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Individual and Super-individual in the Conceptualisation of Memory: from Dichotomy to Synthesis

The last decades of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century brought about profound changes in the structure, content, and methodology of both social sciences and humanities. In thus indicated intellectual context, a radical reconstruction of modern historical research took place. The research into historical memory, or more precisely into the history of memory, initiated in the historiography in the 1980s, at the turn of the 21st century became firmly entrenched as an independent and dynamically developing direction of analysis.¹ It was somewhat later that, in a strict relation to the question of historical memory yet less intensively in the beginning, theoretical considerations of the problem of historical consciousness, its structure, form, and function began in Western historiography (above all in the numerous works of the noted German historian and methodologist Jörn Rüsen and the followers of his ideas).

In the Russian socio-humanistic space, there are heated discussions about categories such as “collective memory,” “social memory,” “cultural memory,” “culture of memory,” “historical memory,” “historical awareness,” “images of the past,” etc. It should be noted that all these terms, introduced and developed in the framework of various theories, are meant as conceptualisations of the super-individual dimension of memory, and the accompanying disputes ensue largely from the age-old opposition of the paradigms of methodological holism and individualism. It is only in recent years that significant detailed studies in this discipline have appeared. Some of them employed the proposed interpretational models; however, what can

¹ For more on this subject, see: Л. П. Репина, “Историческая память и современная историография,” *Новая и Новейшая история* 2004, № 5, p. 33-45.

be seen much more frequently are “truncated” variants, oriented above all towards the description of the stereotypes of collective consciousness, socially and culturally diversified “images of the past,” or sets of common (mass) representations of the past.

Among scholars there is a division of opinions about the correlation between the historical consciousness and historical memory: the former is often simply identified with the latter, although they are usually distinguished as the “form” (in which the society perceives its past through the present) and the “content” (the past or its representations recorded in memory). The question of the mutual relationship between the ideological, axiological, psychological, and pragmatic aspects of the formation, reorganisation, and transformation of the images of the past is only marginal in such research, and the topic of “imagined” and “projected” future is not taken into consideration at all. A parallel analysis of rational and mental dimension of a given “image of the past” and their role in its formation is not normally conducted, even though both these components of the “social construction of historical continuity” or, conversely, “historical discontinuity” (terms proposed by Eviatar Zerubavel) demand the attention of not only sociologists, but historians as well.

The aim of this paper is to compare the most important socially oriented interpretations of the phenomenon of memory, widely reverberated in scientific literature, with the new ideas of Russian researchers in philosophy, psychology, linguistics, and culture studies.

The issue of the ideas (thoughts, sentiments) of large social groups became a topic of interest of researchers already at the turn of the 20th century, beginning with the works by Gustave Le Bon and Gabriel Tarde on crowd psychology. Mass psychic phenomena were referred to using various terms, such as “forms of social consciousness” (K. Marx), “psychology of nations” (H. Steinthal, M. Lazarus, G. Waitz, W. Wundt, A. Fouillée), “psychology of the masses” and “crowd psychology” (G. Tarde, S. Sighele, G. Le Bon), “collective ideas” (É. Durkheim, M. Mauss, H. Hubert), “mentality” (L. Lévy–Bruhl, Ch. Blondel), “public opinion” (G. Tarde, W. Lippmann, F. Tönnies), „group consciousness” (W. McDougall), “collective unconscious” (C. Jung), *etc.* Some of these notions suggest the existence of certain super-individual psychic phenomena. Generally speaking, the ideas about the mechanisms of developing new meanings and senses in the process of interpersonal communication, about the formation of the perception of an individual in the framework of actual group communication (most of all in small groups) under the influence of various forms of impact of the group on the individual, about the social conditions of an individual thought process, about the impact of social factors on the formation of a human and his/her

cognitive processes, about the implications of cognitive schemes accepted in a given society, perceived and adopted by humans as taken for granted in the communication process, and about the cultural conditions of individual ideas are fairly well grounded in sociology, social and cultural anthropology, ethnology, and social psychology.²

It is known that the main thesis of the classic of the sociology of collective memory Maurice Halbwachs is the belief that memory is socially conditioned. According to Halbwachs, individual memory is limited by the memories of other people, which guarantees social cohesion. The scholar studied the social dimension of individual recollections as complex images emerging only as a result of communication and interaction within social groups, he also stressed the significance of the acts of commemoration for the preservation of tradition, which he associated with the process of the integration of individual recollections into the structures of collective memory.

For Halbwachs, memory is a social construct stemming from the present. It is understood as the sum of individual recollections, or rather the collective product of the culture, which develops independently under the influence of family, religion, and social stratum through the language structures, rituals of every-day life, and delineation of space. It creates a system of social conventions, in which framework we shape our recollections.³

The German Egyptologist Jan Assman rightly pointed out the proximity between the notion of “social framework” introduced by Halbwachs and the theory of interpretation frameworks, developed by Erving Goffman, which organise every-day life. Like other critics of Halbwachs, Assman objected to the recognition of the collective as a subject of memory and using (even as metaphors) of such terms as “collective memory” and “memory of a nation.”⁴ Simultaneously, the theory of cultural memory which he developed in the 1990s, based on the material of ancient cultures (Egyptian, Jewish, Greek),

² I.M. Saveleva, A. V. Poletaev, “«Историческая память»: к вопросу о границах понятия,” in: I.M. Saveleva, A.V. Poletaev (eds.), *Феномен прошлого*, Moscow 2005, pp. 170-220 (pp. 175-186).

³ P. Giri, “История в роли памяти?,” in: *Диалог со временем. Альманах интеллектуальной истории*. Вып. 14, Moscow 2005, p. 116. (T.N.—Where no source in English was available, quotations were based on the Polish translation from the original.)

⁴ J. Assman, *Культурная память. Письмо, память о прошлом и политическая идентичность в высоких культурах древности*, Moscow 2004, p. 37. [English edition: Jan Assmann, *Cultural memory and early civilization: Writing, remembrance, and political imagination*. Cambridge University Press 2011.]

and which was a creative development of Maurice Halbwachs⁵ and Aby Warburg's⁶ ideas of collective and social memory essentially builds on the same foundation. Jan Assman considers cultural memory as a specific form of transmission and actualisation of cultural senses, exceeding the experiences of individual people or groups. By cultural memory he understands a continuous process in which the society shapes and maintains its identity thanks to the reconstruction of its past. The change of organisation schemes of a historical experience occurs in a confrontation with a reality which exceeds the scope of conventional ideas, which implies a revision of the experiences so far (reorganisation of the historical memory of past events, a reconstruction of the complete image of the past). It should be stressed that, in Assman's opinion, cultural memory is "reconstructive" in nature, which means that the axiological ideas it contains, as well as the whole "knowledge of the past" it confers, are directly related to the current situation of the group. Jan Assman determined the tasks and capacities of a new direction of analysis—the "history of memory" (*Gedächtnisgeschichte*) which, in contrast to the history proper, investigates not the past as such but *that* past which was preserved in recollections—in tradition (historiographical, literary, iconographic, etc.). The aim of the "history of memory" is not to separate "historical truth" from this tradition but rather to analyse the tradition itself as a phenomenon of collective or cultural memory.⁷

The issue of the existing stereotypes of consciousness and tradition (from family and oral tradition to national, state, and historiographical one), in which the "bygone past" becomes a justification for the "bygone present," holds an important place in various conceptions of super-individual (collective) memory, within whose structure every change of stereotype reflect a tension between the old and the new, the ideas of the past are invariably defined by the axiological criteria of the present, and the memory underlying the tradition turns out to be sensitive to the social

⁵ M. Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective*, Paris 1950; *id.*, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, Paris 1952. [English edition: *id.*, *On collective memory*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992.]

⁶ A. M. Warburg, *Ausgewählte Schriften und Würdigungen*, Baden-Baden 1992. On A. Warburg's theory of memory, see: A. G. Vasilev, "Философия культуры и теория социальной памяти Аби Варбурга," in: *Научные труды МПГУ. Серия: Социально-исторические науки*, Moscow 2005, p. 708-717.

⁷ On J. Assman's cultural memory, see also: O. G. Eksle, *Культурная память под воздействием историзма*, Moscow 2001, pp. 179-180.

situation and political context.⁸ Whereas “an appeal to memory ... is likely to arise only when objectively existing supports are felt to be inadequate.”⁹

Collective memory in Halbwachs' works¹⁰ (and later in the considerations of Pierre Nora¹¹ as well) correlates with the phenomenon of PUBLIC memory—“a social construct resulting from selection, interpretation, and a certain distortion (error) regarding past facts”¹²—and with the OFFICIAL memory as a product of the manipulation of power as well. Paul Ricoeur, assuming that it is “possible to account for the express abuses of memory on the level of the effect of distortion belonging to the phenomenal level of ideology,” explains it as follows:

At this level of appearance, imposed memory is armed with a history that is itself “authorized,” the official history, the history publically learned and celebrated. A trained memory is, in fact, on the institutional plane an instructed memory; forced memorization is thus enlisted in the service of the remembrance of those events belonging to the common history that are held to be remarkable, even founding, with respect to the common identity.¹³

Addressing the issue of relationship between the individual and collective memory in the context of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, Ricoeur raises the question “whether the extension of transcendental idealism to intersubjectivity is capable of paving the way for a phenomenology of common memory.”¹⁴ Which he answers with a whole series of questions:

... in order to reach the notion of common experience, must we begin with the idea of ownness, pass through the experience of the other, and finally proceed to a third operation, said to be the communalization of subjective experience? Is this chain truly irreversible? ... I remain puzzled by this. ...

⁸ R. Hatton, *История как искусство памяти*, St. Petersburg 2003, pp. 249, 255.

⁹ See: A. Megill, “История, память, идентичность,” in: *id.*, *Историческая эпистемология*, Moscow 2007. [English quote from: A. Megill, “History, memory, identity,” in *id.*, *Historical knowledge, historical error: A contemporary guide to practice*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 2007, p. 48. (<http://books.google.com/books?id=dr1XTd0ZY4oC>) (date of access: 3 Mar 2014).]

¹⁰ M. Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, New York 1950.

¹¹ P. Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire*, Paris 1984–1992.

¹² Н. Г. Брагина, *Память в языке и культуре*, Moscow 2007, p. 229.

¹³ P. Ricoeur, *Memory, history, forgetting*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 2004, p. 85.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

There is a moment when one has to move from I to WE. But is this moment not original, in the manner of a new beginning?¹⁵

Ricoeur states that while intersubjectivity is made to—

... bear all the weight of the constitution of collective entities, it is important, however, not to forget that it is only by analogy, and in relation to individual consciousness and its memory, that collective memory is held to be a collection of traces left by the events that have affected the course of history of the groups concerned, and that it is accorded the power to place on stage these common memories, on the occasion of holidays, rites, and public celebrations. Once this analogical transfer is recognized, nothing prevents our considering these higher-order intersubjective communities as the subject in which their memories inhere¹⁶

Having analysed the broadly analysed idea of Maurice Halbwachs' collective memory, Ricoeur reaches a "negative conclusion" that neither the phenomenology of individual memory nor the sociology of collective memory can enjoy solid legitimacy, since each of them does justice to just one of the divergent theses, and suggests to analyse a possible complementarity of these antagonistic approaches.¹⁷ Seeking a common ground between both discourses, he refers to the phenomenology of social reality, emphasising "the formation of the social bond within the framework of interactive relations and on the identities constructed on its basis"¹⁸ and thus taking the discussion to the "border between collective memory and history." According to the philosopher, "history [can] offer schemata for mediating between the opposite poles of individual memory and collective memory."¹⁹ Ricoeur assumes a possibility of existence of "an intermediate level of reference between the poles of individual memory and collective memory, where concrete exchanges operate between the living memory of individual persons and the public memory of the communities to which [these persons] belong," namely the level of dynamic close relations, of people occupying places on a scale of varying distances between *I* and the others. It is in this communication that the correlation of individual and collective memory takes place. This reflects a perception, common in social sciences, that society is a communication system or network and that the past is shaped in

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 119-120.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

the communication process.²⁰ This thought was worded by Serge Moscovici with great precision:

Ideas are not so much intellectual products with social implications as social products generated by the mind, and thus becoming real Penetrating into all the social interactions and circles, ideas transform into a genetic code It is all as if a circulating mental substance formed values, behaviours, languages, and personal traits, and brought them all together into a whole, where each cell protects and supports another In consequence, what appeals to me is a vision of a society composed of two parts—one is surrounded by networks which integrate individuals and are constantly constructed and destroyed by them; the other is situated within the circle of ideas shared by people, who thus shape their common reality.²¹

David Lowenthal, wondering whether the past is present in the memory of every human being, stresses that “its scenes and experiences antedate our own lives, but what we have read and heard and reiterated makes them part of our memories too.”²²

Most things that surround the young, like most of the history they learn, were there before them; as we grow older, more and more of our own past becomes history. [And in learning history, more and more often we turn to our increasingly rich memories, including into them also a part of that history which refers to the time before we were born.]²³

In time, predominant schools of research into social and cultural memory have been established, and the number of publications on these topics is still growing; however, the diversity of material of numerous analyses is a clear sign of a close relationship between the perception of historical events, the image of the past itself and the attitude towards it, and social phenomena (in the broad meaning of the word).

The popularity of memory studies is growing in Russia as well. Simultaneously, the discrepancies and controversies regarding basic terminology become more and more pronounced. Some present-day scholars virtually identify historical consciousness with historical memory, whereas others note that collective memory itself is a reflection of historical

²⁰ For more on this subject, see: A. F. Filippov, “Конструирование прошлого в контексте коммуникации: теоретическая логика социологического подхода,” in: *Феномен прошлого..*, pp. 96-120.

²¹ S. Moscovici, *Машина, творящая богов*, Moscow 1998, p. 359. [*id.*, *La machine à faire des dieux*, Paris: Fayard 1988; quote translated from Polish.]

²² D. Lowenthal, *The past is a foreign country*, Cambridge University Press 1985, p. 186. (<http://books.google.pl/books?id=jMqsAQZmv51C>) (date of access: 4 Mar 2014).

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

consciousness and a basis for the formation of the social identity of a group.²⁴ Still other researchers consider the notion of “collective memory” unscientific, stressing the fact that using it notoriously leads to an “anthropomorphisation of a collective subject.”

In response to this claim it can be said that a similar “anthropomorphisation” does not deter scholars from characterising social memory as

... information gathered in the process of socio-historical development, preserved in the results of practical and cognitive activities, passed from generation to generation via socio-cultural tools, and serving as the foundation of individual and social cognition at every given stage of historical development.²⁵

Nonetheless, since most of the specialists understand historical memory as a set of ideas regarding the social past (both at the mass and individual level), as the critics have it, in this case mass knowledge or common ideas about the past are the CONTENT of historical memory, therefore the new conception should be considered at least redundant, and on the whole totally ideologised and thus harmful.²⁶

The critics support their position using various arguments. According to one of them, the researchers of historical memory become involved in the process of production of that memory, which leads to the blurring of boundaries between mass ideas and specialist historical knowledge. Consequently, in order to distinguish them more consistently, it is proposed to use the notion of collective ideas of the past, developed on the grounds of social psychology, cultural anthropology, and sociology of knowledge, whereas the category of historical memory is usually associated with the concept of the politics of memory, with the analysis of the role of political order in constructing and consolidating specific knowledge about the past so as to achieve certain goals, or is treated as counter-history—above all the history of oppressed classes, national minorities, as well as persecuted religious group and marginal strata. Historical memory is thus perceived chiefly as a political project.

²⁴ For more on the research on historical memory, see: L. P. Repina, *Историческая память...*, pp. 33-45.

²⁵ Ya. K. Rebane, “Принцип социальной памяти,” *Философские науки* 1977, № 5, p. 100. Memory as such is understood as the „ability of the cognitive system of living organisms to code and gather information, usually via higher cognitive processes.” See: *Философия. Энциклопедический словарь*, Moscow 2004, p. 627.

²⁶ I. M. Saveleva, A. V. Poletaev, “*«Историческая память»: к вопросу...*,” pp. 170-220.

An extensive criticism of the notion of historical memory and the theory of “traumatic collective memory” was levelled by Alexey Rutkevich in his work *Psychoanalysis and the doctrine of “historical memory.”*²⁷ Having found the theory “blatantly false,” the author states:

The condition of a traumatic collective experience is the existence of collective psyche ..., which contradicts everything the contemporary human sciences say. Of course, the sum of experiences of many people leaves a more or less similar “impression” ..., but there is no question of a collective soul. Experience may be the same, yet its perception and integration with various interpretation schemes may proceed differently.²⁸

Rutkevich refers to the conception of social memory of the British psychologist Frederic Bartlett. He claims that both the very material of memories and their form depend on the interests and values of the group, on the social control the group exerts over an individual, therefore the individual habit of recalling is similar to the habits of representatives of a given society, class, or group, who may have their own places of memory (monuments, hymns, dates, anniversaries of the founders, etc.). However, as Rutkevich stresses—

... one should speak each time not about “collective memory” but about the means by which some individuals affect others, about the tradition in its primary mining of ‘transferring’ experience, knowledge, and habits. Whereas memory is always exclusively individual in nature.²⁹

Irina Saveleva and Andrey Poletaev precisely formulated two key questions reflecting the theoretical and methodological problems of contemporary research on historical memory. First, there is doubt whether “collective memory” is the result of combining different variants of individual ideas of the past into stereotypical images or the “a priori ‘collective memory’ the society already has determines the content and change of the individual memory of the past?” The other question is as follows:

... is it right to extrapolate the mechanisms of individual memory over social one or, on the contrary, to present individual memory of the social past as a derivative of collective memory?³⁰

²⁷ A. M. Rutkevich, *Психоанализ и доктрина «исторической памяти»*, Moscow 2004, pp. 36.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 24. See also: A. M. Rutkevich, “Психоанализ, история, травмированная «память»,” in: *Феномен прошлого...*, pp. 221-250 (pp. 243-244).

³⁰ I. M. Saveleva, A. V. Poletaev, «Историческая память»: к вопросу о границах понятия..., p. 189.

The latter question was unequivocally addressed by Yuri Lotman:

Similarly to individual consciousness, which has its own mechanisms of memory, collective memory recognises the need to preserve something common for the whole collective and creates the mechanisms of collective memory.³¹

Collective memory is founded on social context. A given event is remembered only if it occupies a place in the notional structures defined by the society. Recently in a book entitled *Memory in language and culture*, in which she analyses phrasemes, set metaphorical collocations, and clichés from the works of 19th–20th-century Russian literature and contemporary journalism, the linguist Natalia Bragina describes memory as a self-organising and self-regulating system for the functioning of fragments of individual and social past.³² In the chapter “Memory and society: The mechanisms of cultural memory”³³, the author rightly notes that “embedding the memory in a social context was conducive to the emergence of a new, metaphorical meaning of the word” and, translating the methodology and meta-language of the historians and philosophers of memory to the language of linguistics, she compares the studies on various kinds of collective memory to the “linguistic analysis of the internal form of lexical units, their etymology, metaphorisation processes, and the reconstruction of the graphical basis of phrasemes.”³⁴ Analysing the forms and ways in which the category of *memory* is used in different kinds of discourse, Bragina distinguishes *personal* and *collective* (that is, impersonal) memory, as well as *soccollective* memory (related to various social groups) and *social* memory (which corresponds to *national memory* and is primarily associated with the practices of commemoration).³⁵ The term of collective memory is thus used in two different meanings.

In turn, the answer to the former question cannot be unequivocal. The past seems to divide into two streams: the unique past I (the biographical past) and the past We (the historical past of the group). On the other hand, it is a feature of modern humanities to perceive culture as the context, form, and result of human activities (according to the principle that “there is no human without culture and no culture without a human”). The Russian psychologist

³¹ Yu. M. Lotman, “Альтернативный вариант: Бесписьменная культура или культура до культуры?,” in: *id.*, *Внутри мыслящих миров: Человек—текст -семиосфера—история*, Moscow 1996, pp. 344-345.

³² N.G. Bragina, *Память в языке...*, p. 159.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 227-255.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Veronika Nurkova developed an original conception of autobiographical memory which shows, in a systematic way, the relationship between its structural and functional properties with the laws of development and regulation. She used a methodology based on a cultural and historical approach to the analysis of individual memory and, consequently, pays a particular attention to the representation and actualisation of the socio-historical past in individual memories.³⁶ Nurkova studies the way in which the consciousness of an individual gains a historical dimension in relation to the events of general importance, describes the role and functioning of the historical factor in individual autobiographical memory, which is embedded in the cultural norms of behaviour, conditioned by specific structures and symbolic practices, and is an amalgamation of individual and socio-cultural senses. There are important observations regarding the functioning of historical memories in the structure of autobiographical memory, in particular the presence of mediated experience of previous generations, as well as the fact that

... the mechanism of transition from having semantic historical knowledge at one's disposal to actively shaping historical memory in the process of living experience consists in creating conditions for active assimilation of historical knowledge.³⁷

Accordingly, the researcher divides the carriers of historical memory regarding a given event into four qualitatively different categories: Participants, Witnesses, Contemporaries, and Heirs.³⁸ The hypothesis suggested by Nurkova may enrich the toolbox of historical research in four directions. First, by taking these models into consideration, it is possible to broaden the spectrum of source analysis of a variety of usually fragmented autobiographical narrations, whose genre typology exceeds the scale of monuments of autobiographical literature. Second, the various mechanisms, highlighted by the author, of incorporating momentous events into individual historical memory and experiencing them as facts of personal biography enable a more precise definition of the possible

³⁶ V.V. Nurkova, *Культурно-исторический подход к автобиографической памяти* (автореферат диссертации на соискание ученой степени доктора психологических наук), Moscow 2009; *ead.*, *Свершенное продолжается: Психология автобиографической памяти личности*, Moscow 2000; *ead.*, "Роль автобиографической памяти в структуре идентичности личности," *Мир психологии* 2004, № 2, pp. 77-87; *ead.*, "Анализ феноменов автобиографической памяти с позиций культурно-исторического подхода," *Культурно-историческая психология* 2008, № 1, pp. 17-25.

³⁷ V.V. Nurkova, *Культурно-исторический подход к автобиографической памяти...*, p. 33.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

criteria of trustworthiness of historical accounts and the role of historical context in the diverse autobiographical texts used by historians, from the so-called “model” (or “canonical”) to perfectly ordinary ones. Finally, what should be considered even more important for the very memory studies and historiography, are the experiments and observations regarding the nature of experiencing the event of the far and recent past conducted by Nurkova from the perspective of Heir, which are equally valuable both from the point of view of the research into individual and collective (social) memory.

What should be considered as the most interesting, however, are the proposals of Andrey Makarov, who focuses on the analysis of the phenomenon of individual memory and the history of its conceptualisation.³⁹ At present, due to the psychological theories, the idea that memory belongs to an individual is actually more widespread. Nevertheless, it appeared in the European culture only as late as in 17th century and it was only gradually that the monopoly on scientific grounds was granted to the individualistic, psychophysiological approach to explaining all the processes of gathering information about past experiences and transmitting this information in time. The imperfection of the psychological approach is that the phenomenon of tradition escapes the notice of scholars. However, already in the beginning of the 20th century, the collective socio-psychological structures emerged again, and it was thus necessary to shift the focus from the individual aspect of memory towards its transpersonal or super-individual aspect.

Looking for a way of conceptualisation of the phenomenon of memory which may become the basis of an interdisciplinary synthesis, Makarov found the term “super-individual memory” to be the most adequate as a notion of broader scope than “cultural memory” or “collective memory” (“it combines the social, cultural, and historical and genetic aspect of external control over the consciousness of an individual”⁴⁰) as well as directly pointing out the dichotomy between the individual and super-individual, central to the conceptualisation of the issue of memory. Building upon the ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin and Yuri Lotman, Makarov writes: “... The personal memory of a human is broader than his/her individual memory. The consciousness and memory of an individual do not function separately from the knowledge other people have now or had in the past. Interpersonal contacts and tradition as intergenerational communication make the accumulation and preservation of knowledge possible. These are the priceless resources of common experience. Coming to the world, communicating with Others,

³⁹ А.И. Макаров, Феномен надындивидуальной памяти (образы—концепты—рефлексия), Volgograd 2009.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

becoming immersed in language, a human becomes the transmitters of knowledge (images, notions, ways of thinking) gathered by the group he/she represents. Assuming that human communities are able to establish the exchange of knowledge with other groups, group memory becomes a part of some universal, super-individual memory.⁴¹ What is involved here are the social conditions of the mechanisms of perception and interpretation of reality, which endows consciousness and memory with a super-individual dimension. Whereas the very phenomenon of socialisation in the context of super-individual memory is, according to Makarov, inseparable from the communicative function of culture⁴², in the semiosphere of which the transfer of information takes place and, due to language, there appears a “plane of universal experience, commonly understood and thus passed from generation to generation.”⁴³ Super-individual memory, whose function is social and integration, “is a prerequisite in constituting the semiotic reality ... through the *symbols* of synchronous (between contemporaries) and diachronous (between ancestors and descendants) interpersonal relationships.”⁴⁴

Andrey Makarov is right to stress that the knowledge of the super-individual dimension of memory becomes more and more important for humanity, since the broadening of the artificial layer of human’s surroundings has led to increased dependence of memory on culture, and not on nature. (It is worth to remember as well that Jan Assman pointed out the emergence of artificial memory—new electronic information carriers—as one of the factors of the contemporary interest in memory.⁴⁵)

On the context sketched above, the conflict between the two most important ways of conceptualisation of the phenomenon of super-individual memory (as a space of common social experience of immanent and transcendent nature or as a construct of individual consciousness motivated by the pragmatic need of the group to which the individual belongs) becomes transformed into a complex of two mutually complementary tendencies, reflecting dialectic moments of the socialisation process of an individual: “the tendency of individual consciousness to interiorise collective memory and the tendency of society go exteriorise individual memory.”⁴⁶ This dialectic is consonant with the “negative conclusion” of Paul Ricoeur

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁴⁵ J. Assman, *Культурная память...*, p. 11.

⁴⁶ A.I. Makarov, *Феномен надындивидуальной памяти...*, p. 188.

described above, concerning the phenomenology of individual memory and the sociology of collective memory, based on just one of two antagonistic theses respectively, and with his proposition to study the possibility that these two contradictory assumptions may complement each other.

What is both interesting and striking is that all the conceptualisations of memory described above, oriented towards overcoming the dichotomy of individual and super-individual (collective, social), see history as the path to synthesis.

**Individual and Super-Individual in the Conceptualisation of Memory:
from Dichotomy to Synthesis**

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Abstract

The article compares the well-known socially-oriented interpretations of the phenomenon of memory with the most interesting new elaborations by Russian scholars in philosophy, psychology, linguistics, and cultural studies. It is shown that the conceptualisations of memory aiming to overcome the dichotomy of individual and super-individual discover the path to synthesis in history.

Keywords: memory, individual, super-individual, synthesis, history.