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Collective Memory and Historical Consciousness

Collective Memory

"History," comments Hegel in *Philosophy of History*, "combines in our language the objective as well as the subjective side. It means both *res gestae* (the things that happened) and *historica rerum gestarum* (the narration of the things that happened)." "This is no coincidence," he goes on to explain, for without memory of the past there is no history, in the sense of the events that are meaningful to the collective, events experienced by a collective that is aware of them. Collective consciousness presumes collective memory, as without it there is no law and justice, no political structure, and no collective objectives. Without "history," there is no history and no state.[1]

Hegel is vague, and perhaps deliberately so. Was he referring to the writing of history? If so, he maintains, unwittingly, the assumption inherent in both ancient and medieval writing that there is no history without its written preservation, and the contrary: every event that is "worthy of being remembered" (*dignum memoriae*) has certainly been put into writing by a witness, whom they consider the best of historians.[2] In part, this preconception is also preserved in our technical distinction between "prehistory" and "history": the era before the dissemination of the written word was, as it were, "ahistorical."

Or was Hegel perhaps referring to that elusive entity known today as "collective memory"? Where does this reside, how is it expressed, and how does it differ from the writing of history or thought about history?

We naturally ascribe historical "consciousness" and "memory" to human collectives – family and tribe, nation and state. Nations are meant to remember their heroes "forever"; to perpetuate the memory of a person means to embed it in the collective memory, which forgets only failures and sins. In some languages – including Hebrew – there is a special ex-

pression for this act (*verewigen, immortaliser, lehantsiach*). This is confusing, as consciousness and memory can only be realized by an individual who acts, is aware, and remembers. Just as a nation cannot eat or dance, neither can it speak or remember. Remembering is a mental act, and therefore it is absolutely and completely personal. Even if we make an extreme assumption (as did some medieval thinkers) – that we all share a common intellect[3] insofar as the objects of our thought are real – we still have to distinguish between personal memories. The memories of people who have experienced a common event are not identical, even if we assume a "unity of the intellect." For each of them, the memory evokes different associations and feelings.

Despite all these reservations, "collective memory" is by no means a mistaken and misleading term. It simply needs to be used within clear limitations. Remembering, whether of personal experiences or of events in the past of a society, is a mental activity of a subject who is conscious of performing it. Memory may even constitute self-consciousness, because self-identity presumes memory. On the other hand, even the most personal memory cannot be removed from the social context. When I remember (and none too happily) my first day at school, I recall the city, the institution, the teacher – objects set by society, whose meaning is assigned to them by society. My personal identity was also built out of reference to social objects, institutions, people, and events. Even my self-consciousness is not completely personal.

Again we refer to Hegel, who was the first, it seems, to show that self-consciousness *requires* a social context by virtue of its very conceptualization. Philosophical literature prior to Hegel refers to self-consciousness as though it is isolated in its own world and perhaps even "windowless," whether conceived of as substance (Descartes, Leibniz) or as a function, that is, a point of intersection for the rational organization of the world (Kant).[4] In a famous chapter in *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*, Hegel developed the concept of self-consciousness, the definition of which gives rise to a *separate* concept of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness, he says "is in and for itself (*an-und-für sich*), in that and because it is for another (*für ein Anderes*) in and for itself; in other words, it exists only when recognized." Because of the paradox in its reference to itself, self-consciousness is divided between recognizing consciousness and recognized consciousness;

Hegel used the word *anerkennen*, which (in contrast to simply *erkennen*) is distinctly social.[5] The relationship between these two types of consciousness – which actually synthesize into one – is both a conceptual and a historical process, a process that threatens to terminate and to eliminate both if a temporary balance is not achieved in "master-slave" relations.

Hegel thus initiated an interpretational trend which culminated, completely contrary to his intentions, in the demand of modern schools of thought that the concept of the subject as mediating or as giving meaning to the world and to language be abandoned. They understand the concept of the subject as relative to and dependent on suprapersonal structures. Moreover, the extremists claim, every structure, in an open or concealed manner, both gives and destroys meanings.[6] If this is true for consciousness, all the more so regarding memory. No memory, not even the most intimate and personal, can be disconnected from society, from the language and the symbolic system molded by the society over many generations.

Consequently, we cannot abandon the concept of collective memory, but must reformulate the relationship between collective memory and the constant act of personal remembering. The following analogy may help. Modern linguistics has developed the fundamental distinction introduced by the Swiss linguist de Saussure between "language" (*langue*) and "speech" (*parole*). Language is a system of symbols plus the rules of their functioning: the inventory of phonemes, words, letters, rules of declension, and syntactic rules available at all times to the speaker. The existence of a language is not independent, abstract; it exists in that it is realized in every real act of speech. And since every such act differs from the next, even if its linguistic components are completely identical, every act of speech in some way also changes the language.[7]

This distinction may be useful in defining collective memory. It, like "language", can be characterized as a system of clear signs, symbols, and practices: times of memory, names of places, monuments and victory arches, museums and texts, customs and manners, stereotype images (incorporated, for instance, in manners of expression), and even language itself (in de Saussure's terms). The individual's memory – that is, the act of remembering – is the realization of these symbols, analogous to "speech"; no act of remembering is like any other. The point of departure and frame of reference of memory is the system of signs and symbols that it uses.

It should be noted that the word *zikaron* or *zekher* (memory) in the infancy of the Hebrew language – and in the infancy of many languages – incorporates both meanings. Alongside the subjective meaning (memory as a mental act) – "Yet did not the chief butler remember (*ve-lo zakhar*) Joseph, but forgot him" (Genesis 40:23) – we also find the objective sense – "this is my name forever, and this is my memorial (*zikhri*) unto all generations" (Exodus 3:15); "write this for a memorial in a book" (Exodus 17:14). Here "memory" is a synonym for "name" or "letter";[8] it is sometime difficult to distinguish between the two meanings. The word denoting the masculine gender in Hebrew (*zakhar*) and in Aramaic is etymologically related to the word for memory (*zekher*), as is appropriate for a patriarchal society in which the meaning of "nation," "community," or "ethnic group" is always exclusive of women.[9] The male alone (*zakhar*) is the memory (*zekher*).

Just as in language, where there are relatively closed regions of professional or status-related language, which serve a single group only, collective memory has special regions for subcultures. Thus, like levels or uses of language that are not in actual use, preserved only by remote islands of language or written texts, so collective memory also preserves symbols and monuments that no longer "remind" most members of the society to which it belongs of anything. If language can be consciously manipulated,[10] all the more so collective memory: it is not an anonymous-organic development that led to the fact that all Napoleon's victories and not a single one of his failures are memorialized in the names of the streets of Paris – Wagram and Marengo, Jena and Austerlitz, Borodino and Aboukir. In the last one, we are called upon "to remember" the continental war against the Turks alone.

Nevertheless, the analogy between language and memory is not complete. We cannot distinguish unmediated and mediated levels of language, whereas collective memory is, in a sense, direct and unmediated in part, namely when the individual recalls events that he has experienced himself. A common experience may be the trademark of a generation.[11] Although here, too, memory is assisted by signs, symbols, and meanings, some of which have received public confirmation, we can nonetheless speak of the relative absence of mediation. And personal memory – as shown by Augustine of Hippo – is likewise never pure memory. Most of our personal memories are both memories and the memory of memories.[12]

Augustine provided Western literature with the first in-depth analysis of memory as related to knowledge, desire, and personal identity. Like Plato, Augustine perceived recall in every piece of knowledge; but Platonic recall is the knowledge of pure and immortal forms which time neither captures nor constructs. According to Augustine, recall is primarily the memory of conditions of the spirit, of internal, time-bound events. The experience of memory is also a measure of time (time is not merely, as Aristotle believed, "the measure of motion"). The past is the remembered present, just as the future is the anticipated present: memory is always derived from the *present* and from the contents of the present.

This is also the basic insight of the French-Jewish sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, in his book on collective memory. The student of the subject of historical consciousness must not overlook Halbwachs; he was the first to discuss the concept of collective memory systematically. He stresses the connection between collective and personal memory and contrasts them both to historical memory – that is, reconstruction of the past by historians whose craft leads them to deviate from or to question accepted values.[13] Both personal and collective memory are primarily a design of the present and its structure, composed of contents and symbols from the here and now. Collective memory is, by virtue of its definition, a "monumental" history in the sense of Nietzsche – and it is nurtured by the "plastic power" of the collective that keeps it alive.[14] The historian demands that we ignore the present and its meanings as much as possible, avoid anachronisms and the tendency to "project our concepts on the people of the past."[15] Collective memory, by contrast, is completely insensitive to the differences between periods and qualities of time; it is shallow in terms of chronology; it is completely topocentric. In the collective memory of the past, people, events, and historic institutions serve as prototypes and are not recognized for their uniqueness. They are links in an ongoing past.

An objection should be made that Halbwachs does not refrain in his analysis from hypostatization of collective memory, even though he is aware that only the individual remembers *sensu stricto*. The tendency to ascribe an independent existence to collective mentality, to the "spirit of the nation," or to language itself, which thinks, as it were, by means of the individual, clearly was a romantic inclination. It ignores the fact that every change in language or in the symbolic system

and functions that comprise the cognitive organization of the world (whether in high or local folk culture) begins with the speaking, acting, recognizing individual. Halbwachs, like his mentor Durkheim, is aware that only the individual thinks or remembers; nevertheless, he (like the members of the *Annales school* in France to this day) ascribes to collective memory contents that differ from those of "history," though not a separate existence.

What does Halbwachs do with the fact that the historical story – the historian's finished creation, or part of it – sometimes becomes an integral part of the collective memory, like the scriptures of Homer? It may be argued that historiographic creation or historic thinking before the era of historicism and professionalization of history as a separate discipline was still naive and attached to collective memory, while historiography since the nineteenth century has been critical, reflective, and conscious of the uniqueness of time and period. Halbwachs' attribution to collective memory of characteristics of pre-critical historiography (such as Christian typological thought) is significant and telling. Yet the transition from pre-critical historiography to historicism, however revolutionary, was not altogether new. Several indications of historicism can be discerned within the presumably naive historical consciousness that preceded it, including the distinction between one "spirit of the time" and another (*qualitas temporum* in medieval language).[16] In no way did it lack awareness of varying linguistic uses: "Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God, thus he spoke, Come, and let us go to the seer: for he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer." (I Samuel 9:9); the poet, Cicero says, is permitted to use archaic linguistic forms.[17]

On the other hand the modern historian, whose calling it is to do so, does not disconnect himself from the collective memory at all, and does not hasten to destroy social norms, least of all those he is unaware of. It is customary that the historian's writing reflects the past image shared by him and those of his generation and location, which he only embellishes and elaborates.

Therefore, in order to avoid the conflict between collective memory and the recording of history without blurring the differences between them, we need an additional interpretative dynamic construct to explain how the second arises out of the first. Unlike the relationship between "language" and

"speech" – and even in contradiction to it – reflection on the contents of collective memory gives rise to increasing freedom in their individual implementation. In other words: The more the use of the contents, symbols, and structures of collective memory allows, in culture or otherwise, conscious changes and variations in number, the more complex and less predictable the story of history becomes: the liturgical incantations of a dynasty of tribal leaders through a sacred ceremony are not like the poetry of Homer or the Book of Judges, and the Book of Kings is not like Herodotus. I propose the concept of historical consciousness in this precise meaning as such a dynamic heuristic construct – the degree of creative freedom in the use and interpretation of the contents of collective memory. This degree differs at different times in the same culture or at different social levels of the same culture in a given time.

I shall return to and elaborate this point later below. Halbwachs' ideas are used by Y. Ha. Yerushalmi in his fascinating book on historiography and collective memory in the history of Israel.[18] He also compares historiography to collective memory, and both of these to the work of historical interpretations since the introduction of Jewish studies in the nineteenth century. His point of departure is the question as to why historiography in Israel ceased from the time of Yoseph Ben Mattetiyahu to the beginning of Jewish studies in the 19th century, even though Jewry was saturated with historical memories, and despite the fact that as early as the Scriptures, liturgical memory was established in the command "Remember." (The outbreak of historical creativity in the seventeenth century was a deviation from the norm.) And he says: the interest in history was never identical to historical consciousness or historical memory, even though they were close to each other at the time of the Scriptures. They were not interested in history as history; the events of their own time did not seem important to them. The Scriptures served them as an archetypical pattern for all events in the present, for themselves and generations after them. Paradoxically, it was at the beginning of Jewish studies, when historical consciousness and historical research became the backbone of scientific study of Judaism, that the split was made between critical historical consciousness and collective memory.

Historical Consciousness

The transformations of historical consciousness in Israel and elsewhere are also the explicit and implicit subject of several studies of mine. Since my view differs in a number of central points from that of Yerushalmi, I would like to summarize its essence as follows. In Western culture, beginning with ancient times, a new type of historical image emerged out of collective memory; the name "historical consciousness" in the specific sense is appropriate for this image. Its essence lies not only in the reminder of the past for the purpose of creating collective identity and cohesiveness, but in the attempt to understand the past and to give it meaning.

It is no coincidence that historical consciousness developed primarily in Israel and in Greece: in both these cultures, as I have claimed elsewhere, historical consciousness is created from consciousness of historic origins. I am not referring to the image of the past restricted to historiographic creation alone, but to the stereotype image – a real part of the collective memory – as expressed in liturgy, in poetry, and in law. While most of the earlier Mediterranean cultures pictured their beginnings in mythical times, *in illo tempore*, near the time of the creation of the world, only the Jews and the Greeks preserved the memory of their nomadic past ("a wandering Aramaean was my father") and their becoming a nation in historical time – and relatively late historical time, at that. Note "When Israel was a child then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt" (Hosea 11:1); the consciousness of its coming into being in historic time has accompanied the Israeli faith ever since its first manifestations. From the viewpoint of the "Jahevist" in Judaea in the ninth century B.C., Israel was transformed from a tribe to a nation in Egypt, and the exodus from Egypt occurred some five hundred years before the writer's time.[19] Antiquity is a sign of aristocracy and status, certainly in ancient society. Youth is a sign of inferiority; and in fact the term "Hebrew" did connote lower social status ("a Hebrew slave" as compared to a "man of Israel"). Israel compensated for the inferior image based on its youth with its collective memory in the image of being the Chosen People: its monogamous God (and orphan of both parents) chose Israel alone; Israel is the "territory" and the "property" of God even before it becomes a people. God was, is, and will take active part in events of the time for the security and success of this people. Thus, historical consciousness, the consciousness of the beginning of history, and the consciousness of the choice are intertwined in the Scriptures.

The Greeks also viewed other cultures, such as that of Egypt, as being many times more ancient and richer than theirs, which Plato comments on in his Timaeus. The Greeks based their feeling of superiority (unlike the image of them that has been depicted by humanists since the Renaissance) not on their culture but on their political institutions: they enjoyed a kind of freedom that was possible only in the *polis*. The nations of the East lived on bondage; and the Greek-Persian War was the war of freedom against bondage.[20] A comparison of their culture to other cultures and the comparison of present society to past society created a clear-cut historiography in Greece. The distinguishing feature of historiography of the Scriptures is the emphasis on direct and indirect supreme supervision, and legitimization of the ruler (such as Solomon); the mark of Greek historiography is the search for "reasons" (αἰτία) and sensitivity to the development of society and its institutions – at times based on an analogy to medical diagnosis or the development of the individual.

Consciousness of the uniformity of history also has its dual origin in Israel and in Greece. The image of historical *time* as a single continuum of fulfillment of God's plan in well-defined chapters – historical "periods" – originates in the Jewish apocalyptic literature. The apocalyptic literature, whether of a cult (such as the cult of the Dead Sea Scrolls) or not, viewed this "world" (αἰων) as a temporary span of time, beginning with the sin of Adam and culminating in cosmic destruction, and an entirely new world to which only a few selected souls would escape. It viewed the present as being on the verge of the end of days, and sought proof of this both in the structure and the course of the time, as well as in the idiosyncratic-concrete decoding of the Scriptures, and in prophecies after the event.[21] The image of the arena of history – the historical *range* – as a single continuum and stage originated in the philosophical and historical thought of Hellenistic-Roman culture. Just as Hestua saw the entire world as one state (*cosmopolis*), so Polybius wrote the history of the *oikoumene*, the history of the settled world, as a developmental explanation of the gradual unification of the world under the best and most moderate of governments.[22]

The two images synthesized in historical consciousness as it

developed in the writing of the Fathers of the Christian church. From the very beginning, the Christian church (apologetica) faced two contradictory tasks: in opposition to the Jews, it had to prove the uniqueness and differentness of the New Testament as opposed to the Old Testament; in opposition to the heretics and sinners within its own ranks and on the outside (Markion, Gnosis), it had to prove the continuity between the New and Old Testaments, which were both given by the same shepherd. For this purpose, right from the beginning, Christianity adopted the apocalyptic *pesher* (decoding) mode of interpretation, typological thought, and the "accommodative" interpretation of history. Decoding means actualization of the Scriptures, and particularly of the prophecies in the Old Testament which refer to the period of the New Testament. Typological thought – the most clear-cut sign of the Christian perception of the past from the level of the masses to the highest level – identifies images, events, and institutions in the period of the Old Testament as an arche-pattern (prefiguration) of parallel images and events in the New Testament: the latter are a type of *impletio figurae*, the completion of the arche-pattern at a higher level.[23] Finally, under the influence of the concepts of cultural and social development according to Greek thought, Christian thought adapted the evolutionary concept of "accommodation" of God's providence, revelation, and governance to the level of human achievements and development in the various periods of world history, and even the Old Testament was a *praeparatio evangelica* in the same sense.[24]

In today's scholarship, there is general acceptance of the essentially mistaken assumption that the Judeo-Christian perception of history was "linear," while the Greek perception of history was "circular." Neither is correct.[25] Where do we find the first expression of the decisive position that a historical event is a one-time occasion – or that all of history is one-time, and the Lord does not "build worlds and destroy them?" I believe that it was in Augustine. In contrast to Origen's teachings of the αἰῶνε, which assumed consecutive worlds each ending in destruction by fire and in each of which the redeemer appears repeatedly, Augustine states decisively: Christ came and could come only once and for all time. Since the transformation to the flesh of the son of God is the central point around which the significant history of humanity revolves – the history of the "city of God wandering

on the earth" –, history is also temporally unique – even if some types of events and people recur.[26]

There would appear to be a strong link between Augustine's analysis of the concept of time as related to memory (which we commented on above) and his emphasis on the one-time nature of history. The Aristotelian concept of time is a physical-external concept: the measure had to be the repetitive cyclical motion of the zodiac. Time, by his definition, is the "degree of motion according to early and late." The measure of internal time, in contrast, is change, the event that does not repeat itself and is therefore "experienced." Time, according to Augustine, is the degree of both motion and rest and, very similar to Bergson's *durée*, it is an inner experience.[27] (The first to unite the two traditions of perception of time – physical and experiential, external and internal – was, I believe, Kant.)

Elsewhere I have tried to show how these ways of historical thinking in Christianity – the typological and the accommodative – were appropriated out of the exegist context in the twelfth century to become tools for analysis of the events of the present.[28] For until the twelfth century, the Europeans did not see the events of their time as significant in terms of *sacra historia*: from ancient Christianity to the second coming of the Redeemer, until his second "presence" (παρουσία), the world seemed to be in the sixth era of its history, and only aging (*mundus senescit*). The twelfth-century Christian thinkers discovered that the events of their time were important, worthy of "interpretation", just like the Old and New Testaments; there is no century in the Middle Ages more rich and abundant in historical speculation and historiographic creativity than the twelfth century.

In ancient times as in the Middle Ages, the writing of history – whether sacred or secular history – was bound up with the implicit assumption that the historical fact is a given: it does not need to be interpreted at the immediate level of understanding, but only at the deeper level of theological interpretation (*spiritualis intelligentia*). Therefore, the eye-witness seemed to them the most reliable historian.[29]

This was not the perception of history after the twelfth century, when a revolution occurred that was no less radical than the revolution in physical thought of Galileo's time. It entailed a new contextual perception according to which historical fact is "understood" only in terms of the context in

which it is rooted. This applies to both historical texts and any other remains of the past. The historian must reconstruct the context, and the reconstruction is always tied to his point of view in the present.

The contextual perception was incorporated to some extent in the medieval concept of accommodation discussed earlier, in that it also deems some institutions "fit" or "unfit" for their time, and distinguishes periods according to different "qualities of time" (*qualitas temporis*). But only in the seventeenth century was the idea transferred from the religious sphere to the secular sphere and applied first to legal interpretations and the interpretation of classical texts and only later to history itself. Not until the nineteenth century did history become the primary measuring-rod of all human sciences.

Historical Consciousness in Traditional Judaism

There is no doubt that from the completion of the Scriptures until the nineteenth century Judaism lacked a consecutive historiographic tradition. The books of the Hasmoneans constituted an exception; Josephus Flavius wrote for foreign needs; thus his Latin paraphrase (the Josiphon) was translated in the tenth century into Hebrew (the Book of Josiphon). The lack of historiography is explained by Yerushalmi in that the scriptural history provided the *tanas*, Amorites, and generations after them with more than enough archetypical patterns to evaluate the events of their time. These generations, at least until Ibn Varga's *The Rod of Judah*, saw no specific significance and identity in the events of their time. They viewed the characters of the Scriptures – and this is another sign of typological perception – as ubiquitous in their nature.[30]

First it should be noted that up to the eleventh century the historical conceptions of Judaism did not substantially differ from those of Christianity. Christian historiography in the ancient period, with the exception of a few writings, such as the book of Oroseum (also serving to prove the thesis of the theology of writing), is likewise little more than the history of the Church, written to establish the "chain of tradition" or Apostolian agreement. Genuine historical writings are relatively rare in the early medieval period. Neither did the authors of records until the eleventh century, principally

monks, see the events of the present as *digna memoriae*. In this regard, Jewish literature is no exception.

Moreover, the secular history of the West was, until the nineteenth century, primarily political historiography; it concentrated on the clear bearers of political power, rulers, and their actions. Here the communities of Israel, in the Diaspora and in Israel "in Arabian chains," saw themselves as political objects rather than subjects. Therefore the events of their own history as it developed did not seem to them "worthy of remembering."

Yet despite this – and perhaps because of it – the medieval Jews were not inclined to the typological vision and extreme typological interpretations that were common in their Christian environment (and in Shiite Islam). In emphasizing the typological element in traditional Jewish historical consciousness, Yerushalmi exaggerates: it exists principally in the analogy between the time of the kingdom and the messianic period. There are few typologies in Jewish liturgy (The Ninth of Av, Purim) as contrasted with their abundance in Christianity. The same holds true for Jewish thought. The exception proves the rule: Ramban (Nachmanides), who developed the typological vision of history into a comprehensive method of Torah interpretation, had almost no successors despite the widespread dissemination of his approach.[31]

However, even if historiography hardly existed at all in the sphere of traditional Judaism, and if the midrash constituted an archetypical pattern for completely ahistorical interpretations, a well-developed historical consciousness existed elsewhere – namely, in the halakhic interpretations and applications. I am not referring to Moses Maimonides' historical-accommodative interpretation of the reasons for the commandments in the Scriptures, which also remains an exception,[32] but to halakhic discussion itself. Here we find clear distinctions of time and place throughout: distinctions regarding customs according to period and location, exact knowledge of the place and time of the messengers and teachers of halakha, the estimated value of money mentioned in sources, the significance of institutions of the past. In the realm of halakha, every "event" was worthy of remembering, including the minority opinion.

Once again we should not be overhasty to consider this a special Jewish achievement. Both the rhetorical and the legal interpretations of the Roman law paid careful attention to

circumstantiae of legal texts, their period, their location, and the usage of words that changed over the periods; that technique may have begun in rhetoric and philology. It should be recalled that Aristarch of Samos stated it was necessary to "understand Homer according to Homer alone,"[33] and that pagan debaters always used this method in questioning the authenticity of Jewish and Christian sacred writings. The degree of historical awareness of the commentators and creators of the halakha was approximately the same as the degree of historical awareness of the interpreters of Roman law in the Middle Ages prior to the development of the *mos gallicus*.[34] To be more precise: the historical awareness of the sages of the halakha was restricted mainly to *realia* incorporated in Rabbinic law and to questions of authenticity (such as the authenticity of the Zohar).[35]

Historical consciousness also includes the development of myths or historical fictions. Often this refers to historical fiction, and perhaps to deliberate historical fiction. The most pronounced example is the fiction that was canonized at the beginning of the Sayings of the Fathers: "Moses received the Torah from Sinai and passed it on to Joshua, and Joshua passed it on to the elders, and the elders to the prophets, and the prophets to the members of the Great Knesset." Where are the high priests? Isn't it the high priest who appears in the Scriptures as the authorized commentator on the Torah – "And thou shalt come unto the priests and Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days" (Deuteronomy 17:9). However, the Tanaitic interests required emphasis on the line of tradition of the laymen as the bearers of the oral law.

Another example is also instructive: "on that same day" – meaning on the day that Rabbi Gamliel was relieved of the presidency in Yavne – "Yehuda, an Ammonite convertee, came and asked to join the congregation. Rabbi Gamliel said to him: You are forbidden, as it is said: 'No Ammonite or Moabite shall join the congregation of God.' Rabbi Joshua (b. Chananya) said to him: Do Moab and Ammon remain in their place? Sanherib came and mixed up all the nations, as it is said: 'And I will remove the boundaries between nations and ruin their reserves...'"[36] The generation is that after the destruction of the Temple; Yavne tried to impose its legal authority and reduce to a minimum the barriers in Israel – such as the limitations on marriage and the fine points of purification adhered to strictly by priests – in order to allow a

cohen to marry a daughter of Israel. "The priests agree to create distance but not to bring closer."[37] For the purpose of removing barriers, Rabbi Joshua b. Chananya was willing to forget and ignore an interpreted scripture; the demand of Ezra to send away the Moabite and Ammonite women – a demand that Joshua b. Chananya surely knew – was dated after Sanherib.

True, the tendency to see the entire history of Israel from the perspective of the Beit Midrash also created anachronisms and clear distortions, such as the comment on Lamentations Bar Kokhva used to say: "I am the King Messiah." The sages sent emissaries to him to see whether he could smell and judge [the metaphor 'smell and judge' – "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse ... and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sign of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears" (Isaiah 11:1-3) – is taken literally by the midrash], and when they saw that he could not, they killed him.[38] But in other places in the halakha, and occasionally in the midrash as well, we do find some sensitivity to anachronisms.[39] A crucial ruling in the Middle Ages was the opinion in the *tosaphoth* that "the gentiles of our time are not pagans."[40]

Over and beyond these examples is one basic fact: normative Judaism did not preserve a continuous record of political events in the form of chronicles or historical studies. However, it did preserve a continuous and chronological record of innovations in halakha: the halakha originated in a specific place and time. Until the nineteenth century, Judaism viewed the raison d'être of the Jewish nation in the halakha. Innovations of halakha were genuine "historical" happenings in the eyes of its leaders, and the term "innovation" (*hidush*) indicates that every halakhic ruling had to have historical, even if fictitious, legitimation.

My main point in this brief review is that Western historical consciousness does not contradict collective memory, but rather is a developed and organized form of it. Nor does it contradict historiographical creation, for both lie at its base and are nurtured by it. All three express the same "collective mentality," and the expression is always manifest in the individual who recalls and expresses it.

It is true that prior to the nineteenth century (and even later), the professional historian controlled knowledge, modes

of argument and investigation, and the accepted norms of educated expression; the majority of their society had little access to these. However, the nineteenth century, which witnessed the professionalization of history, was also the period in which the historian was given a special position in the establishment of its culture and justification of the nation-state. Historical research at that time still had a wide readership. This research, including the most professional, generally provided a faithful reflection of the problems of identity of the nation-state and the societal wishes. This is illustrated by de Toqueville's attempt to prove the continuum between the *ancien régime* (and thus to restore the Revolution to French history) – or the debate among German historians over whether the Saxon prince, Heinrich the Lion, was right to refuse to participate in King Friedrich I's invasion of Italy, or whether Heinrich IV was really defeated by the Pope at Canossa.

In the nation-state of the nineteenth century, collective memory was largely produced by historians and found its way into society through textbooks, speeches, lectures, and symbols. Even the metatheoretical debate over the limits and unique means of cognition of the humanities – empathetic "understanding" as opposed to causal-rational "explanation" – also reflected the assumption that only a national can write the history of his nation faithfully. In contrast, noone needs to be a triangle in order to prove the truth of a geometric statement. The crisis of the nation-state in the First World War was also a "crisis of historicism."[41]

The same is true for Jewish studies in the nineteenth century. How far did the radical historicization of Judaism remove scholars of Jewish studies in the nineteenth century from collective Jewish memory? Yerushalmi claims that this was the case; in contrast, I believe that the collective memory of the contemporary peer group of scholars of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* should be examined. Even if we assume that the majority of Orthodox Jews in France, Austria, and Germany were not aware of the full scope of the achievements of Jewish studies – even in its major areas of activity – its results nevertheless faithfully reflected the desires and the self-image of nineteenth-century Jews desirous of emancipation, and of the "perplexed of the times." The vast majority of German and French Jews wanted to adopt the culture of their environment and at the same time to preserve their special nature as a subculture.[42] What suited that desire more than a presenta-

tion of the history of Israel as "the history of one and the same idea – the idea of [ethical-rational], pure monotheism"? Thus, in the consciousness of the Jews until the nineteenth century, what made them unique among the nations of the world was their specialness: only they had been given the Torah and the commandments, and these ensured their existence, the "eternity of Israel," as opposed to the laws of the stars and nature: "Israel has no guiding star." The nineteenth century led to the need to ensure the uniqueness and the eternity of Israel by an immanent promise arising from the history of the world itself. Here consciousness was really turned upside down; for them, the specialness of Judaism was its universality.[43] The work and the desire of the historian reflected the desire of the peer group, and even became part of the "language" itself. Both Geiger's *Urschrift* and the Reform prayer book – that is, both historiography and "collective memory" – reflected the very same mentality and the same image of the past that wished to view contemporary Judaism – and Judaism at all times in the past – as liberal-bourgeois, open to its environment and to change. If Geiger interpreted the controversy between justifications of commentaries as one between the national conservative aristocracy and the democratic faction that was open to change (of which Jesus was also a descendant), his interpretation is of interest today only for scholarly reasons. On the other hand the commentator who wishes to view our forefather Abraham as the archetype of a municipal council member (*unser Erz-vater Jacob – das Vorbild eines Stadtverordneten*) seems ridiculous to us. The scope of the "collective memory" of the average German Jew of the nineteenth century was no less than that of the traditional Jew: merely its emphases were different.

The nation-state replaced the sacred liturgical memory with secular liturgical memory – days of rememberance, flags, and monuments. The national historian – who in the nineteenth century enjoyed the status of a priest of culture, and whose work, even professional, was still read by a wide stratum of the educated public – made the symbols concrete. It even created some of them, some almost from nothing, such as the legend of Hermann, the victorious Cheruskian hero of early Roman-Germanic encounter. A comprehensive critical study of the symbols and signs related to Jewish collective memory today, in Israel and outside it, has yet to be written. The pioneering article by S. Friedländer[44] on the memorialization

of the Holocaust and the revival can serve as a useful orientational point of departure for such research. I believe that such investigations will also lead to the conclusion that the distance between secular Jews (or secular Israeli culture) and traditional Judaism was created not by the lack of historical knowledge and symbols, but by their alienation from texts and textual messages, the halakha and the midrash. Moreover, in the history of Zionism and the Jewish settlement of Palestine, historiography has also reflected the accepted norms and ideals of the society it served.

This is not meant to deny the critical role of the historian in modern society or to view his critical achievements as mere pretense. On rare occasions, the historian comes out against distorted and even damaging images of the past; even more rarely, he succeeds in creating a new discourse beyond his professional sphere. Nevertheless, the critical argument itself can become a pattern for "collective memory," as did Marxist or psychoanalytical terminology, and even the most aware and critical of historians is bound by assumptions, not all of which he is fully conscious of.

The fact that the historian is always influenced by the "point of view" of his time and place,[45] from which he cannot detach himself completely, does not *necessarily* preclude historical understanding. Sometimes it adds a dimension that was entirely absent in the horizon of discourse of the period the historian wants to understand: the Middle Ages, for example, completely neglected the keeping of records, not to mention the explanation of the economics of their time. Historical consciousness begins with the data of the present; the object of historical interpretation is never "completely determined," and every interpretation that does not contradict the agreed factual basis provides additional understanding. However, this is not the place to develop more generally what I consider to be the principles of historical interpretation.

I have tried here to briefly examine the issue of historical consciousness and its relationship to collective memory and historical writing, and thus to contribute something to the demystification of collective entities and meanings.

Notes

1 G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. Glockner (Stuttgart, 1928), pp. 97-98; cf. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 9th ed. (Tübingen, 1960): "And thus its presence which governs the detailed historical matter ... is not in itself proof of histories of an 'era' ... nonhistorical eras (*unhistorische Zeitalter*) are not therefore also without time barriers (*ungeschichtlich*)." The contradiction of the opinions depends on different conceptualizations of time and temporality (ibid. p. 405 and ff.).

2 Amos Funkenstein, *Heilsplan und natürliche Entwicklung, Formen der Gegenwartsbestimmung im Geschichtsdenken des Mittelalters* (München, 1965), pp. 70-77 (hereafter: Funkenstein, 1965).

3 Examples are ibn Rashd and the Averroeists of the Middle Ages (*unitas intellectus*), as well as the somewhat different assumption of de Malebranche and Spinoza in the seventeenth century; and similarly, Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton, 1986), pp. 290-296 (hereafter: Funkenstein, 1986). In a sense, this is the assumption of all those who construct a "general consciousness" (such as Kant).

4 Descartes' "I think therefore I am" – *sum res cogitans* – is, as is known, an act – of judgment or a performative – which transforms into an attribute of a substance (thought). Descartes assumes without proof or any argument that this one-time act of consciousness (referring to himself as "I") is identical to a *person* with all its contents and continuity; among its contents is the concept of God. Only out of such an assumption can Descartes reconstruct the world destroyed previously under the tutelage of the "malignant spirit." For Leibniz, the self is a monad, encompassing by virtue of its very definition all its "states." Kant, who identifies the unity of consciousness with self-consciousness ("The 'I' accompanies all my perceptions"), denies (much as Ryle later) that it can be treated as a substance; but it is still isolated.

5 Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. F.G. Weiss, *Sämtliche Werke*, II (Leipzig, 1909), p. 140.

6 See Manfred Frank, *Die Unhintergehbarkeit von Indivi-dualität* (Frankfurt, 1986).

7 See Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de Linguistique géné-rale* (Paris, 1916), English translation by Wade-Basking: *Course in General Linguistics* (New York, 1958).

8 "And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes" (Exodus XIII:9); and compare XIII:16; Joshua II:7. In Genesis VII:16; XX:8; or Deuteronomy XVI:3, it is difficult to separate the subjective and the objective meanings. In Deuteronomy XXIV:22: "And thought shall remember ... therefore I command thee to do this thing," it is not the act (fulfillment of the commandment) that is remembered; the act *is* the memory.

9 See, for example, Exodus XIX:15.

10 See, for example, Viktor Klemperer, *Die Unbewältigte Sprache; aus dem Notizbuch eines Philologen "LTI"* (Leipzig, 1946).

11 Peter Loewenberg, "The Psychohistorical Origins of the Nazi Youth Cohort", in: *American Historical Review*, Vol. 76/5, 1971, pp. 1457-1502; Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (New York, 1936).

12 Aurelius Augustinus, *Confessiones*, X, 10,17; X, 16,14.

13 Maurice Halbwachs, *La Mémoire collective* (Paris, 1950), pp. 35-79, particularly pages 74, 99; cf. also J. Assman, "Kollektives Gedächtnis und kulturelle Identität", in: J. Assman and T. Hölscher (eds.), *Kultur und Gedächtnis* (Frankfurt/M, 1988), pp. 9-19.

14 See Friedrich Nietzsche's essay "Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben", in *Werke*, Karl Schlechta (ed.), vol. 1 (1874; München, 1960).

15 As early as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, warnings were voiced against anachronisms: for instance, F. Budde, *Historia Ecclesiastica* (Jena, 1726). Praef: "Saepius animaverti, plurimis mortalium, etiam praestantissimis viris, contingere, ut de rebus antiquissimis secundum sui temporis conditionem notiones animo forment." Also L'Abbé Fleury, *Les Mores des Israélites*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1712), p.8: "Je le prie de quitter les idées particulières de notre pays et notre temps, pour regarder les Israélites dans les circonstances des temps et des lieux..."

16 See Funkenstein, 1986, pp. 202-289, and Amos Funkenstein, "Continuity and Innovation in Seventeenth Century Thought and Science," in: *Israel National Acad-emy of Science*, Vol. VI, 6, pp. 119 (hereafter: "Continuity and Innovation").

17 Cicero, *De oratore* III, 153. Earlier, Aristarchus of Samos formulated the basic interpretative rule that Homer should be understood by Homer alone. See R. Pfeiffer, *Geschichte der klassischen Philologie von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des Hellenismus* (Hamburg, 1970), pp. 276-278.

18 Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor* (Seattle, 1982).

19 I Kings 6:1. Cf. also Funkenstein, 1986, pp. 243-250.

20 Charles N. Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study of Thought and Action from Augustus to Augustine*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1957), especially chapter XII.

21 Amos Funkenstein, "A Schedule for the End of the World: The Origins and Persistence of the Apocalyptic Mentality", in: *Visions of Apocalypse, End or Rebirth?*, (eds.) S. Friedländer, G. Holton, L. Marx, E. Skolnikoff (New York, 1985), pp. 44-60.

22 Polybius, *Historiae*, I, 4.1-2 (ed. F. Hultsch).

23 Amos Funkenstein, "Parshanuto ha-tipologit shel ha-RaMBan," in: *Zion* 45 (1979-80), pp. 35-59 (Heb.). An abridgment of the above titled: "Nahmanides' Symbolical Reading of History" in: *Studies in Jewish Mysticism*, (eds.) Joseph Dan & Frank Talmage (Cambridge, Mass., 1982), pp. 129-150.

24 See Funkenstein, 1986, pp. 271-351; Funkenstein, "Continuity and Innovation", p. 122, 129-150; Funkenstein, 1965, pp. 17-36, 51-54, 60-67.

25 See Funkenstein, 1986, p. 248, note 4, and Yerushalmi, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-109 (footnotes 4 and 7).

26 Augustinus, *De Civitate Dei* XII, 21, CCSL 48, p. 376; however, Augustine did not always understand Origen properly; cf. Origenes, *Contra Celsium IV*, 68 f., ed. Koetschau I, p. 338; *De Principiis* II, 3,4, ed. Klostermann, GCS Orign. V, p. 119. Origen also sometimes stressed the difference between the aeons.

27 See fn. 12.

28 Funkenstein, 1965, pp. 51-67, 77 ff., as well as Funkenstein, 1986, pp. 261-271.

29 Funkenstein, 1965, pp. 70-77 (the medieval concept of historical fact).

30 Yerushalmi, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-10, 35-36, 47 ff., 108, note 5.

31 Cf. note 23 above.

32 Amos Funkenstein, *Maimonide: nature, histoire et mes-*

sianisme, tr., C. Chrales (Paris, 1988). The teachings of the origins of the commandments mainly influenced the non-Jewish world, as early as the Middle Ages, and more so in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See A. Funkenstein, "Gesetz und Geschichte: zur historisierenden Hermeneutik bei Moses Maimonides und Thomas von Aquin", in: *Viator* I (1970), pp. 148-177, and J. Guttmann, "John Spencer's Erklärung der biblischen Gesetze in ihrer Beziehung zu Maimonides", in: *Festschrift für D. Simonson* (Kopenhagen, 1923), pp. 258 ff.

33 See fn. 17.

34 See also D. Kelly, "Klio and the Lawyers", in: *Medievalia et Humanistica* V (1975), pp. 24-49.

35 Yaakov Emden, *Mitpachat Sefarim* (Lemberg, 1927), pp. 37-40; Y. Tishbi, *Mishnat Hazohar*, vol. I (Jerusalem, 1956), pp. 52-56.

36 Mishna, *Seder Toharot*, Tractate Yadayim 4.

37 Ibid.

38 Midrash Eicha Rabati, chapter 2.

39 See also Yerushalmi, *op. cit.*, p. 111, note 21.

40 Y. Katz, *Between Jews and Gentiles* (Jerusalem, 1959), chapter 2.

41 Dilthey developed the main points of his teaching prior to the First World War; Troeltsch published his book after it: E. Troeltsch, *Der Historismus und seine Probleme* (Tübingen, 1922).

42 Amos Funkenstein, "Hermann Cohen: Philosophie, Deutschtum und Judentum", in: *Jahrbuch des Instituts für Deutsche Geschichte*, Beiheft 6, pp. 355-365 (Tel Aviv, 1984); David Jan Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry, 1780-1840* (New York, 1987).

43 Amos Funkenstein, "Zionism and Science: Three Aspects", Lecture in memory of Chaim Weizmann, separate edition (Rehovot, 1985).

44 Saul Friedländer, "Die Shoah als Element in der Konstruktion israelischer Erinnerung", in: *Babylon*, Heft 2/ 1987, pp. 10-22.

45 This is an insight first formulated in the eighteenth century by Gatterer, Chlademius, and others, using Leibniz's terminology. Cf. P. Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1975); R. Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik historischer Zeiten*, Frankfurt/M. 1979.

Lutz Niethammer

Afterthoughts on Posthistoire

The Zeitgeist tries to elude specification by resorting to a host of terms prefixed by the morpheme "post-": post-modern, post-industrial, post-revolutionary society. That list can be extended – yet the most encompassing of these epithets, namely "posthistoire," enjoys only apocryphal popularity. In articles or notes on research in progress, you may occasionally chance upon the observation, almost in passing, that history is at an end, that we live in "posthistorical" times. The bald statement usually stands without any further commentary, as if little more need be added. Interest in the posthistorical era is riveted more on aesthetic playfulness as an approach to the potpourri of the past, simulation of arbitrarily selected fragments drawn from bygone eras: one engages in a game with tokens that have some semblance of enduring value, yet are quoted out of context, and thus annulled.

The historian reading these terse pronouncements about the supposed demise of the very subject and pith of his professional craft is bewildered, since his field would appear to be enjoying something of a rejuvenation: a rare conjunction of increased historical interest, encouragement by the media and an aesthetic reanimation of elements culled from the cultural heritage. He is unnerved and troubled by what the heralds of posthistoire seem to insinuate: that the entire project of rehistoricization may ultimately be little more than some sort of simulation itself, a phoney spectacle staged and directed by the culture industry. He is plagued by gnawing doubts: perhaps all the historian is in fact involved with is some ambitious enterprise of manipulation, a project akin to the cataloguing of tiny fragments of stone, chosen arbitrarily. He endeavors to arrange them into a pattern, without knowing whether or not they form part of a larger mosaic. Beyond these small specimens looms a chaos: a pile of past debris and detritus, formless and without plan. Is this dust-blown heritage the reflection of posthistoire?

Before the historian's object of study evaporates into a mirage, it would be useful to examine some of the more explicit discussions of the Zeitgeist, focusing on the nature of