



The Phenomenon of Collective Memory in the Semantic Contexts of Post-Modernity

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Abstract: *The article is devoted to the study of the phenomenon of collective memory in the value contexts of post-modernity. During the 20th century, the culture of memory is revealed through the individual-collective polarity, and in the postmodern era attention is focused on the boundary between them, on the culture of memory in the dimension of the modern media, on the contexts of the global information war. While individual memory loses touch with the past in the dimension of simulated identity, collective memory is usually associated with tradition as a reservoir of memory of the past. Collective memory in the age of modern media is in certain danger of targeted negative external influence, falsification, and inflation. The deepest cultural fears of the 20th century are the deformation or loss of memory, as well as the fear of memory substitution. The main value is linking memory with authenticity in the reproduction of the basic narrative in the cultural practices of today, in which the individual intersects with the collective. That is why the article pays special attention to the border between individual and collective memory, the culture of recall in communicative projects, and the reflection of moral dilemmas in different models of historical memory, the confrontation of different memories.*

Keywords: *collective memory; individual memory; culture of memory; places of memory; dynamics of memories; communicative memory; collective symbols*

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1. Introduction

The phenomenon of memory in individual and collective dimensions becomes the subject of research by philosophers, historians, cultural anthropologists, and psychologists in the tumultuous 20th century, when in the discourses of crisis and cultural trauma, the concepts of *memory*, *forgetting*, and *recollection* are revealed in new historical contexts, and there is a rethinking of the methodological principles of its research in the processes of deontology of culture. Approaches to the study of memory processes, which have been based on mnemonic techniques, linear history, and an established model of the universe, are changing. As a result of the emergence of a huge number of cultural mediations. The problem of collective memory needs special attention in the context of various discourses: power, religious, political, spectacular-hedonistic-advertising, cultural-traumatic, etc.

The hermeneutic approach to the reconstruction of the past must now take into account the extreme expansion of memory to emotions, feelings, the body, to the reproduction of a spatio-temporal model of perception in a certain narrative. At a time when historical narratives are losing their authenticity, the need to live certain experiences that can only seem authentic is replaced by a directive to reproduce the authentic, the real, and the true, both on an individual and collective level, containing a scaled and therefore more imperceptible for reflection influence.

In the concepts of memory of the 20th century, according to the principle of binary oppositions of a world split in half, the polarity of individual and collective memory is evident. In parallel, the idea of memory as a construct corresponding to one or another *mode of historicity* is being formed. However, the constructivist approach, with all its advantages, does not explain exactly how a person masters the space-time of culture, which helps preserve memory as a source of meanings that refer to the origins of true identity.

The search for a common field of intersection between collective and individual memory is gaining relevance because it is at the border, that one can trace the peculiarities of the modern culture of memory, the conditions for the emergence of new collective symbols, the formation of identity and its semantic strategies in modern cultural practices. Therefore, the purpose of the research is to reveal the peculiarities of the phenomenon of collective memory in the semantic contexts of post-modernity, identity changes, and communicative practices.

2. Literature review

Reflections of memory in the space-time of culture are presented in the works of Halbwachs (1992), Assmann (2008), Assmann (2011), Nora (1989), Connerton (2008), and other researchers who reveal the work of memory in terms of cultural practices from the past to today, study the logic of its representations in resonance with changes in scientific and artistic world pictures, as well as in the dynamics of individual and collective interaction.

The cultural-traumatic discourse of memory, which combines historical, cultural, and psychoanalytical approaches, addresses the issue of collective memory directly. It is formed around the concepts of Neal (1998) (national trauma), (Alexander et al., 2004) (cultural trauma), (the traumatic gap between event and representation), etc. The disclosure of the problem of memory in the dimension of post-modernity turns several researchers, in particular, to the problem of the *refraction* of historical narratives in the mind (Rüsen (2007), Ricoeur (2004), Hartog (2015), Wrzosek (1995)), to the study of the structures of historical time (Koselleck (2004)), to the disclosure of cultural contexts of historical experience and narrative substance (Ankersmit (2004; 2005)), to the practices of reproduction of primary sociality (Maffesoli, Haio (205), to the conflicts of interpretation of the traumatic past at different levels of memory (Zerubavel (1995), Caruth (1996)), etc. Ideas of expanding the contextuality of memory with the involvement of achievements of transgenerational psychology of experience and media philosophy are presented in the concepts of post-memory by Hirsch (2008), 'media memory' by Kansteiner (2002), etc.

Ukrainian scientists (Nahorna (2014), Bondarevska (2013), Kebuladze (2013), Holyk (2017), Pukhonska (2017), Losyk (2016), Menzhulin (2021), Ilin (2020), Kyrydon (2017), Kis (2010), Bodnar (2020) and others) investigate the culture of memory in individual-collective dimensions. Memory is inseparable from the analysis of semantic universals of national culture (Polishchuk (2018), Parakhonsky, Yavorska (2019), Konyk (2019)), etc. The basis of the national-existential methodology of the study of the phenomenon of memory is the paradigm of recall and the revision of historiography, which began with Ukraine gaining independence.

3. Methodology

Memory as an object of primarily cultural-philosophical research requires a comprehensive analysis of the dynamics of individual and collective interaction. Cultural, axiological, and hermeneutic approaches are the basis of the research. These approaches made it possible to reveal the scaling processes of individual and collective memory at the macro- and micro-levels of history, in the perspectives of approximation and distance. In order to study the theoretical aspects of the analysis of memory culture, the methods of analysis and synthesis, as well as the historical-comparative method, were used. The interdisciplinary approach is determined by the very direction of *Memory studies*, research that takes place on the resonances of philosophical, historical, ethnological, and psychological studies. Turning to the methods of synchronous and diachronic analysis of memory in the space-time of culture allows us to reveal the current trends of the culture of collective memory concerning cultural practices, which also provides the main research strategy: the unity of historical and logical approaches. The methodological key to the analysis of general trends in the development of historical and cultural memory is a paradigmatic approach, which not only reveals the peculiarities of the development of memory in the space-time of culture but also reveals the dynamics of the transition to an expanded, complicated model of memory, to critically reflect on the paradigm of recall, the theory of narratives, the doctrine of archetypes, in the dimension of synergy processes and various memory models. All the above approaches and methods made it possible to consider the phenomenon of collective memory in the meaningful contexts of post-modernity.

4. Results and Discussion

An important peculiarity of the 20th century was the rethinking of the issues of space and time of culture in the context of history, memory, and identity. Information wars in the new media formats affect the interpretation of the past-present-future, a person's self-awareness. There is a *debunking* of Enlightenment science and there are total doubts about the authenticity – step by step the supports of cultural ontological certainty are disappearing. One of them has always been memory. Memory in the processes of culture is expanded in parallel and virtualized, the confrontation between memory and history is sharpening, and their interdependence is becoming more and more obvious. In his book Rösen (2007) notes that a certain shift occurs in the era of the crisis of history, because “there has been a global wave of intellectual explorations into fields that are ‘historical’ by their nature” (Rösen, 2007, vii).

But together with the crisis of general history, we face the crisis of memory in its individual and collective forms. The biggest threat to humanity is the *change* or *loss* of memory. After all, natural gaps in memory as a result of the influence of new knowledge, technologies, and a new field of culture, in particular manipulative practices, do not just become vulnerable – they disappear.

Delegating memory becomes an attractive way out of the situation of its increasing burden and complexity. As Nora (1989) notes, the less memory is experienced from the inside, the more it exists only through its external signs – hence an attempt to simultaneously fully preserve the present and total preservation of the past. The researcher explains such an instruction to archive memory also with the fears and anxieties of the present, and humanity's uncertainty in the future.

In general, the *memory turn* is due to the heterogeneity of the reflection of the past and the complication of the very processes of information preservation and broadcasting in postmodern

culture, which are becoming unpredictable. This leads to the fact that memory goes beyond established narrative-mimetic forms, the usual retelling of well-known plots, because they are now selected, combined, and changed by a person whose cultural self-awareness becomes bolder and more independent (Losyk, 2016).

The problem of memory is revealed in different contexts: social, cultural, historical, collective, and visual – all these perspectives present the general culture of memory as a certain civilization dimension, which includes the understanding of history and different *traditions of remembering*. The attachment of memory to the past is a sign of its functioning in tradition. But with the complexity of the memory model, the *conflicts of interpretation of the past* spread: a ‘symbolically reconstructed past’, a ‘social structural past’, an ‘implied objective past’, a ‘mythical past’ (Zerubavel & Barnett, 1986). Studying the social and historical contexts of these conflicts actualizes memory as something homogeneous that has to be deconstructed each time depending on the historical situation.

In these situational-historical dimensions, the division into collective and individual memory in search of its foundations is most noticeable.

Collective memory and identity require comprehensive research to reveal the phenomenon of memory as a system of images that were historically formed, preserved, transmitted, and transformed under the influence of new experiences. A *historical event* is an experience of reality that people experience together, which is preserved in the memory of generations and transmitted to descendants. This connection between generations becomes shaky and uncertain in the conditions of the criticism of tradition, which spread together with the criticism of culture at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Therefore, attention to collective memory is due primarily to this ‘time gap’, when individual memory was separated from collective memory and we found ourselves in a situation of searching for support and sacred sources of both our own and national history.

Halbwachs (1992), who initiated the study of collective memory, considered memory precisely as a function of a *continuous connection of generations*. He paid special attention to the relationship between collective and individual memory in groups that lived in different times and left behind material evidence. He investigates the issues of reconstruction of the past and localization of memories, pointing out the dangers of the method of social reconstruction. The researcher also resorts to the need to define the collective framework of memory, which are not the “empty forms where recollections coming from elsewhere would insert themselves. Collective frameworks are, to the contrary, precisely the instruments used by the collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society” (Halbwachs, 1992, 40).

And, accordingly, it is not so much the *mystical collective soul* as the society with its complex sign and symbolic system becomes the subject of further research into collective memory. Shared memory is formed through shared symbols in the space of the group, which refers to the actual process of symbolization. Here the group differs from the somewhat abstract idea of the group of Halbwachs (1992). This life-giving group memory draws the attention of researchers to the very process of generation of events of the past, where the role of commemorative narratives and rituals in contemporary social life is revealed (Zerubavel, 1995). Participation in ‘commemorative’ rituals, that is, actually in the processes of preserving and passing on the memory of the past, paying attention to the special aura of these rituals allows not only to revive old memories but also to change them.

Having gotten rid of the completeness of reproduction in the ritual, memory is separated from the sacred mythical basis, from the belief in the original myth that determines history. As a result of the desacralization of tradition, the state of culture is changing, as Nora (1989) calls it ‘fundamental collapse of memory’. In a deeper context, it is a departure from collectivity based on traditional ritual. This ritual collectivity had to be restored or replaced with something. And this replacement became places of memory, as new reference points of identity for many people. Places of memory act as a *visible remnant of the past*, its representation, therefore they are often objects of

a ritual in which the invisible part is reproduced. Places of memory represent a certain symbolic space in which the identification of individual discourse with collective discourse takes place (Nora, 1989). Places of memory block the work of forgetting, but unlike Halbwachs, Nora considered them evidence not of a return to the past, but of a break with it. Speaking about the loss of memory, the researcher means first of all its replacement by history.

Nora's memory research opens a discourse of criticism of traditional historiography and is evidence of the 'reawakening' of history. Understanding the work of tradition as collecting remains, searching for traces, and fragments with transportation to the archive causes distortions of archival memory. We have to catch the difference between real, authentic memory, which is handed down in the tradition non-verbally, related to self-awareness of the body, a sense of authenticity, and, on the other hand, memory which is mediated by history. The researcher describes two types of memory places: the first, spectacular and triumphant, and, generally, imposed either by a national authority or by an established interest; the second is "places of refuge, sanctuaries of spontaneous devotion and silent pilgrimage, where one finds the living heart of memory" (Nora, 1989, 23). In general, there are many such classifications, which are based on the unconscious organization of collective memory, which we are obliged to bring to consciousness.

In addition to places of memory memorials, history as a whole is saturated with mnemonic representations and sacred objectivity, and therefore to some extent enters into the space of faith. The past here becomes a defining factor of unification. From this point of view, memory is closely related, on the one hand, to the interpretation of the past, given by certain frames and mnemonic representations, and on the other hand, it seeks to go beyond continuous archiving and identification of memory with history, faith, and trust in a basic, usually remote in time, narrative. That is, it seeks to get out of stagnation and into the space of actual changes.

The issue of places of memory in post-modernity actualizes the shift of attention from the idea of a tradition remote in time as the basis of memory to its transitional states and communicative aspects. This process can be referred to as contextual memory expansion.

The turn to communicative memory addresses experience, which should be considered in an extremely broad perspective. According to Koselleck (2004), if we collect all the testimonies of numerous witnesses from antiquity to the present: politicians, philosophers, theologians, poets, as well as historians themselves, they should answer the question of how expectations, hopes, or predictions are correlated with the past and find linguistic expression in projections of the future, how, in a concrete situation, experiences come to terms with the past.

Assmann (2008) emphasizes that memory is not just a reconstruction of the past, it is modeled and the way we live it in the moment *here* and *now* plays a big role. One of the important aspects of his research is an appeal to the actual mechanisms of memory formation and functioning, to its boundary states, therefore the researcher is interested in "transitions and transformations account for the dynamics of cultural memory" (Assmann, 2008, 117).

But it is at the communicative level that identity is formed as a set of social roles, as the personification of a certain social self. Here the immediate past is revealed, containing a certain set of facts and artifacts, a connection directly with people as its carriers, and a certain biographical experience, because communicative memory usually covers three or four nearest generations. If the cultural memory sets meanings and is the cultural basis of the transmission of the myth through rituals and holidays, then the communicative one is more saturated information that affects the individuality of a person in the present.

Cultural memory is related to collective memory through the unification of people based on belonging to a certain worldview system of the national world, that is, based on national identity. Assmann (2008) believed that collective memory not only preserves the unity of the group but also strengthens identity, and helps build a system of symbols through a certain kind of reflexivity. His following paper (Assmann, 2011) focuses attention on the problems of individualization and memory activity and reveals the mechanisms of changing its forms of preservation and transmission.

The researcher turns to communicative memory as a more reliable source of meaning formation, because memory here goes beyond the cultural text. Thus, book culture has passed into the past, audiovisual culture is also already inferior to practices in which the content of corporeality is greater and deeper. The pluralization of memory is also connected with the development of means of communication. Therefore, it is not the text that becomes decisive, but identity, means of social influence, and value dimensions of memory culture. At the same time, we observe symptoms of danger, because the reliability and quality of new images are becoming quite problematic. According to Nahorna (2014), this turn expresses the need for a new ethics based on the 'dialogical paradigm'.

Jaspers (2001), Adorno (1998), Ricoeur (2004), Rösen (2007), Koselleck (2004), Ankersmit (2005), and others focused on the moral and ethical aspects of cultural memory. Responsibility for history, the ability to organize memory, and bring rationality to chaos becomes the subject of research by Rösen (2007), who considers the work of memory as a *war of narratives*. The moral aspect of memory is expressed in the desire for truth, which is achieved not only by checking sources, analyzing facts, etc., but by *critically mobilizing the past*, where responsibility for history reveals another context of memory – intercultural. In the narrative structure of historical time with an emphasis on intercultural and transgenerational processes, the peculiarities of its conceptualization and the mental strategy of cultural preservation are revealed. It defines how the human mind appropriates contingency by narration.

The valuable aspect of memory is revealed in the dimension of time, in the unfolding of historical thinking, which closes with one's own experience. Ricoeur (2004) considered historical memory to be the most important component of culture, a source of moral values and images of a better future. He emphasizes the objectivity of *fair memory* because it is important *how* we interpret history for future generations and support a culture of moral values, not violence. This forms a critical reflection of the contradictory circumstances of history, the fates of certain personalities, contradictions of modes of historical thinking, etc.

Ankersmit (2004) also claims that ethics in itself is an important aspect of understanding history. But at the same time, ethical and political standards can be the worst examples of the work of historical memory, and to preserve the best, the researcher proposes to develop a kind of philosophical microscope, with the help of which it is possible to examine and investigate the most subtle ramifications of historical, ethical and political discourses. The microscope-telescope metaphor reveals the regularities of the interaction of individual and collective memory in the space of postmodern culture because similar processes take place at both poles of micro- and macro-history. In post-modernity, we observe the extreme expansion of memory contexts, in connection with which the functions of preservation and translation are actualized since the principle is changing – there is a transition from an established tradition with linear processes of information transmission to a dynamic structure open not only to internal changes but also to external influences.

These transformations become the subject of research by Assman (2008), Assman (2011), Hirsch (2008), etc. The researchers pay attention to the living connection between the nearest generations, which is of great importance for the preservation of memories in the changing and dynamic modernity. This also makes it possible to explain the extension of memory contexts and the complex algorithms of experience transfer. Ideas about functional, affiliative, and communicative memory are considered in the context of identity practices.

In the radical practices of post-modernity, the appeal to the actual memory becomes important in order to understand its work in action and to prevent a violation of the collective and individual balance. In small collective communities, memory processes can be coordinated from the inside and this is their great advantage. External management processes are easier to start in a large organization. Notable in this regard is the interview that C. Jung, the founder of analytical psychology and an expert on the 'collective soul', gave to a Swiss newspaper in 1945, after the surrender of the German army in Reims. Reflecting on the collective and individual guilt of the

Germans after the defeat, he noted: "All of them, whether consciously or unconsciously, actively or passively, have their share in the horrors; they knew nothing of what was going on and yet they did know, as though a party to a secret *contract génial*" (McGuire, Hull, 1987, 150). Studying the psychology of the Nazis, C. Jung concludes that their unconscious was full of demonic forces. For him, the *demonic* is a projection of nature, which in European culture was supplanted first by Christianity, then by science, and which, turning into monsters of the unconscious, gave rise to crazy ideas of destruction and self-destruction. Demonic images influence numinously through archetypes and, mainly, on large masses.

Each nation's path to individualism is unique, and the cure for the tendency to be enchanted by archetypes lies not only in changing the political system but in the education of the individual *from person to person*, in sincere repentance. Therefore, the term *collective* does not always mean the presence of a collective memory. Already in the context of the formation of collective and individual memories in the media and communication perspective, Kansteiner (2002) expresses a somewhat paradoxical opinion that "the more 'collective' the medium... the less likely it is that its representation will reflect the collective memory of that audience" (Kansteiner, 2002, 193).

However, the experience of the atomized subject of mass culture of the 20th century revealed that memory cannot be only individual. The inability *to remember together*, that is, to form a memory model in live communication, leads to a kind of *memory death*. Ricoeur (2004), while investigating the connection between individual consciousness and collective memory, paid attention primarily to the conditions for preserving the *sense of unity of the self*. When we do not belong to a group, our memory weakens due to the lack of external support. However, the sense of the unity of the Self persists, through the intermediary of the consciousness we have at every instant of belonging at the same time to different milieus. Even in oppositional social influences, and therefore social uncertainties, it gives the possibility of own independent position. According to the researcher, in the *personal act of recollection* one first looked for, and then found, a sign of the social, the difference of which from a radical illusion is determined by personal faith and testimony. This is an extremely relevant idea that we should look for the priority of memory management not from the outside, but from the inside.

Understanding proximity as a dynamic relationship, Ricoeur (2004) also emphasizes that these should be people who are close in spirit, from communication with whom a special kind of memory is formed. The value of relationships with close relatives outlines the meaning of birth and death as two events that limit human life and which are beyond consciousness and control. Life and death for society are facts of demographic policy, but for close relatives, they have a special meaning from the point of view of the culture of memory.

Therefore, the morality of the new collectivity is formed in boundary cultural practices, where the individual and the collective are balanced. This is due to the attention paid to the communicative memory of small communities, three or four generations, where collective symbols are created from the living fabric of culture, the stories of witnesses, the dynamics of personal memories, and existing artifacts. It is in communicative memory that personal and collective identification can occur at the same time, and the transition to cultural memory is carried out. Ignoring the important stages of the formation of cultural and historical memory leads to its vulnerability to external influences, absorption by archetypal ideas detached from historical reality, from the challenges of the present time. Such an emphasis on the collective plunges consciousness into a dream of oblivion. A huge number of disasters and traumatic experiences accumulate in the bowels of collective memory, and the scaling of collective symbols leads to cultural amnesia and the possibility of creating an artificial construct of memory.

Critical mobilization of the past in the moral dilemmas of post-modernity is possible through the transmission of memory from person to person in the space of live communication. This is how a new place of memory emerges as a collection of directed collective energy, opportunities to generate new collective symbols in the moment here and now. The fact that previously the collective and individual dimensions of memory coincided in a ritual replaced by

places of memory in living communication reveals a relative zone in its relationship to a real event: memory is pluralized and modeled.

Absorption by collective images scaled to large masses leads to the archaization of the community, and a drop in the level of memory, the key to which are the processes of accumulation and submission to the dominant collective idea. New narrative practices become freer dynamic forms that unfold in the process of formation, work with all agents of communication, and involve work with value concepts, responsibility, and the possibility of moral choice. In communicative projects, as new places of memory, there is a certain synchronization of versions, and their resonant interaction, which is revealed in the understanding of memory processes according to the fractal principle as the detection of regularities through the establishment of certain analogies. It is like an intuitive sense of truth.

5. Conclusions

Therefore, in critical periods of history, the boundary between the collective and individual dimensions of memory becomes relevant, the contexts of which are studied in the culture of historical memory, visual-media studies, and cultural-traumatic discourse. The individual and the collective are combined in the living practices of the culture of memory, an actual history that is simultaneously lived and reflected upon. Boundary processes can be traced in the dynamics of communication (actions of communicative memory).

The historical authenticity and value of a fact, an artifact, or an event are revealed through the practices of unfolding a narrative, a special form of involvement in the memory of another. This process is aimed at forming a symbolic system of collective memory here and now and makes it impossible to preserve memory with scaled collective images, which is characteristic of societies with a dominant collective nature.

The development of communicative memory through the formation of a culture of joint thinking contributes to the coordination of different narratives in the value plane of new collective symbols, the transition from complicity in experiencing a common emotional experience to its understanding of a common concept, which is possible only in an active intellectual space. These searches take place in the plane of identifying individual and collective resonances in the creation of collective symbols in new places of memory.

A new collectivity is formed at the level of communicative memory, where personal and collective identification takes place and the transition to cultural memory is carried out. The creation of collective symbols from communicative memory (especially generational memory) protects against absorption by scaled symbols of collective memory, which leads to cultural amnesia and opens the possibility of artificial correlation of memory.

The critical mobilization of the past in the moral dilemmas of post-modernity is possible through the translation of memory from person to person in the liminal space, which corresponds to one of the stages of the ritual process. A new place of memory emerges as a collection of directed collective energy, opportunities to generate new collective symbols in the moment here and now.

Under the conditions of external threats with changes in the information field, in particular the scaling of collective symbols, the restoration of communicative memory in groups becomes the basis for the formation and maintenance of the group's memory, which includes the acceptance of traumatic events in order to build a new credibility of collective memory. The process of constant restructuring of the past-present-future becomes the foundation of a new collectivity, which is opposed to memorylessness, the replacement of basic narratives, and the scaling of invented (artificial) collective symbols.

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