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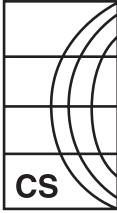

Collective Memory in a Global Age

Learning How and What to Remember

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abstract: This article argues that attempts to conceptualize the memory boom in amnesic societies have resulted in a clash between two theoretical stands: the approach which stresses the significance of remembering and the perspective which insists on the value of forgetting. It asserts that neither the value of memory nor the value of forgetting can be taken for granted and argues that any search for possible resolutions to the dialectical relationship between remembering and forgetting should be taken in the interest of cultivating a relationship with the past that enhances societal well-being in the present. Such reasoning leads us to judge the value of cosmopolitan memory in terms of its capacity to shape post-nationalist solidaristic political communities. The acceptance of the need to judge the act of putting the past in the service of the present requires us to question the contrasting projects of cosmopolitan citizenship: one claiming that remembering is vital for sustaining plurality and diversity of a global citizenship, and the other that stresses the importance of forgetting for the emergence of the politics of a global citizenship. After presenting contrasting views on the importance of memory for the development of cosmopolitan citizenship, the article searches for an approach to memory which is better suited to projects that aim to ensure post-nationalistic solidarity and human rights while protecting cultural rights, minority rights and personal identity.

keywords: cosmopolitan ✦ forgetting ✦ global society ✦ memory

Introduction

Today, memory has become to be seen as 'as cure to the pathologies of modern life' (Huyssen, 1995: 6), while at the same time forgetting has established itself as one of the best strategies for navigation through the social world (Connerton, 2008). The fact that 'we live with memory on our

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lips but in societies without living memory' (Nora, 1996: 5) is one of the most interesting paradoxes of contemporary societies. Unsurprisingly, sociologists are confused; some of them, for example, Bethke Elshtain (2006: 87), claim that our era is one of forgetting, while others, for instance Olick (2003), argue that we live in societies fascinated with memory. The attraction of memory in post-national, post-traditional and global societies can be illustrated by our readiness to erect memorials to events that have only just happened (e.g. debates about the appropriate monument for the victims of September 11 started only a few weeks after the terrorist attack) as well as by the burgeoning field of memory studies (see, for example, the new journal *Memory Studies*). The passion for the preservation of personal memory is visible in the proliferation of personal blogs, family history websites and memorial websites on the Internet. The role of memory is also illustrated by the fact that many contemporary spiritual battles are fought on the terrain of memory.

Such debates and conflicts often take the form of clashes over how to represent the past: what should be remembered and what should be forgotten are typically fought between social 'camps' and are constitutive in the formation of new identities (Zerubavel, 1997: 12). For example, one of the most significant battles to correct the Polish national memory was a debate on Polish–Jewish relations during the Second World War. This clash, initiated by Jan Tomasz Gross's (2001) book *Neighbors* (which disclosed events from Polish history that do not fit into the Polish ethos of suffering and heroism), catalysed rethinking of the Polish national identity and Poles' attitudes to the others (Glowacka and Zylinska, 2007). Another example of such debates is a clash that has recently occurred in some English schools. The report for the Department for Education and Skills, *Teaching Controversial History*, found that history departments in northern cities had avoided selecting the Holocaust as a GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education; a set of qualifications taken by 14- to 16-year-old students) topic for fear of confronting 'anti-semitic sentiment and Holocaust denial' among some Muslim pupils (*The Guardian*, 2 April 2007: 8). Although teaching of the Holocaust is expected to become compulsory under the new national curriculum from 2007–8, 'schools have avoided teaching the Holocaust and the Crusades in history lessons because they are concerned about causing offence to Muslim pupils or challenging "charged" versions of history which children have been taught at home' (*The Guardian*, 2 April 2007: 8). Another school decided to teach the Holocaust despite anti-Semitic sentiment among students, but 'avoided the Crusades as "their balanced" treatment of the topic would have directly challenged what was taught in some local mosques' (*The Guardian*, 2 April 2007: 8).

Yet, despite growth of the passion for memory, today culture's power to dissolve memories grants a high status to forgetting. In an information age,

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with an abundance of data and knowledge, with a well-developed storage system of data, forgetting, which is a normal adaptive strategy in all circumstances, becomes an essential defence policy (Singer and Conoway, 2008). 'Taken together, the great archivization and the new information technologies, the one centralizing, the other diffusive, have brought about such a cultural surfeit of information that the concept of discarding may come to occupy as central a role in the 21st century as the concept of production in the 19th century' (Connerton, 2008: 65). In the interconnected world, with its overflow of easily accessible information, where forgetting becomes all the more necessary, we witness the decline in the role of national memories as stable sources of identity. With post-national trends, such as the European unification, further enhancing the construction of 'solidarities below the level of identities grounded in histories' (Berger, 2007: 17), the national past is no longer the sole site for the articulation of collective identities.

The growing importance of forgetting seems to worry not only representatives of the 'cultural conservatism'. For example, the British prime minster, Gordon Brown, rejects forgetting as threatening the idea of nation and claims that memory is required to 'step in' to forge a 'retrospective continuity' between past and present (*The Guardian*, 14 January 2006: 1). Brown, in his recent proposal for a day of national patriotism, Remembrance Sunday, proclaims a war against forgetting. By making the English language and history essential elements of citizenship, reclaiming national symbols such as the union flag, Brown hopes to unify the nation around British ideas, customs and values (*The Guardian*, 14 January 2006: 1). Such efforts to strengthen national identity with the help of historical remembering are neither new nor peculiar to Britain. What is interesting here is that this attempt to grant the importance to the national memory in shaping the national identity occurs in the context of the growing decoupling of nation and identity (Levy and Sznaider, 2006a; Nora, 1996). In short, the widespread desire to memorize events, in the context of the growing usefulness of forgetting, as the necessary strategy for navigation through the interlinked and information-rich world, is one of the most interesting paradoxes of contemporary societies.

This paradox is not, however, fully grasped by today's attempts to conceptualize the memory boom in amnesic societies as they tend to focus either on the significance of remembering or on the value of forgetting. Such efforts have resulted not only in the clash between two theoretical views on the nature of modern societies but also in the clash between two normative claims about how we should organize our society. Moreover, these contrasting views fuel a search for different practical solutions to important contemporary issues and dilemmas. For example, the view stressing the importance of memory and the stand insisting on

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the significance of forgetting have found expression in two contrasting projects of cosmopolitan citizenship and therefore indirectly in ideas for the construction of a global civil society. The first perspective insists on the value of memory in ensuring the plurality and richness of a global civil society. The second approach stresses the importance of forgetting for the emergence of the politics of a global citizenship.

The article's aim is to make this implicit contradiction explicit and to show that both approaches are ill-suited to the problems of remembering in the global age. It tries, by discussing whether remembering or forgetting is essential to ensure the condition of the global citizenship, to discover ways to balance the need for identity and the need to accept the difference in a global age. I argue that such an approach to memory is better suited to projects that aim to ensure post-nationalistic solidarity and human rights while protecting cultural rights, minority rights and personal identity.

In what follows, I look at social functions attributed to remembering and forgetting respectively. After reviewing both perspectives, I advance an approach that highlights the dialectic relationship between remembering and forgetting. Since in today's global world one of the main dilemmas is how to mediate the relationship between strangers and provide for the development of a global civil society, I focus on the role of memory and forgetting in solving difficulties of ensuring citizens' rights, while at the same time enhancing diversity and solidarity.

The Importance of Collective Memory

Notwithstanding the spread of theories about collective memory, its definition has proved elusive because of the difficulties involved in the conceptualization of collective memory's complex relations with myth and history and because memory, seen as performing many functions and operating on many different levels, is assigned multiple meanings. When talking about collective memory we tend to stress that, although memory is a faculty of individual minds, remembering is social in origin and influenced by the dominant discourses. In other words, while it is the individual who remembers, remembering is more than a personal act as even the most personal memories are embedded in social context and shaped by social factors that make social remembering possible, such as language, rituals and commemoration practices. What is remembered is profoundly shaped by what has been shared with others such that what is remembered is always a 'memory of an intersubjective past, of past time lived in relation to other people' (Misztal, 2003: 6).

Remembering serves social purposes at the personal and social levels, being sociologically functional for individuals and societies. As an active

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social process of 'sense making through time' (Olick and Levy, 1997: 932), it reconstructs past experiences in such a way as to make them meaningful for the present. Memories give ways of understanding and comprehending the world and a set of values and beliefs about the world. Collective memory is not just historical knowledge, as it is the experience mediated by representation of the past that enacts and gives substance to the group's identity. Memory helps in the construction of collective identities and boundaries, whether these are national, cultural, ethnic or religious. It can be seen as the guardian of difference, as it allows for recollection and preservation of our different selves that we acquire and accumulate through our unique lives (Wolin, 1989: 40). Memory, the central medium through which meanings and identities are constituted, thus is seen as the essential condition of a meaningful and rich civil society.

Furthermore, memory, as organized cultural practices, ensures the reproduction and cohesion of a given social and political order. When the nation-state was the unit around which modern social life evolved, 'history was holy because the nation was holy' (Nora, 1996: 5) and memory provided the legitimization to the nation. Nations, characterized by 'the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories' (Renan, 1990: 11), constructed their citizens' national identities and national cohesion with commemorations, rituals, marches, ceremonies, festivals and with the help of teachers, poets and painters (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). However, with the state divorced from the nation, memory, as a living presence, vanished and gave way to the legitimization of society by the future; the role of remembering seems to be now seen in the context of its contribution to democracy and justice. Recently, the importance of the relationship between memory, justice and democracy has come to our attention as the result of such processes as the post-Cold War wave of democratization, the expansion of the human rights language and the increased search for identities and authentic cultures (Misztal, 2005). Since the end of the Cold War, Europe, and especially Eastern Europe, has been constructed 'upon a compensatory surplus of memory; institutionalized public remembering as the very foundation of collective identity' (Judt, 2005: 16). The transformation from Communism to post-Communism has been accompanied by discoveries of many 'blank spots' and attempts to settle wrongs that were committed during the Communist era by the state and its agents. Europe's numerous efforts at retroactive justice, which deals with the issues of how and why democratic regimes settle wrongs that were committed during the authoritarian era by the state and its agents, suggest that coming to terms with the past has become the grand narrative of recent times (Elster, 1998).

The growing valorization of memory as the essential element of democratic systems is not only associated with its role in enriching civil society

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and the new status of the remembrance of past injustices. The assertion that collective memory is the condition of the democratic order's reaching its potential is based on the assumption that the democratic system's health depends upon its self-critical working through of the past and that only by preserving collective memory can we master democratic institutions and democratic values (Adorno, 1986). Without memory, that is, without the checking of, and reflection upon, past records of institutions and public activities, we will have no warnings against potential dangers to democratic structures and no opportunity to gain a richer awareness of the repertoire of possibly remedies. The operations of the South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which between 1994 and 1998 investigated gross violations of human rights, seems to be the most comprehensive attempt to help reconciliation by simultaneously discovering historical truth and promoting a new culture of human rights (Teeger and Vinitzky-Seroussi, 2007).

Furthermore, memory also enriches civil society because the order rooted in remembering cultivates our democratic right to the truth. Additionally, the uses we make of the past and the manner in which we reminisce facilitate inputs to democratic life. Memory, understood as a set of complex practices which contribute to our self-awareness, allows us to assess our potentialities and limits and therefore to take an independent stand on public issues. This statement is supported by many empirical studies which show that the lack of interest in the past and the lack of knowledge of the past tend to be accompanied by authoritarianism and utopian thinking and that 'the root of oppression is loss of memory' (Gunn Allen, 1999: 589).

Finally, memory, understood as anything which is transmitted or handed down from the past to the present, is essential for the functioning of any collectivity because every group needs a collective consciousness (Shils, 1981: 15). Memory, like most traditions of belief, has an inherently normative flavour, and thus it influences groups' conduct. For Shils (1981: 15), who sees tradition 'as a guarantor of order and civilization', it is this 'normative transmission which links the generations of the dead with the generations of the living in the constitution of a society' (Shils, 1981: 24). Memory, seen as 'the vessel which retrains in the present the record of the experiences undergone in the past and of knowledge gained through the recorded and remembered experiences of others, living or dead' (Shils, 1981: 50), is more than the act of recollection. The functioning of groups is maintained through the reinterpretation of what earlier generations believed, and is carried forward by a continuing chain of transmissions. 'It is this chain of memory and of the tradition which assimilates it that enables societies to go on reproducing themselves while also changing' (Shils, 1981: 167).

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The view that remembering is usually a virtue and that forgetting is necessarily a failing, while correctly insisting on the value of memory, is 'not self-evidently true' (Connerton, 2008: 59). It tends to overlook the social role of forgetting and the many negative consequences of the sanctification of the past. Indeed, the politics of memory is often nothing more than the politics of forgetting, especially in regimes that have to hide very important things. Frequent calls for forgetting, claiming that memories can 'do more harm than good' and pointing to the many unintended consequences of the game of memory, bring to our attention that the order based on remembering is not without its own problems. In what follows, I try to investigate whether some amount of forgetting is a necessary condition for civic health.

The Role of Social Forgetting

The positive strong links between memory and democracy, justice and civil society are rejected by the perspective which asserts that our societies' nature is better grasped by the notion of forgetting, understood as the opposite social activity of collective remembering. Social forgetting is explained as an outcome of society's need to eliminate segments of its social memory which are interfering with the society's present functions. It is seen in various ways: as the disappearance of frameworks of recollection or as an instance where memory is undone, erased, or as part of the transformation of memory, or as the substitution of one memory for another. In short, forgetting is not always a failure and it is not a unitary phenomenon. Moreover, there are several types of forgetting: from repressive forgetting, through forgetting that is constitutive in the formation of a new identity, to forgetting as humiliated silence (Connerton, 2008). Different types of forgetting are precipitated by different agents: some types of forgetting are a matter of overt activity of a state apparatus, while other types are initiated by an act of groups or individuals. For example, the agent in forgetting as humiliated silence is most commonly civil society, as this type of forgetting is 'manifest in a widespread pattern of behaviour in civil society, and it is covert, unmarked and unacknowledged' (Connerton, 2008: 67).

Forgetting, defined in sociological terms, is seen as performing several functions. First, forgetting is essential for the construction and maintenance of national solidarity and identity. This role of forgetting was famously noted by Ernst Renan in his 1882 lecture in which he argued that in order to ensure national cohesion there is the need for forgetting about the violence and unity-threatening events, but remembering heroes and glory days. He insisted that forgetting is an essential element in the creation and reproduction of a nation since to remember everything could

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bring a threat to national cohesion and self-image – the creation of nation requires a creative use of past events Renan (1990). The essence of a nation is not only that its members have many things in common, but also 'that they have forgotten some things' (Renan, 1990: 11).

For example, postwar Europe was built upon a deliberate forgetting (Judt, 2005). After the Second World War a need to reintegrate society restricted nations' desires to expose their past and the political climate of the postwar period favoured forgiving and forgetting. In many countries, after the initial punishment of leading figures, there was a long period of silence. In nations like France and Italy, after the initial attempts to account for past wrongdoings and the initial stigmatization of collaborators, myths were constructed to gloss over the extent and depth of collaboration with the Nazi regime (Bernstein, 1992; Gross, 2000; Rousso, 1991). In the early postwar era, West Germany 'did not foster either memory and justice or democracy' (Herf, 1997: 7–9). The government's policy and practice of 'defusing the past' was based on the assumption that for the transition of West Germany to a stable democracy, it was necessary to adopt a silence about the crimes of the Nazi period. West Germany was a nation characterized by social amnesia and not interested in learning from the example of the Nuremberg Trials. 'Memory and justice might produce, it was argued, a right-wing revolt that would undermine a still fragile democracy' (Herf, 1997: 7).

The argument that too much remembering of the past can undermine intergroup solidarity resurfaced in the 1990s. It was asserted that the preoccupation with memory of past injustices could easily lead to social conflicts as it would enhance 'the collective narcissism of minor differences' which forms 'the basis of feelings of strangers and hostility' between people (Blok, 1998: 33). As the wars in ex-Yugoslavia attest, the use of memories to close boundaries of ethnic, national or other identities and which accepts some versions of the past as to be 'the true' could aggravate conflicts. Groups that turn towards their past in order to glorify specific aspects of it and demand a recognition of suffering can run a danger of allowing memory to be used as a political instrument that legitimizes myths and nationalist propaganda. Such a fascination with memory acts as an obstacle to democracy because it results in groups' competition for the recognition of suffering, and therefore undermines the democratic spirit of cooperation. Within this perspective it is argued that remembering is not only divisive, costly and prolonged but also that it can lead to the banalization of the memory. When shared memory is an expression of *nostalgia*, which has a tendency to distort the past by idealizing it (Margalit, 2002: 62), the sentimentality of communal memory can reduce its roles as a source of truth. Furthermore, coming to terms with the past can awaken a stubborn resistance and bring about the exact opposite of what is intended.

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Second, forgetting can be an essential step in the process of reconciliation. The need for social forgetting was already understood and practised in Athenian democracy, which established the linguistic affinity between 'amnesty' and 'amnesia' and used forced forgetting to ensure reconciliation (Elster, 1998). In the process of restoring the Athenian democracy after the oligarchic coup, democrats ruled that, in order to live together again as a political community and to guarantee reconciliation, individual citizens were forbidden to recall the past. As amnesia became the legal rule, remembering a past injustice, seen as breaching that rule, was a punishable offence. Cohen (2001: 342), after analysing in detail this first case of transitional justice in history, concludes that while perhaps it was not an example of total amnesia or complete social harmony, nonetheless, despite the continuing enmity and political tensions, supporters of the oligarchy remained immune from prosecution and amnesty for the most part was respected. Consequently, the reconstruction and restoration of democracy, as well as rules of law, ensured a long period of political stability for the Athenian democracy. In the 1990s, the policy of dealing with past wrongdoings was one of the main concerns of all the new democracies that struggled with the issue of retrospective justice. Although not many of the post-authoritarian countries opted for a total forgetting, the majority of those who decided to address past wrongdoings found it very difficult to cope with the legal, moral and practical difficulties connected with the choice between truth and justice, remembering and forgetting (Huyse, 1995; Linz and Stepan, 1997; Osiel, 1997). For example, today Poland's 'memory policy' (as the Institute of National Remembrance, established in 1998 to prosecute 'Nazi and Communist crimes against the Polish nation', is commonly called) is engaged not in protection of national memory but rather in activities that 'destroy this memory' (Michnik, 2008: 52). In other words, because of the complexity and difficulty of the project of civil repair we are frequently left with forgetting as the default option.

The third role of forgetting is to enhance the functioning of civil society and democracy (Cohen, 2001; Elster, 1998). For liberals, from Hobbes to Rawls, social amnesia has been the foundation of society since it allows society to start afresh without inherited resentments and negative aspects of particularistic memories characterized by closure which does not allow for the accommodation of others. The argument stressing the role of memory in enhancing the democratic potential is also undermined by the observation that civil society can function without memory. For example, both Heller (2001) and Markus (2001) assert that civil society can perform its role guided simply by utilitarian considerations. Heller (2001: 112) notes that civil society can work without cultural memory, as 'it can operate smoothly through the clashes of interest and cooperation, to limited and future-oriented activities, and to its own short-term memories, without

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archives and without utopia but guided simply by utilitarian consideration'. Civil society, like the market, does not require memory as it is future oriented, seeks purposively oriented cooperation and does not seek cohesion. According to Markus (2001), democratic imperatives, such as toleration and openness, can be achieved through the discursive mechanism of civil society, which requires only civility. Civility, in turn, as being the recognition of the other as a bearer of basic and inalienable rights, does not grant an important role to memory. Additionally, since 'democracy depends upon the existence of solidarity bonds that extend beyond political arrangements' (Alexander, 2006: 38), forgetting, by fostering solidarity, also indirectly protects democracy. Solidarity, defined as 'feelings for others whom we do not know but whom we respect out of principle' (Alexander, 2006: 4), is rooted in dedication to values of civil society and as such is central to democracy. As extending solidarity to others depends on the acceptance of the abstract and universal commitments of the civil sphere, forgetting is often the first step on the way to transcend particular commitments, narrow loyalties and sectional interests.

Finally, forgetting is seen as playing an active role in the process of creating equality. To accomplish political and legal equality, through contract or covenant, the individual has to forget past injustices and social categories that were the marks of inequality (Wolin, 1989: 38). Also, Rawls's (1971) theory of justice rests on the assumption that individuals can develop solidaristic distributive principles only by forgetting any actual knowledge of their own particular personal fate. In a similar way, Gupta (2005) rejects memory because the more we remember our past, the less likely we will be able to endorse equality between people. 'So we must first learn to forget our prejudices and our petty memories if we are to be equal to the task that modernity has set for us' (Gupta, 2005: 48). Gupta endorses forgetting as a solution to ethnic, religious and other problems, as only forgetting can make more equal the fate of citizens. He argues that the fascination with memory acts as an obstacle to a global civil society and democracy in general because focusing such group memories on narrow ethnicity results in groups' competing for the recognition of suffering, and thus undermining the democratic spirit of cooperation. As modernity is best achieved when forgetting of the past is encouraged and as memory surfaces when citizenship is delayed, a nation-state has a choice, 'either it delves into memories of blood and soil, or it moves on to a different form of national identity that is based on citizenship' (Gupta, 2005: 148). Thus, according to Gupta, only by taking leave of the past and of memory, are we capable of generating equality. The friction between an openness, on one hand, and the ethics of remembering, on the other, is especially visible when memory is seen as the vehicle for establishing collective rights and voicing collective demands. When group memories are externally forged and controlled,

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group members may be deprived of their own authentic voice. On the other hand, in the case of politicization of group identities, group members may suffer from a lack of equal opportunities and from discrimination because of 'the systematic neglect of alternative causes of group disadvantage' other than their distinctive memory (Barry, 2001: 305). Hence, while recognizing that identity group politics as a whole 'cannot fairly be said to undermine a political distribution' (Gutmann, 2003: 23), we should be suspicious of groups that elevate their identities above democratic standards of equal freedom and opportunity for all.

Yet, the experience of postwar Europe and especially Eastern Europe, provides proof that the system built upon a deliberate politics of forgetting is unsustainable (Judt, 2005). This, together with the not always welcome consequences of a system rooted solely on remembering, forces us to search for a new dialectic between memory and forgetting in today's interconnected world.

The Dialectical Relationship between Memory and Forgetting

If we accept that the value of neither memory nor forgetting can be taken for granted, we are forced to admit the dialectical nature of the relationship between forgetting and remembering. This relationship is dialectical to the extent that it enables one to grasp the two opposed priorities as simultaneously valid; in other words, both remembering and forgetting matter. Paraphrasing Hegel, who famously said that tragedy involves the clash not between good and evil but between two goods, it could be said that today's paradoxical conflict between remembering and forgetting involves the clash between two practices beneficial to society. Thus, any search for possible resolutions to the dialectical relationship between remembering and forgetting should be taken in the interest of cultivating a relationship with the past that enhances societal well-being in the present.

How to reconcile memory and forgetting on the normative level has been recently suggested by the ethics of memory perspective which focuses on relations between forgetting and forgiving and offers compromise to the clash between memory and forgetting on the normative level. This perspective formulates the relationships between remembering and forgetting from the point of view of the public good and the importance of the relations between memory and justice. Ricoeur, Todorov and Margalit all assert that the value of memory needs to be evaluated in terms of its capacity to benefit others. They argue that memory is neither good nor bad itself and that the value of the past relates to the uses we make of the past and the manner in which we reminisce. For example, Todorov (2003) argues that memory of the past can be useful for us if it

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enhances the cause of justice. The right use of memory is one that serves a right reason or goal, not one that merely reproduces the past. According to Ricoeur (1999), it is justice that turns memory into a project and it is the same project of justice that gives the form to the future and the imperative to the duty of memory. Ricoeur's ideas of the duty of memory as the imperative of justice resemble Margalit's (2002) notion that obligations to remember are generated by the type of relationships we have with others.

If we agree, following the ethics of memory, that moral values can only be attached to memories that benefit others and that modern democracy is best served when both equality and plurality are endorsed, our task should be to search for a relationship between memory and forgetting which improves equality, while at the same time promoting diversity and intergroup cooperation. Since groups' cooperative attitudes towards others are results of their ability to critically evaluate their own respective pasts in such a way that secures tolerance and removes barriers to mutual understanding, only an open, critical and reflective memory represents the morally important value. On the other hand, a closed, fixed memory of the event offers only the single authorized version of it and can cause moral damage to civil society by conflating political and ethnic or cultural boundaries. So, memory, when used to close boundaries of ethnic, national or other identities and which accepts some versions of the past to be 'the true', can aggravate conflict, but when memory is open-ended it can be an important lubricant of cooperation.

The acceptance of the need to judge the act of putting the past in the service of the present requires us to question today's memory projects. Since the selection of what we remember and forget has a great deal to do with the society we are in, we need to look at the contrasting projects of cosmopolitan citizenship, one claiming that remembering is vital for sustaining plurality and diversity of a global civil society, and the second one which asserts that we need to take leave of the past in order to ensure the equality between world citizens. On the surface of it, the second perspective, which assumes that the past is an irrelevant component of a global civil society and argues that conditions of life in modern democracies should enhance cooperation on the basis of a minimum set of resemblances, seems better to reflect the reality of the global age as it focuses on the impact of globalization and the development of electronic means of communication (e.g. the Internet) on collective memories. It claims that today's society has lost touch with the past as these two process have brought the death of time and distance, the growing pace of information processing, increased mobility in all forms as well as fragmentation of identities and homogenization of culture. It asserts that a global society is characterized by forgetting as we are overloaded with information, and the fluidity, rootlessness and speed with which images, messages and

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people travel lead to the growing loosening of the links between memory and identity and the legitimization of society by the future and forgetting as its means to achieve it.

However, globalization not only brings with it the possibility of high levels of mobility and the divorce of the state from the nation but also the emergence of the regime of human rights, new risks, international institutions as well as global forms of life, identities and interconnectedness and interdependencies (Beck and Sznaider, 2006). In short, it creates the conditions for the rise of cosmopolitan memory, the value of which should be judged in terms of its capacity to shape post-nationalist solidaristic communities and to enhance the rise of mutual recognition which depends on 'the positive evaluation of outsider qualities' (Alexander, 2006: 461)

Towards Cosmopolitan Memories

The importance of cosmopolitan memory is seen as being connected with its capacity to transcend national boundaries and enhance universal solidarity. Defined as 'a variable that helps explain the reconfiguration of sovereignty, and thus the salience of the nation-centric model itself' (Levy and Sznaider, 2006a: 661), cosmopolitan memory is granted with a power to overcome national solidarities. Its capacity to overcome national loyalties is explained in several different ways. First, the significance of global memory is connected with its contribution to the proliferation of global values and its potential to reorganize the history of the other. Levy and Sznaider (2006a: 660) assert that the role of cosmopolitan memory, which refers to 'practices that shift attention away from the territories' nation-state framework', is to show how the conflicts of the past generate reconciliation and give rise to a shared memory. They identified cosmopolitan memory with the memory of the Holocaust and argue that the global memory of the Holocaust has been transformed 'into a universal imperative, making the issue of universal human rights politically relevant to all who share this new form of memory' (Levy and Sznaider, 2006b: 132) The Holocaust, as a denationalized memory, is a symbol for global solidarity and humanistic care. Its growing symbolism has influenced the development of a supranational moral universalism that may restrict genocide acts in the future (Alexander, 2004). Second, it is argued that cosmopolitan memory enhances universalistic solidarity because it provides for identity not in the narrow sense but for a kind of mutual identification that unites individuals dispersed by culture, race, religion or class.

Cosmopolitan memory protects cultural rights and minority rights and therefore represents a successful expansion of a mixture of the local and national with the global. Here the role of cosmopolitan memory is

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associated with the cultural dimension of cosmopolitanism which stresses conditions of diversity, world openness and change. In this 'post-universalistic' kind of cosmopolitanism, which is expressed in more reflexive kinds of self-understanding and which is not 'merely a condition of diversity but is articulated in cultural models of world openness through which societies undergo transformation' (Delanty, 2006: 34), people connect 'not through identity but despite difference' (Appiah, 2005: 134). A 'rooted' cosmopolitanism is embodied in a supranational identity and offers a less dualistic view of the relation between the particular and the universal and starts with 'what is human in humanity' (Appiah, 2005: 157–8). Appiah (2005) defends a 'rooted' cosmopolitanism and proposes that cosmopolitans are people who, while practising toleration and openness to the world, construct their lives from their cultural resources. In short, in cosmopolitan memory global and local (that is culturally specific) values are mutually constitutive.

Third, cosmopolitan memory's capacity to shape post-nationalist solidaristic political communities is stressed in the approach which connects the development of cosmopolitan memory with the emergence of the human rights regime. Such a conceptualization of cosmopolitan memory follows Turner's (2006) argument that human rights are rooted in our awareness of our common vulnerability, which is increased by our remembering lessons from the past. According to him, memory of past atrocities enhances the world's understanding of its common vulnerability and common risk. The record of past successes and failures of institutions as well as memory of past experiences are seen as the essential aspect of the regime of human rights. Turner (2006) argues that the claim of vulnerability needs some argumentative support from the role of moral education. This ensures the importance of recollections of experiences of social reciprocity in moral education; as such, memory teaches sympathy, respect and recognition of others. Seeing human rights as derived from vulnerability via the moral community, within which sympathy is taught (with the help of lessons from the past) to the young, assigns to cosmopolitan memory a very essential role in the evolution of human rights legislation and culture.

Fourth, cosmopolitan memory is seen as capable of overcoming national boundaries as in today's world it is conceptualized against a background of global risks. As worldwide economic development is exacerbating transnational problems, a global awareness of a need for cooperative, international responses increases. Cosmopolitan memory enhances global solidarities because it is rooted in a common awareness of the global risk and this global concern brings people closer together. For example, Beck's (2006) description of the global world as the risk society points out that our shared sense of interconnection and commonality is premised on the immediate threat of conflict and that the shared risk draws humanity

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together in a dialogue. Collective memory, being transformed in the age of globalization, transcends the nation-state context and ensures that 'global concerns become part of local experiences of an increasing number of people' (Levy and Sznaider, 2002: 87).

Finally, cosmopolitan memory expresses the experience of the united word. Stepinsky (2005: 1396–8), as a way of illustrating how this type of memory has become a force of global unity, explores UNESCO's MOW (Memory of the World) collective memory project which tries to preserve the events which have been constitutive features of human civilization. It is not tied to the historical conflicts but has developed as a website to document international heritage. 'The MOW project also responds to central dilemmas of the global age. In fact, the central aim of the venture is to project the "fragile" and "irreplaceable" documentary heritage that constitute the recorded MOW' (Stepinsky, 2005: 1397). This type of cosmopolitan memory can potentially create a new awareness of globality, enhance new solidarities and offer support for norms for the effective spread of human rights.

However, there are also voices which question the nature and role of cosmopolitan memory. First, some argue that cosmopolitanism is only a sort of totally deterritorialized high class global culture or the class consciousness of frequent travellers. Thus, it will never replace national identity, rooted in the national past, as the constituent factor in the formation of bonds of belonging and solidarities. Cosmopolitanization of memory does not lead to universal solidarity and universalism of democratic rights, it rather contributes to transformation of national memories into more complex entities where different social groups have different relations to globalization. For example, Calhoun (2007: 1), according to whom nationalism is 'not a moral mistake', does not see any alternative to national democracy and argues that the importance of national solidarities is underestimated by believers in the cosmopolitan world. According to him, nation-states are the main source of solidarity, especially for those at the bottom of the social scale, for the less educated, excluded and oppressed. In short, nation-states have not vanished; they play a very important role as mediator of belongings (Calhoun, 2007).

Second, others question the significance of cosmopolitan memory because of its inability to solve tensions between the particularism of the realm of memory and the universalism of democratic rights. This dilemma is connected, on the one hand, with the limits to the level of abstraction from particularity that can be achieved, and, on the other, with particularism's threat to the openness of the universal. For example, Levy and Sznaider's identification of the memory of the Holocaust with the project of cosmopolitan memory does not avoid the dilemma caused by the friction between the particularism of the realm of memory and the universalism

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of democratic rights. It seems that Levy and Sznaider (2006b), while stressing the importance of remembering, overlook the fact that it is difficult to identify the correct situations in which to apply the memory lesson. For instance, despite the fact that we recognize the importance of the Holocaust lesson and accept that it is our responsibility to make sure that the Holocaust is remembered as the warning sign in human moral history, we failed to prevent the genocide in Rwanda, the Srebrenica killings and other atrocities.

Furthermore, the role of cosmopolitan memory can also be questioned if we ask ourselves about its real reach and input to improving ways of living together. Although in learning to remember the Holocaust we have achieved a significant success, to the extent that we now see genocide as a historical anomaly unique to a particular regime, or, alternatively, as a historic commonplace that allows us to brand every instance of political killing a holocaust, we have failed to achieve clarity (Bethke Elshtain, 2006). Furthermore, the messier the conflict, the more difficult it is to apply the memory lesson. The cases of recent genocide (Rwanda, Srebrenica) prompt us to ask what are the boundaries of the cosmopolitan world and its memory. Moreover, in different regions, nations and even among citizens of the same country, the Holocaust could be remembered not in the same way, for instance studies suggest that Israeli Jews and Israeli Arabs remember the Holocaust differently; while the Holocaust is a permanent source of national memory for Israeli Jews, for Israeli Arabs it is not a significant aspect of their memory (Bernnan, 2006; Kkhalidi, 1997; Wiessman, 2004; Zerubavel, 1995).

Another criticism of the notion of cosmopolitan memory asks whether the concept of cosmopolitan memory is applied to events of global significance and how this significance is established. In this spirit, Margalit (2002) points out that regions of the globe are not uniformly represented in the cosmopolitan memory, with memories and events from the First World tending to surpass memories and events from the Third World countries. 'Thus, our memory of Kosovo overshadows our memory of Rwanda. Moreover, because they are likely to be better remembered, the atrocities of Europe will be perceived as morally more significant' (Margalit, 2002: 80). The fact that the content of the global memory is dominated by events from the most powerful nations suggests that memory narratives vary by nation-states, regions and levels of socioeconomic development.

Finally, despite the proliferation of electronic and digital media committed to the 'virtual' archiving and preservation of memory, the role of a traditional means for passing and sustaining local and personal memories cannot be overlooked. A strong oral tradition of story telling is still present among many groups and the family is still the main mnemonic community (Zerubavel, 1997). Listening to a family member recount a shared experience,

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for example, 'implicitly teaches one what is considered memorable and what one can actually forget' (Zerubavel, 1997: 87). Mnemonic communities, through introducing and familiarizing their member to the collective past, ensure that their members, by identifying with the groups' past, attain and sustain a required social identity. Since we tend to remember what is familiar – because familiar facts easily fit into our mental structures, and therefore make sense to us – groups' identities and collective memory are continuously reinforced. Due to a group's mnemonic tradition, a particular preconception marks every group's remembering, and such cognitive basis can narrow cosmopolitan memory's claims to represent global values and solidarity defined in universalistic terms.

To summarize, while it is true that cosmopolitan memory itself will not create and sustain universal solidarity, nonetheless, as a result of information and communication technologies, the sense of global interconnectedness is more acute now than ever before. Such a global collective memory can play an important role in 'in undermining myths of nationhood, particularly those that have played their part in causing ethnic cleansing and genocide' (Hirsch, 2003: xix). However, the increasing interconnectedness of world regions and cultural transfer do not mean the end of national perspectives. It is now commonly acknowledged that while the nation-state loses in dominance, it does not mean that it becomes redundant. Although the 'national container' is slowly being cracked, still distinctive national and ethnic memories are not erased but transformed (Levy and Sznaider, 2006b). Nation-states, as the bearers of globalization as well as being a global subsystem themselves, ensure the continuity of national memories. However, these national memories are now situated in a context of denationalized memories (Beck, 2002). In other words, now national memory, as a product of the internal crisis of the state in the age of globalization, develops in accord with common rhythms and universal periodizations (Levy and Sznaider, 2006b). In order to understand differences and similarities between national memories (which are now subjected to a common patterning) and the newly emerging cosmopolitan memory (which brings together local and global), we need to investigate wider narratives already in a prevalent circulation within the world's cultural collectivities.

The important role in creation and circulation of this stock of knowledge is played by the commemoration industry, the mass media and nation-states. The commemoration industry's continuous attempts to get hold of the mass media's attention are not always well informed (Fernandez-Armesto, 2008). The media know only about impending opportunities to commemorate what is already familiar. Politicians cannot be relied upon in this matter as they tend to promote opportunities that suit their agenda. In order for collective memory and commemorations not to serve particularistic interests, and in order not to allow the dominance

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in memory of global media events and concerns of the main powers, and in order for cosmopolitanism not to be only associated with global elites, we need public intellectuals to provide the leadership in the discussion of what we should remember and how we should remember. To make sure that cosmopolitan memory is open, self-reflective and democratic, an active involvement of public intellectuals is essential (Misztal, 2007). Although at the moment the intellectuals' role is not very significant, there have been a number of proactive attempts by international academics to encourage critical reflections about national pasts and identities. For example, France's debate over the Vichy and Poland's discussion of its dealings with the Jews during the Second World War were both initiated by historians based in American universities. In other words, mnemonic battles that develop between different mnemonic communities over the correct 'version' of the past are now neither contained nor defined by national borders. In the context of growing interdependence and communication, national memories are often re-reflected upon in the framework of cosmopolitan memory which, by endorsing the recognition of the other, offers legitimacy to denationalized memories. The emergence of cosmopolitan memory integrated around mutual recognition and respect for difference and diversity raises hopes for a globalized civil society which, in a world of 'increasingly dangerous weapons and political tactics, 'may be the only way to proceed' (Alexander, 2006: 552).

Conclusion

The right to the truth about the past is an essential element of our rights. Yet as the difficulties of the relationship between remembering and forgetting become clear, we realize that memory is not the remedy for everything and that the fascination with memory, moreover, can undermine our concern with the public good. However, forgetting is equally problematic. The culture of forgetting overlooks our right to the truth about the past and could threaten democracy. Therefore we need to ask ourselves what kind of memory and how much and what kind of forgetting, and how much might be compatible with a just, pluralist and democratic cosmopolitan society. Globalization and increasing cultural interpenetration have contributed to the emergence of cosmopolitan memory. It is difficult to realize the promise of a new peaceful and democratic globe without a mnemonic community that transcends the nation-state and enhances cultural diversity and global solidarity. The creation of cosmopolitan memory is an important step leading to post-nationalist solidaristic political communities. In order to make sure that this new development enhances a discourse of hospitality, openness, mutual understanding, toleration and cooperation, we need to continue to learn how and what to remember.

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