of selecting ˘˝appropriate means for achieving the ends which our education has inculcated˘˝.

Oakeshott contrasts this with that form of moral life which he calls ˘˝a habit of affection and conduct˘˝. In this type of moral life everyday situations are said to be met not by ˘˝conduct recognized as the expression of a moral ideal˘˝ nor by ˘˝consciously applying to ourselves a rule of behaviour˘˝,

but by ˘˝acting in accordance with a certain habit of behaviour˘˝. Such a form of moral life does not issue from the consciousness of possible alternative ways of behaving and from a choice, determined by an ideal or a rule or an opinion, from among the perceived alternatives; conduct here ˘˝is as nearly as possible without reflection˘˝. Accordingly, in most of the current situations of life there is no weighing up of alternatives and no reflection on the possible consequences of action; on any particular occasion there is ˘˝nothing more than the unreflective following of a tradition of conduct in which we have been brought up˘˝. For these habits of affection and behaviour are not to be learned by precept, but only by ˘˝living with people who habitually behave in a certain manner˘˝. We acquire such habits in the same way that we acquire our native language. Just as there is no point in a child˘˝s life at which it can be said to learn the language which is habitually spoken in its hearing, so equally there is no point in its life at which it can be said to begin to learn habits of behaviour from the people constantly about it. Even though, in both cases, what is learned, or at least some of it, can be formulated in rules and precepts,

in neither case do we, in this kind of education, ˇ˝learn by learning rules and precepts ˇ˝. What we learn, in acquiring habits of conduct as in acquiring a language, may be learned without the formulation of rules. And indeed, Oakeshott insists, such practical knowledge of rules as this command of language or behaviour entails is impossible until we have forgotten them as rules and are no longer tempted to turn speech and action into the application of rules to a situation. In sum, Oakeshott wants to say that the dividing line between behaviour which is habitual and behaviour which is rule-governed depends upon whether or not a rule is consciously applied; and he insists that a substantial part of human behaviour can be described in terms of the notion of habit, such that neither the idea of a rule nor the idea of reflectiveness is essential to it.

Against this Winch argues that the test of whether a person ˇ˝s actions are the application of a rule is not whether they can formulate the rule but whether it makes sense to distinguish between a right and a wrong way of doing things in connection with what they do. And where that makes sense, ˇ˝it must also make sense to say that he is applying a criterion in what he does even though he does not, and perhaps cannot, formulate that criterion ˇ˝.(43) Winch infers from this that Oakeshott is right to say that learning a form of conduct is like learning to speak a language, but that he draws a false inference from the analogy. Learning to speak a language entails being able to go on speaking sentences that have not been shown one. There is evidently a sense in which this involves doing something different from what I have been shown. Yet in relation to the linguistic rules that I am following this still counts as ˇ˝going on in the same way ˇ˝ as I.

have been shown. And this brings out what is meant here when we speak of going on in the same way. There is a sense in which to acquire a habit is to acquire a propensity to go on doing the same kind of thing; but there is another sense in which this is true of learning a rule. These two senses, Winch emphasises, are different, and much hinges upon the difference. (44) If it were merely a question of habits, he argues, then our current behaviour might certainly be influenced by the way in which we had acted in the past; but that would be just a causal influence. The dog responds to N ˇ˝s commands now in a certain way because of what has happened to the dog in the past. If I am told to continue the series of natural numbers beyond 100, I continue in a certain way because of my past training. The phrase ˇ˝because of ˇ˝ is being used differently of these two situations. The dog has been conditioned to respond in a certain way, whereas I know the correct way to proceed on the basis of what I have been taught. Winch wants to say that I can be said to have acquired a rule, rather than a habit, because I understand what is meant by ˇ˝doing the same thing on the same kind of occasion ˇ˝. The notion of a rule of conduct and the notion of meaningful action are interwoven; it is indispensable to our identifying actions as actions ˇ˝ rather than as mere bodily happenings or physiological events ˇ˝that they be seen as meaningful actions. The most important category for our understanding of social life, then, will not be that of cause and effect but that of

meaningfulness. By this move Winch leaves the notion of habit with no significant work to do for social theory.

By making this distinction between habits and rules, Winch is able to argue that those forms of activity which Oakeshott describes as ˇ˝habits of affection and conductˇ˝ are properly describable as rule-following behaviour. Winch mentions several examples of rule-governed behaviour; I shall cite one example which he does not give but which captures his meaning. A term like ˇ˝shameˇ˝ refers us to a certain type of situation, the shameful, and to a certain manner of response to the situation, that of hiding oneself or of seeking to wipe out the stain. Hiding in this context is intended to cover up the shame; we can understand what is meant by hiding here only if we comprehend what kind of situation and feeling is being talked about. A term like shame, then, can be explained only by reference to a specific language of interaction in which we blame, exhort, admire and esteem each other. In the case of situations judged to be shameful there may be no systematic formulation of the norms and of the conception of men and society which underlie them. But the understanding of these norms and of that conception is nonetheless implicit in our ability to apply the approprlate descriptions to particular actions and situations. These practices require the possibility of certain self-descriptions by the participants and such self-descriptions are constitutive of those practices. (45)

Sahlins arrives at a position analogous to that advanced by Winch but by a different route: that is, by applying the methods of structural linguistics to the ˇ˝languageˇ˝ of clothes. In his study of the American clothing system Sahlins dispenses with any notion of habit, not explicitly but by implication. (46) What he is concerned to reject explicitly is the supposition that the social meaning of clothes has any necessary connection with their physical properties. Against this he argues that the social meaning of objects of apparel that makes them useful to certain categories of persons is symbolic and arbitrary. In making this claim, Sahlins deliberately applies the premise of Saussureˇ˝s distinction between language and speech, which from the outset sets aside what he called the ˇ˝physical aspect of communicationˇ˝.(47) This means that what is important is not how a sound is produced but the way in which it is distinguished from other sounds. The sound p, for example, is studied not as a sound which results from closing the lips and the absence of any vibration of the vocal chords, but as a sound opposed to the series v and f as an occlusive, to the series b, g and d as a voiceless consonant, and to the series t and k as a labial. It thus becomes possible to characterise a language, not with reference to the physiological details of its articulation through the role it imposes on the vocal chords and the soft palate, but with reference to the way in which each sound is distinguished from all other sounds in a system of opposites. This independence of language from the phonetic substratum is the most important element of structuralism: phonology is structural because it is interested in sounds in so far as the various sounds of a language

are defined solely by their relation with one another. Having in this way set aside at the outset the physical aspect of communication, Saussure then isolates what he calls the ˇ˝executive sideˇ˝. What is given as intelligible is language as a systematic organisation of potential arrangements on the basis of which a particular speaker produces speech as a particular message. Speech cannot then constitute the unique object of a specific discipline, but is dispersed across different domains. Even if it can be scientifically described, this falls to the task of many sciences, including acoustics, physiology, sociology and the history of semantic changes. Saussureˇ˝s objectivism is thus unable to conceive of speech, and more generally of practice, other than as execution within a logic which is that of the code to be applied.

Sahlins goes on from these premises to argue that the system of clothing is like the structure of a language. The clothing scheme is ˇ˝a kind of general syntaxˇ˝, a ˇ˝generative grammarˇ˝, and a set of ˇ˝semantic oppositionsˇ˝. The scheme operates as a set of rules for declining and combining classes of clothing so as to map the cultural universe. In manufacturing apparel of distinct cut, outline and colour an item of clothing becomes appropriate for men or women, for night or day, for around the house or in public, for

adult or adolescent; what is here produced are classes of time and place which index situations and activities, and classes of status to which all persons are ascribed. By deploying binary contrasts between heavy/light, rough/smooth hard/soft, any piece of cloth becomes a particular combination of textural qualities; what is here produced, again, is a set of propositions concerning age, sex, activity, class, time and place. Thus given rules of combination comparable to a syntax, a clothing system ˇ˝ it is argued ˇ˝ can develop a series of propositions which constitute so many statements about the relations between persons and situations in the cultural system. As a materialisation of the main co-ordinates of person and occasion, clothing becomes a complex scheme of cultural categories and the relations between them; the code is decodable at a glance because it works at an unconscious level, the conception being built into visual perception itself.

It should be noted that the language of clothes is here being described from the standpoint of the perceiver, not the wearer. There can be no doubt of the analytical purchase this gives; nineteenth-century clothing, for example, provides a field-day for a taxonomist in search of binary oppositions. Its garments signalled to the world the role the wearers were expected to play and reminded them of the responsibilities and constraints of their role. The role of men was to be serious (they wore dark colours with little ornamentation), active (their clothes allowed them movement), strong (their clothes emphasised broad chests and shoulders), and aggressive (their clothes had sharp lines and a clearly-defined silhouette). The role of women was to be frivolous (they wore light pastel colours, ribbons, laces and bows), inactive (their clothes inhibited movement), delicate (their clothes accentuated small waists and sloping shoulders), and submissive (their clothes

were constricting). But now let us switch the perspective from the perceiver to the wearer. The apparel worn by Victorian women not only conveyed decodable messages; it also helped to mould female behaviour. Clothes were signs. They also constricted. ˇ˝No one but a womanˇ˝, wrote Mrs Oliphant in 1879, ˇ˝knows how her dress twists about her knees, doubles her fatigue, and arrests her locomotive powers.ˇ˝(48) Tight skirts and sleeves, crinolines and trains, floor-length petticoats ˇ˝ they all arrested her locomotive powers. But no encumbrance was more graphically constricting than the tight-laced corset, worn almost universally in England and America throughout the nineteenth century. Its defenders and its opponents were in agreement about many of its effects. The defenders of tight-lacing spoke of ˇ˝disciplineˇ˝, ˇ˝submissionˇ˝, ˇ˝bondageˇ˝, and ˇ˝confinementˇ˝; the epithet ˇ˝straight-lacedˇ˝ survives as a memento of a time when wearing a corset was seen as a moral imperative. The opponents of tight-lacing compared the practice with Chinese foot-binding

and insisted that it caused deformity; they worried about the compression of vital organs in the soft boneless area of the waist, the displacement of the ribs, and the complaints of general weakness ˇ˝ debility, fatigue, low vitality ˇ˝ that this brought on. Both opponents and defenders of the corset were in a sense in agreement: it was designed to constrict the diaphragm and change the configuration of the body. The effect, in other words, begins to look rather less like Sahlinsˇ˝ ˇ˝semantic oppositionˇ˝ and rather more like Oakeshottˇ˝s ˇ˝habits of affection and behaviourˇ˝. And this raises the whole question of what we mean by the constitution of social categories, by bringing into the open the double meaning of the term ˇ˝constitutionˇ˝. For the Victorian clothing system did not only signal the existence of categories of behaviour, it also produced the existence of those categories of behaviour and kept them habitually in being by moulding bodily configuration and movement.

There is, then, a.striking parallel between the lines of inquiry suggested by Sahlins and by Winch. In each case the idea of habit has been eliminated by a strategy of separation. Winch abandons the concept of habit in favour of the idea of a social rule, while Sahlins has no need for a concept of habit in a science of signs whose aim is to decode a structure of grammatical possibilities. Habit is either explicitly abandoned or implictlv ignored. It is explicitly rejected in a form of investigation which separates the rule and, its application; and it is implicitly rejected in a mode of inquiry which separates the code and its execution. But it is on the executive side, on the side of application, that a weakness of these models lies. For as soon as one moves attention from the structure of a language to the uses which agents in practice make of it, one sees that mere knowledge of the language, a knowledge of the rule or the code, gives only imperfect mastery of those practices that have been subsumed under the parallel terms of application and execution. In such a picture, whether of a language or of sets of practices understood on the analogy of a language, no place and hence no significance is assigned to that cumulative practice of the same in which habitual skill resides. There is, as it were, a gap between the two

terms which are here analogously employed: a gap between rule and application, and a gap between code and execution. This gap must, I shall suggest, be reclaimed by a theorv of habitual practice, and, therefore, of habit-memory.

The point of insisting upon the fact of this gap is to show that there is something distinguishable as social habit-memory and to put oneself in the position where one can begin to look more closely at how that works As such, social habits have a quite separate significance from individual habits. It is no more part of my purpose to inquire into the working of distinctively individual habits than it was part of the undertakings of the

kind represented by Winch and Sahlins to do that. For an individual habit does not have a meaning for others in the sense that it rests on others˘˝ conventional expectations within the context of a System of shared meanings. Of course, a purely individual or personal habit, of greater or lesser triviality, can be interpreted as meaningful by others. An individual may be in the habit of doodling during lectures; and others might interpret that behaviour as meaningful, either in the sense that it can be taken to be unintentionally symptomatic of a person˘˝s temperament, or in the sense that it can be taken to be intentionally conveying the fact that the individual˘˝s mind is not fully occupied by the ostensible object of everyone˘˝ s attention. But it does not meet the criterion of a social habit. For the meaning of a social habit rests upon others˘˝ conventional expectations such that it must be interpretable as a socially legitimate (or illegitimate) performance. Social habits are essentially legitimating performances. And if habit-memory is inherently performative, then social habit-memory must be distinctively social-performative.

If we pass in review the three types of memory which I have distinguished ˘˝ personal, cognitive, and habit-memory ˘˝ we find that each has been studied or might be studied in ways designed to elucidate the nature of a particular type of failure on the part of the subject whose capacity to remember is being investigated, the nature of the failure being peculiar to that particular kind of memory claim which is being made in each case.

Personal memory has been studied by psvchoanalvsts as part of an investigation of the life history of individuals. A significant memory failure here would entail the subjects˘˝ inability to remember the prototype of their present actions in situations where they deliberately but unconsciously put themselves in distressing circumstances and in this way compulsively repeat, or act out, a prior and causally determining experience.

Cognitive memory has been studied by psychologists as part of an investigation of universal mental faculties. A significant memory failure here, whether of a normal or pathological kind, would entail the subjects˘˝ Inability to adopt a schema or principle of classification, or their misapplication of that schema or classification in particular instances.

But what kind of forgetting would the forgetting of a social habit-memory entail? It is not entirely clear just how most practitioners of contemporary conventionalism would answer that question. Whereas psychoanalysts have been explicitly interested in the ways in which subjects forget prototypical situations in their life history, and whereas psychologists have been explicitly interested in the ways in which subjects forget to employ or misemploy a schema or category, the practitioners of conventionalism have not been explicitly interested in acts of remembering

and forgetting as such. But a conventionalist account necessarily implies an account of forgetting, and what has commonly been implied is that we are dealing here with a form of cognitive memory. That is, from the act of applying the rule or code, or from the failure to apply them, we infer that a particular rule or code has been remembered or forgotten. But I want to say that, in addition to this, something further is involved, and that this is a different type of remembering. The habit-memory ˇ˝ more precisely, the social habit-memory ˇ˝ of the subject is not identical with that subjectˇ˝s cognitive memory of rules and codes; nor is it simply an additional or supplementary aspect; it is an essential ingredient in the successful and convincing performance of codes and rules.

6

The one social theorist not only to have acknowledged the importance of social memory but to have devoted sustained and systematic attention to the ways in which memory is socially constructed is Maurice Halbwachs, particularly in his two important works Les cadres sociaux de la MÈmoire and La mÈmoire collective.(49) He there argued that it is through their membership of a social group ˇ˝ particularly kinship, religious and class affiliations ˇ˝ that individuals are able to acquire, to localise and to recall their memories.

We should try the experiment, he suggested, of passing in review the number of memories which we recall or which are evoked for us in the course of a day by our direct or indirect relations with other people. We will then notice that, most commonly, we appeal to our memory in order to reply to questions which others put to us, or which we imagine that they could ask us, and, in order to reply to them, we envisage ourselves as forming part of the same group or groups as they do. Most frequently, if I recall something that is because others incite me to recall it, because their memory comes to the aid of mine and mine finds support in theirs. Every recollection, however personal it may be, even that of events of which we alone were the witnesses, even that of thoughts and sentiments that remain unexpressed, exists in relationship with a whole ensemble of notions which many others possess: with persons, places, dates, words, forms of

language, that is to say with the whole material and moral life of the societies of which we are part or of which we have been part.

This applies, he argues, equally to recent and to distant memories. For what binds together recent memories is not the fact that they are contiguous in time but rather the fact that they form part of a whole ensemble of thoughts common to a group, to the groups with which we are in a relationship at present or have been in some connection in the recent past. When we wish to evoke such memories it is enough if we direct our

attention to the prevailing interests of the group and follow the course of reflection customary to it. Exactly the same applies when we want to recall more distant memories. To evoke such memories, it is enough, once again, to direct our attention to the recollections which occupy a primary place in the thoughts of the group. There is no difference, in this respect, between recent and distant memories. It is as beside the point to speak of an association by resemblance in the case of distant memories as it is to speak of an association by contiguity in the case of recent memories. For the kind of association that makes possible retention in the memory is not so much one of resemblance or contiguity as rather a community of interests and thoughts. It is not because thoughts are similar that we can evoke them; it is rather because the same group is interested in those memories, and is able to evoke them, that they are assembled together in our minds.

Groups provide individuals with frameworks within which their memories are localised and memories are localised by a kind of mapping. We situate what we recollect within the mental spaces provided by the group. But these mental spaces, Halbwachs insisted, always receive support from and refer back to the material spaces that particular social groups occupy. He cited Comte˘´s remark that our mental equilibrium is, first and foremost, due to the fact that the physical objects with which we are in daily contact change little or not at all, so providing us with an image of permanence and stability; and he went on to show how no collective memory can exist without reference to a socially specific spatial framework. That is to say, our images of social spaces, because of their relative stability, give us the illusion of not changing of rediscovering the past in the present. We conserve our recollections by referring them to the material milieu that surrounds us. It is to our social spaces ˘´ those which we occupy, which we frequently retrace with our steps, where we always have access, which at each moment we are capable of mentally reconstructing ˘´ that we must turn our attention, if our memories are to reappear. Our memories are located within the mental and material spaces of the group.

Thus Halbwachs explicitly rejected the separation of the two questions: How does the individual preserve and rediscover memories? And how do societies preserve and rediscover memories? With exemplary lucidity, he demonstrated that the idea of an individual memory, absolutely separate from social memory, is an abstraction almost

devoid of meaning. He showed how different social segments, each with a different past, will have different memories attached to the different mental landmarks characteristic the group in question. And he singles out, as illustrative of his general thesis, the particular cases of memory as it works within kinship groups, within religious groups, and within classes. Yet Halbwachs, even though he makes the idea of collective memory central to his

inquiry, does not see that images of the past and recollected knowledge of the past are conveyed and sustained by (more or less) ritual performances.

If we follow the thread of Halbwachsˇ˝s argument we are inevitably led to the question: given that different groups have different memories which are particular to them, how are these collective memories passed on within the same social group from one generation to the next? Halbwachs does little more than hint at answers to this question, confining himself, for the most part, to suggestions that are at once formulaic and anthropomorphic. Thus he says that ˇ˝society tends to eliminate from its memory everything which could separate individualsˇ˝, (50) or that, at certain moments, ˇ˝society is obliged to become attached to new values, that is to say to depend upon other traditions which are in better relation with its needs and present tendenciesˇ˝. (51) Such formulations, co-existing so incongruously with the particularity and vividness of his many acute perceptions, are evidently derived from certain habits of language and method, in particular from a Durkheimian vocabulary, characterised by the employment, with the epithet ˇ˝collectiveˇ˝, of terms borrowed from individual psychology. This is no minor blemish or lacuna. For if we are to say that a social group, whose duration exceeds that of the lifespan of any single individual, is able to ˇ˝rememberˇ˝ in common, it is not sufficient that the various members who compose that group at any given moment should be able to retain the mental representations relating to the past of the group. It is necessary also that the older members of the group should not neglect to transmit these representations to the younger members of the group. If we want to continue to speak, with Halbwachs, of collective memory, we must acknowledge that much of what is being subsumed under that term refers, quite simply, to facts of communication between individuals. That the members of different social groups do in fact communicate with each other within the group in ways that are characteristic of that particular group can indeed be inferred from what Halbwachs says; but it is a matter of inference, because he leaves us with no explicit sense that social groups are made up of a system, or systems, of communication.

The difficulty may be illustrated with an example which Halbwachs himself cites. In the course of discussing family memory he speaks briefly about the role of grandparents. ˇ˝It isˇ˝, he writes, ˇ˝in a fragmentary way, and as it were across the intervals of the present family that they communicate their own memories to the grandchildren.ˇ˝(52) But how are we to think about these ˇ˝intervalsˇ˝? What the remark demonstrates is an inability to pinpoint the characteristic acts of transfer, and so to contextualise properly the ways in

which the memories of grandparents, as a social group, are transmitted to grandchildren, as a social group. This is a failure within the terms of his

own inquiry; and because it is also a general failure, it is worth pursuing further.

Marc Bloch has drawn attention to the fact that in ancient rural societies, before the institution of the newspaper, the primary school, and military service, the education of the youngest living generation was generally undertaken by the oldest living generation.(53) In such village societies, because working conditions kept mother and father away almost all day, especially during the summer period, the young children were brought up chiefly by their grandparents; so that it is from the oldest members of the household, at least as much as if not indeed more than from their own parents, that the memory of the group was mediated to them. This process began very early in the life of the child. After the first phase of childhood, dominated by nourishment and the relationship with the mother, the child joined the group of siblings and other children living in the household; and it was from this time on that their education was most frequently supervised by grandmother. Until the introduction of the first machines, it was grandmother who was the mistress of the household, who prepared the meals, and who, alone, was occupied with the children. It was her task to teach the language of the group. When the ancient Greeks called stories ˇ˝geroiaˇ˝, when Cicero called them ˇ˝fabulae anilesˇ˝, and when the picture illustrating the Contes of Perrault represented an old woman telling a story to a circle of children, they were registering the extent to which the grandmother took charge of the narrative activity of the group. In such a context we should not envisage communicatioti between generations as being conducted, so to speak, in ˇ˝Indian fileˇ˝, the children having contact with their ancestors only through the mediation of their parents. Rather, with the moulding of each new mind there is at the same time a backward step. joining the most malleable to the most inflexible mentality, while skipping the generation which might be the sponsor of change. And this way of transmitting memory, Bloch suggests, must surely have contributed to a very substantial extent to the traditionalism inherent in so many peasant societies.(54)

My point in focussing on this particular example is to emphasise the fact that to study the social formation of memory is to study those acts of transfer that make remembering in common possible. I mean to isolate and Consider in more detail certain acts of transfer that are to be found in both traditional and modern societies. In doing this I wish to lay stress on particular types of repetition; whereas some dominant trends in contemporary social theory are often criticised on the ground that they do not address, or address inadequately, the fact of social change, I shall seek to highlight the way in which such theories are often defective because they

are unable to treat adequately the fact of social persistence. It is to this end that I have singled out, as acts of transfer of crucial importance, commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices. As we have seen, these are by no means the only constituents of communal memory; for the production of informally told narrative histories is both a basic activity for our everyday characterisation of human actions and a feature of all social memory. But I have seized upon commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices in particular because it is the study of these, I want to argue, that leads us to see that images of the past and recollected knowledge of the past are conveyed and sustained by (more or less ritual) performances.

NOTES

Introduction

1 Especially in the work of Maurice Halbwachs. See M. Halbwachs, Les cadres sociaux de La mÈmoire (Paris, 1925); La mÈmoire collective (Paris, 1950); La topographie lÈgenda ire des Evangiles en Terre Sainte (Paris, 1941); ˇ˝La mÈmoire collective chez les musiciensˇ˝, Revue Philosophique, 127 (1939), pp. 136ˇ˝65. A number of more recent studies should be mentioned in this connection:

E.Shils, Tradition (London, 1981); Z. Bauman, Memories of Class (London, 1982); E. Hobsbawm and I. Ranger (eds.), The Invention of Tradition (Cambridge, 1983); P. Nora, Les lieux de La mÈmoire (Paris, 1984); R. Bovers, Atrocity and Amnesia. The Political Novel since 1945 (Oxford, 1985); B. A. Smith, Politics and Remembrance (Princeton, 1985); P. Wright, On Living in an Old Country (London, 1985); D. Lowenthal, The Past is a Foreign Country (Cambridge, 1985); F. Haug, Female Sexualization: a Collective Work of Meniory (tr. E. Carter, London, 1987).

2 A valuable corrective to politically sanitizing talk of post-industrialism maybe found, for example, in H. Schiller, Mass Media and American Empire (New York, 1969); The Mind Managers (Boston, 1973); Communication and Cultural Domination (New York, 1977); Information and the Crisis Economy (Oxford, 1986); but see also A. Mattelart, Multinational Corporations and the Control ofCulture (tr. M. Chanan, Brighton, 1979).

3 See F. Jameson, The Political Unconscious (Ithaca, 1981).

4 M. Proust, Remembrance of Things Past (tr. C. K. Scott Moncrieff and I. Kilmartin, London, 1981), vol. I, p. 20.

5 M. Proust, Remembrance of Things Past, vol. III, pp. 1007˘˝9.

I. Social memory

1. The terms of this transformation are set out in R. Koselleck, ˘˝Der neuzeitliche Revolutionsbegriff als geschichtliche Kategorie˘˝, Studium Generale, 22 (1969), pp. 825˘˝38.

2 See I. Schieder, ˘˝Das Problem der Revolution im 19. Jahrhundert˘˝, Historische Zeitschrift, 170 (1950), p. 233˘˝71; G. Steiner, ˘˝The Great Ennui˘˝, in In Bluebeard˘˝s Castle: Some Notes Towards the Redefinition of Culture (London, 1971), pp. 11˘˝27.

3 I. Kant, ˘˝Der Streit der Fakult‰ten˘˝ (1778), Philosophische Bibliothek, 252, p. 87.

4 On trial by fiat of successor regimes, see 0. Kirchheimer, Political Justice: the Use of Legal Procedure for Political Ends (Princeton, 1961), pp. 304 ff.

5 A. Camus, The Rebel (tr. A. Bower, London, 1953), p. 112.

6 On the distinction between the significance of the private assassination and the public execution of kings see M. Walzer, Regicide and Revolution (Cambridge, 1974).

7 On the political theology of kingship see especially E. H. Kantorowicz, The

King˘˝s Two Bodies: a Study in Medieval Political Theology (Princeton, 1957); M.Bloch, The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France (tr. J. E. Anderson, London, 1973); L. Hunt, Politics. Culture, and Class in the French Revolution (Berkeley, 1984); see also F. Kern, Kingship and Law in the Middle Ages (New York, 1970); M. Walzer, Regicide and Revolution (Cambridge, 1974).

8 See Walzer, Regicide and Revolution, p. 18.

9 On the carnival see M. Bakhtin, Rabelais and his World (tr. H. Iswolsky, Cambridge, Mass., 1968), pp. 196-277; and for a more recent exploration of the themes suggested by Bakhtin, P. Stallybrass and A. White, The Politics and Poetics of Transgression (London, 1986).

10 For fashions in dress during the French Revolution see Sennett, The Fall of Public Man (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 183 ff.

11 See Sennett, The Fall of Public Man (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 64˘˝72.

12 M. Oakeshott, Rationalism in Politics (London, 1962), p. 119.

13 For a discussion of expectations and genres see especially E. D. Hirsch, Validity in Interpretation (New Haven, 1967). A brief treatment of these themes may be found in G. Buck, ˇ˝The Structure of Hermeneutic Experience and the Problem of Traditionˇ˝, New Literary History, 10 (1978), pp.31ˇ˝48.

14 See R. Collingwood, The Idea of History (Oxford, 1946), esp. pp. 266 ff; and J.Goldstein, Historical Knowledge (Austin, Texas, 1976), esp. pp. 13ˇ˝16, 52ˇ˝9.

15 See F. Gabrieli, ˇ˝The Arabic Historiography of the Crusades,ˇ˝ in B. Lewis and P. M. Holt (eds.), Historians of the Middle East (London, 1962), pp. 98ˇ˝107; B. Lewis, History: Remembered, Recorded, Invented (Princeton, 1975); E. Sivan, ˇ˝Modern Arab Historiograph~ of the Crusadesˇ˝, Asian and African Studies, 8 (1972), pp. 102ˇ˝49.

16 See for example A. Kohli-Kunz, Erinnern und Vergessen (Berlin, 1972) and J. Ritter, ˇ˝Die Aufgabe der Geisteswissenschaften in der modernen Gesellschaftˇ˝, Schriften der Gesellschaft zur Forderung der West fdlischen WilhielmsUniversit‰t zu M¸nster, Heft 51 (M¸nster, 1961).

17 See especially F. Meinecke, Historism: the Rise of a New Historical Outlook (tr. J.E. Anderson, London, 1972) and P. H. Reill, The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism (Berkeley, 1975); see also I. Berlin, Vico and Herder (London, 1976) and P. Rossi, ˇ˝The Ideological Valencies of Twentieth-Centurv Historicismˇ˝, History and Theory, Beiheft 14 (1975).

18 On role-playing in a society of strangers see R. Sennett, passim.

19 M. Proust, Remembrance of Things Past (tr. C. K. Scott Moncrieff and I. Kilmartin, Harmondsworth, 1981), vol. 1, p. 62.

20 On gossip in village life see J. Berger, Pig Earth (London, 1979). It should be noted, however, that a number of recent studies take it as their task to set the life of villages within a larger social and national context, the economic and political ˇ˝outsideˇ˝, the effect of this historical approach being that villages have come to be regarded less as static, isolated entities. See C. Bell and H. Newbv, Community Studies: an Introduction to the Sociology of the Local Community (London, 1971); J. Boissevain and J. Friedl (eds.), Beyond Community: Social Process in Europe (The Hague, 1975); J. Ennew, The Western Isles Today (Cambridge, 1980); S. H. Franklin, Rural Societies (London, 1971); A. Macfarlane, with S. Harrison and C. Jardine, Reconstructing Historical Communities (Cambridge, 1977), on the ˇ˝myth of the communityˇ˝; R. Schulte, ˇ˝Village Life in Europeˇ˝, Comparative Studies in Society and History, 27 (1985), pp. 195ˇ˝206.

21 On the manipulation of political memory through control of records see J.Chesneaux, Pasts and Futures, or, What is His tory For? (London, 1978).

22 See H. Butterfield, The Discontinuities Between the Generations in History (Cambridge, 1972).

23. See T. Schieder, ˇ˝Das Problem der Revolution im 19. Jahrhundertˇ˝, Historische Zeitschrift, 170 (1950), pp. 233-71.

24. See J. Joll, 1914: The Unspoken Assumptions (London, 1968).

25 S. Terkel, Working: people talk about what they do all day and how they feel about what they do (London, 1975).

26 P. Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory (New York, 1975).

27 C. Levi, Christ Stopped at Eboli (tr. F. Frenaye, London, 1963), esp. pp. 130 ff.

28 For a discussion of the narrative accounts embedded in everyday discourse see A. Macintyre, After Virtue (London, 1981), pp. 190ˇ˝201.

29 Mention should be made, however, of a number of recent works which address the question of social memory: E. Shils, Tradition (London, 1981); Z. Bauman, Memories of Class: Pre-History and After Life of Class (London,1982); S. Nora, Les lieux de la mÈmoire (Paris, 1984); B. A. Smith, Politics and Remembrance (Princeton, 1985); P. Wright, On Living in an Old Country (London, 1985); F. Haug Female Sexualization: a Collective Work of Memory (tr. E. Carter, London, 1987).

30 On personal memory see R. Wollheim, The Thread of Life (Cambridge, 1984) and S. Shoemaker, ˇ˝Persons and Their Pastˇ˝, American Philosophical Quarterly, 7 (1970), 269ˇ˝85.

31 See C. B. Martin and M. Deutscher, ˇ˝Rememberingˇ˝, The Philosophical Review, 75 (1966), pp. 161ˇ˝96 and D. Wiggins, Identity and Spatio-Temporal Continuity (Oxford, 1967), esp. pp. 50 ff.

32 See H. Bergson, Matter and Memory (tr. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer, London, 1962).

33 B. Russell, The Analysis of Mind (London, 1921), pp. 166 ff.

34 A. R. Luria, The Man with a Shattered World (tr. L. Solotaroff, London, 1973).

35 See J. Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis, The Language of Psychoanalysis (tr. D. Nicholson-Smith, London, 1973).

36 S. Freud, ˇ˝Remembering, Repeating and Working Throughˇ˝ (1914), Standard Edition, XII, pp. 147ˇ˝56.

37 On the role of narrative in psychoanalysis see M. Sherwood, The Logic of Explanation in Psychoanalysis (New York, 1969) and D. P. Spence, Historical Truth and Narrative Truth: Meaning and Interpretation in Pychoanalysis (New York, 1982).

38 See especially F. C. Bartlett, Remembering (Cambridge, 1932); J. Piaget and B. Inhelder, Memory and Intelligence (tr. A. J. Pomerans, London, 1973); A. Lieury, La mÈmoire, rÈsultats et theories (Bruxelles, 1975).

39 On colour amnesia see M. Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception (tr. C. Smith, London, 1962).

40 P. Winch, The Idea of a Social Science (London, 1958).

41 Ibid., pp. 57 ff.

42 See M. Oakeshott, Rationalism in Politics (London, 1962), especially pp. 61˘˝9 and 119 29.

43 P. Winch, Idea of a Social Science, p. 58.

44 Ibid., pp. 59˘˝60.

45 This example is discussed by C. Taylor, ˘˝Interpretation and the Sciences of Man˘˝, in Philosophy and the Human Sciences, volume II (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 23 ff.

46 See M. Sahlins, :La PensÈe Bourgeoise: Western Society as Culture˘˝, in Culture and Practical Reason (Chicago, 1976), pp. 166-204.

47 See A. Martinet, Elements de linguistique genÈrale (Paris, 1960).

48 See H. E. Roberts, ˘˝The Exquisite Slave: the Role of Clothes in the Making of the Victorian Woman˘˝, Signs, 2 (1977), pp. 554-69.

49 See M. Halbwachs, Les cadres sociaux de Ia mÈmoire (Paris, 1925); Halbwachs, La mÈmoire collective (Paris, 1950); see also by the same author, La topographie lÈgenda ire des evangiles en terre sainte: Etude de mÈmoire collective (Paris, 1941); ˘˝La mÈmoire collective chez les musiciens˘˝, Revue Philosophique, 127 (1939), pp. 136-65.

50 M. Halbwachs, Les cadres sociaux de la mÈmoire (Paris, 1925), p. 392.

51 Ibid., p. 358.

52 Ibid., pp. 233-4.

53 See M. Bloch, The Historianˇ˝s Craft (tr. R. Putnam, Manchester, 1954), pp. 40ˇ˝1; for a review of Halbwachs (1925) see M. Bloch, ˇ˝MÈmoire collective, tradition et coutumeˇ˝, Revue de SynthËse Historique, 40 (1925), pp. 73-83.

54 For corroborative remarks on this suggestion, with particular reference to the role of grandmothers in traditional societies, see D. Fabre and J. Lacroix, La Tradition orale du conte occitan (Paris, 1974), volume I, esp. pp. 111ˇ˝15.