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Moral Topography of Memory, Time Control and Accumulation of Identity

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to analyze the basis for the moral obligation to remember. As the moral relation to the past is primarily a matter of shared identity, the kind of obligation in question splits into two related issues, namely, that of political, state-oriented and state-organized memory on which the political identity rests and that of memory labour grounded in social identities based in shared, time-extended projects. Drawing upon tensions between these two, I discuss time control and the accumulation of identity as central to memory labour and, referring to John Zerzan's critique of symbolical roots of power, pinpoint the moral basis of such an accumulation. On the basis of this, I argue for nesting the duty to remember in acknowledging the agent's recognition of the relatedness and dependency of their agency and possibilities of flourishing which can be obtained thanks to adjusting the field of the virtue of practical wisdom so that it includes members of the time-extended community.

Keywords: memory labour, moral topography, time control, *phronesis*, social identity

Introduction: The Temporality of Moral Obligation

The relation of moral obligation to time is ambiguous. Highlighting the importance of including future generations in establishing moral duties, which gained special place in debates in ethics at least since the late 1970s,[1] has been broadly

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[1] See B. Barry, "Justice between Generations," [in:] *Law, Morality and Society: Essays in Honor of H.L.A. Hart*, P.M.S. Hacker, J. Raz (eds.), Oxford 1977, pp. 268–284; J. English, "Justice between Generations," *Philosophical Studies* 31 [2] (1977), pp. 91–104; H. Jonas, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung. Versuch einer Ethik für die technologische Zivilisation*, Frankfurt am Main 1979; A. Baier, "The Rights of Past and Future Persons," [in:] *Responsibilities to Future Generations: Environmental Ethics*,

recognized as an important part of moral reasoning, and along with the growing awareness of climate change and limits of mainstream models of economic growth helped to establish one of the crucial domains of contemporary theorizing and policy. The paradigmatic line of thinking here was outlined by John Rawls in his *Theory of Justice*, where he states that, despite working in a generally individualistic framework, the parties in the original position should not be conceived as just individuals, but as "representing a continuing line of claims. For example, we can assume that they are heads of families and therefore have a desire to further the well-being of at least their more immediate descendants."[2] Seen along such lines, the agent is not just an individual to whom some obligations might be ascribed, but rather he or she is a representative of a micro-community, and their decisions will shape the life opportunities of future generations, which themselves are thus — to use a term derived from business — stakeholders of their life projects. At the same time, ethical reflection on the atrocities of colonialism and 20th-century totalitarianisms gave raise to ground-breaking works on the duty to remember the victims, the moral position of the witness and the philosophy of memory in general.[3]

However, this vector of interest in the temporality of moral obligation has two, somewhat disproportionate, directions. For just as the agent is generally required to (*prima facie*) equally value the wellbeing of those who will face the consequences of his or her actions, the axiology of memory makes it unavoidably selective. Two groups are usually prioritized. On the one hand, there are members of one's family, one's immediate progenitors to whom one owes gratefulness (or feels rancour) for the conditions of one's life. The second consists of heroes and victims who populate a much broader group of symbolic attachment. Here is where the ethics of memory splits: it obliges us to honour those who shaped our shared identity and urges us to give justice to the victims of the past atrocities[4] on the one hand, but for those who do not have such an exposed place in the past it does not have much more to offer except for the general commitment to remember.

In what follows I will have nothing to say about commemoration of victims. Instead, I shall examine the moral topography of memory. Namely, I shall argue that the mnemonic labour becomes the core of identity when the moral obligation to remember is supported by a social framework of time control. This exposes the labour to the perils of political exploitation, but without it the scope of the moral obligation remains blurred and the possibilities of agency are limited. For it is the social identity that is the capital worked out in the mnemonic labour.

E. Partridge (ed.), New York 1981, pp. 171–183; S. Scheffler, *Why Worry about Future Generations?*, Oxford 2020; G. Kahane, "The Significance of the Past," *Journal of The American Philosophical Association* 7 [4] (2021), pp. 582–600.

[2] J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice: Revised Edition*, Cambridge 1999, p. 111.

[3] W.J. Booth, *Communities of Memory: On Witness, Identity, and Justice*, Ithaca–London 2006; A. Margalit, *The Ethics of Memory*, Cambridge–London 2004; P. Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, Chicago–London 2004; S. Smilansky, "The Idea of Moral Duties to History," *Philosophy* 96 (2021), pp. 155–179.

[4] A. Berninger, "Commemorating Public Figures — In Favour of a Fictionalist Position," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* (2021), https://doi.org/10.1111/japp.12474.

Moral Communities in Time

Consider the owner of the Nishiyama Onsen Keiunkan hotel in the Akaishi Mountains, Japan.[5] They are not just a hotel owner, because what they own is the world's oldest hotel, established in A.D. 705 and for 52 generations managed by a single family (including adopted members). Facing the portraits of their predecessors, they do not only face managers who led the company through the disturbed times of two failed Mongol invasions, the civil wars of the Muromachi period, the revolutions of the Meiji era, World War II and rapid post-war modernization, but also people with whom they are bound by blood ties, name and social position. Let's assume that under their management the hotel has gone bankrupt.

Putting aside the nuances of Japanese culture, should the long tradition of the business be taken as an additional reason for the owner's shame and sense of failure? To whom then do they owe their regret? What difference for them may the historical fact of someone's existence several decades, or even centuries, ago, make?

The business context of the example highlights an important part of the issue under discussion, as it enables us to see those in the field of the agents' activity as stakeholders in their projects and hence joining some (perhaps local and unstable) community significant from the point of view of the agents' obligations and possibilities of acting. To take into account the temporal aspect of moral obligation, however, stresses the one-dimensionality of this group, which gathers the stakeholders and relations who are revealed by the horizontal cut of the time axis (oriented vertically). Yet, in both the case of the contract party in Rawls's original position and that of the hotel owner, what needs to be taken into account is the obligation which spreads along the time axis.

The dominant analogy here is that of familial relations. Rawls's example of the head of a family is paradigmatic, as it combines both moral responsibility, distribution of crucial economic, social and symbolic resources, and shared narrative based on common experiences. Yet what is the temporal range of an obligation derived from such a community? People might find themselves obliged to support their parents[6] and grandparents, but in what sense might this obligation be extended to previous generations? Consider the hotel owner again: what kind of obligation might be linked to their ancestor who lived 1,300 years ago? The key question here is that of the kind of moral obligation that reaches beyond the mere duty to remember. The latter, it is worth noting, which might be analyzed in terms of the virtues of justice and *phronesis*, that is, as doing justice to the conditions

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[5] I take this as an example and claim no detailed knowledge of the Nishiyama Onsen Keiunkan hotel or of their owners.

[6] It is worth noticing, however, that it is far from being clear whether adult children do have obligations towards their parents; see W. Sin, "Adult Children's Obligations towards Their Parents: A Contractualist Explanation," *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 53 (2019), pp. 19–32; M.C. Stuifbergen, J.J. Van Delden, "Filial Obligations to Elderly Parents: A Duty to Care?," *Medicine, Health, and Philosophy* 14 (2011), pp. 63–71. This doubt seems to signal an important issue, which cannot be fully addressed here, concerning the change in developed societies' turn from memory (and especially from its duty-bearing vision) to a more critical view in which both inherited social position and state history need to be explained (and excused) in terms of justice and privilege.

of one's own flourishing which have been established by the actions of past generations, and adjusting one's attitude (for example, by practising thankfulness), does not fulfil the duty in question. For the hotel owner is not only obliged to remember and commemorate their ancestors *qua* ancestors, their distant relatives, but being the owner of the hotel they had established and run, he or she runs, in a sense, their business, and that makes the owner's everyday acting part of his or her memory labour, which cannot be limited to the practice of memory and commemoration. Hence, what is of key importance here is that both the present owner and their ancestors are not only interlinked by personal acts of memory, but also, and primarily, that these bonds are structured and supported by their involvement in sustaining and development of the material core of memory — in this case, the hotel. The hotel is central to both the owner's and their ancestors' flourishing and it is an important part of their identity. The material (institutional) core of this identity both merges the life-projects of time-distanced relatives, strengthening the familial community, and serves the current family members (and hence the institution) as the basis for their claims of featured status, here among the many mountain hotel owners in Japan.

This seems to be a general framework for social (and political) memory which is rooted in the intentional heterogeneity of mnemonic labour. For establishing a community of memory requires one to reach beyond one's immediate experience, that is, beyond one's immediate recollections of certain persons or events. And contemporary practices of mnemonic labour, characterized by the extensive use of tools — writing (letters and memoirs) in societies of wide-spread literacy, as well as image preservation (photos and videos) in the technologically advanced world — hide its heterogeneity by the immediate accessibility of all kinds of memories. For a *recollection* is a private, first-person experience, an association the agent *has with* somebody or something, heavily loaded with emotions which can be transmitted through personal contact, within a system of shared life in which this kind of exchange is part of everyday giving and receiving.[7] However, it is not necessarily based on the agent's intentional effort to search for and gather recollections of the past. Note that the *memory* that is obtained in this kind of acting is aimed in the intentional act, that is, one has a certain reason for looking for and sustaining it.[8] Thus understood, the memory is developed primarily for non-sentimental reasons, just as in the cases of totemic communities or bourgeois and aristocratic families. Their genealogies are meticulously collected not for merely familial (recollecting) reasons, but because they are the sources of problematized identity, treated not as part of the everyday life of a certain micro-community, but as their way of self-presentation to other social groups and individuals or as a resource conducive to their prosperity. Seen along such lines, these kinds of familial identities are the bases for claims of a particular social status. They both strengthen the ties between members of a family, clan or tribe, highlighting their

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[7] A. MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues*, London 1999.

[8] Thus, my distinction differs from Ricoeur's analysis of memory (*la mémoire*) taken as intention and recollection (*le souvenir*) as its object (P. Ricoeur, *Memory*, p. 22).

mutual obligations, and fund a distinction of the role and significance of these social settings from all the others the agent is part of. Thus, memory grounds the claims to distinct status (in fact, it is — along with wealth and physical power, taken as the ability to use violence — one of the key ways of establishing such a distinct status) which defines the social position of the family or clan members, and which becomes mediated by their self-presentation as group members. Thus the family (and clan as an extended family) becomes the centre of identity, which is a resource for setting one's social position and range of agency. As the latter may be based on prestige and historical significance (highlighted by memory labour), it becomes a basis of claims to power.

Memory Labour and Time Frame

Social and political memory are similarly heterogeneous, as they consist in separating people's identity from their immediate recollections and replacing them with memories of other people preserved in their reports and artefacts. To a degree, they resemble familial memory, as knowing somebody's ancestors consists not only in an ability to memorize their names, but also to "say something about them" — who they were, what they did, what they experienced (in the sense of a distinctive, formative event). That is to say, for someone to become acknowledged as one's ancestor, not only does the existence of the past person need to be recorded, but furthermore the time of their life needs to be reproduced effectively (in the sense of Hans-Georg Gadamer), that is, it needs to be included in the community's (family's) narrative,[9] the narrative of its identity and goals, both those that have already been obtained, and those to which it aims. In this respect to remember is to include past people into the common project, in the life of a certain social institution which might be distinguished from others and which serves as an institutional core and material base for common efforts.

Two things need to be remarked here. Firstly, as noted above, two at least partially independent phenomena might here be distinguished. For, as Paul Ricoeur points out, recollecting is not intentionally homogeneous, and it may consist in both the fact of one's (or one's community's) "possessing" memories (or recollections, in the sense of the distinction I introduced above) and the activity of searching for them. The former is an individual experience effective thanks to the possibility of recreating in one's imagination past events and persons, among which recreations at least some are relevant for one's life project. At the same time, establishing a precise genealogy reaching beyond recollections and stories told by the oldest living members of the community is not only a purposeful cultivation of memory based on a certain intention, but is also an act of selecting those who will be remembered and those who will be forgotten. Thus understood, memory be-

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[9] T.L. Goodsell, J.B. Whiting, "An Aristotelian Theory of Family," *Journal of Family Theory & Review* 8 (2016), pp. 484–502.

comes a framework for the community's identity; it constitutes a timeline so that the community may overcome the limited durability of recollections.[10]

This leads to the second remark. In formally organized communities, such as states (perhaps except for the smallest, which can sustain communities of recollections) or religious organizations, this kind of memory cannot be a direct extension of the recollections of the community members (except, again, for the most traumatic and geographically extensive, such as floods or wars). Here again the technicization of memory labour blurs the view. For despite the abundant resources of written and audio-visual archives, what we have access to is not the recollections (the common memory in Avishai Margalit's term), but, rather, primarily records made deliberately, with an unavoidable element of propaganda, often for the use of pre-existing political structures rooted in organized memory labour.[11] Hence it is not only, as W. James Booth claims, that memory "is the fabric of a community's way of life,"[12] but also community itself shows up, to an important degree, as an effect of the division of mnemonic labour. This division not only points out those people who are obliged to remember, but also defines those past events and persons who deserve to be remembered and the ways in which the memories of them will replace the actual recollections. Hence, what is remembered is not a community of recollections taken as a sphere of common, recorded experience, but a line of experience defined by the hegemony of a single power centre which sets the framework of identity that, thanks to this framing, can be controlled. The basis and core of this hegemony is time control, the ability to define the current of events and their chronology for those who should take them as significant for organization of their lives, to point out the contents of the shared memory and set the standards of effective mnemonic labour.

Zerzan on Time Control

Time control is the central issue of John Zerzan's anarcho-primitivist critique. I take his stance as a form of far-reaching intervention, which enables us to look beyond the scope of the discourse of the philosophy of memory. The starting point of his analysis is social critique rather than the philosophy of memory, and instead of undertaking a detailed scrutiny of memorizing phenomena, he aims at uncovering the roots of the contemporary social and political order. His analysis, however, is not directed against the social and political *status quo*, but is developed so that it should reach the origin of the entire civilization project. According to him, this is based on the appropriation of power, which is possible thanks to alienation and control, which themselves are consequences of the "invention" of the symbolical and of time control.

The symbolical and time control are interlinked, because measurement and, in effect, time control are both primarily cultural, since they consist in abandoning

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[10] For a similar distinction of common and shared memory, see A. Margalit, *The Ethics*, pp. 50–54.

[11] Ibidem, pp. 52–54.

[12] W.J. Booth, *Communities*, p. xiii.

part of one's own flow of experience to a god or spirit through the shaman, the first professional to have emerged from the pristine equality of hunters-gatherers.[13] What is of crucial importance is the transition from the immediacy of first-person experience to significance-bearing time, relating to the external reality that sets certain limits on individual consciousness. Due to this transition, time, which so far has been a dimension of individual life and can be reproduced in the memory of a certain experience by its immediate subject, and which can be mediated only by closely related people, becomes the object of actions of an external (organized) actor, whose aims are independent of the will and imagination of the subject of the recollections themselves.

In this way time becomes objectivized and presented as an independent reality of intrinsic meaning and value.[14] Two aspects of this transition are worth noting. Firstly, time understood in this way becomes the subject of external control, which causes its objectification, standardization and measurement, and consequently imposes an obligation on it. Thus, the freedom to regulate the rhythm of life is gradually replaced by its regulation by an external metre, which makes room for both the symbolical and technology's growing importance. For it is in this way that discipline and routine, supported by systems of time control and the signals of its passage, are introduced into human activity, which leads to the domestication of human beings so that they become a resource in a process they do not control.[15] This process intensifies with the technicization of the society and culminates in the development of its industrial form, with the domination of the rhythm of machine, timetable, and production cycle that are typical of it.[16] Simultaneous with this is the reification of time as an objective dimension of life and its being presented as a realm of obligation and value, something which should not be wasted. Thus orientation in time, control over the ways it is "spent" and discipline become the main components of "civilized" life.

As Zerzan points out, "time literacy," which becomes important part of upbringing, leads to agents' self-limitation, which is a *sine qua non* of urban life. That is to say, historical development is possible only thanks to the self-domestication of humans and imposition on them of control and measurement, subjection to which is necessary for being part of a large-scale society. This leads to the second aspect of humans' subjection to the time regime: the directness of living time becomes appropriated by emerging centres of power. Time subjected to symbolization and measure is not a dimension of personal experience and is not regulated spontaneously any more. It becomes, to an important degree, a property of someone or something else — a god, a society, or the state — and hence it becomes encumbered with a value of the nature of an obligation. Here a double alienation shows

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[13] J. Zerzan, "The Case against Art," [in:] J. Zerzan, *Origins: A John Zerzan Reader*, Milwaukee–Greensburg 2010, pp. 130–138.

[14] J. Zerzan, "Time and Its Discontents," [in:] J. Zerzan, *Time and Time Again*, Olimpia 2018, pp. 55, 88.

[15] J. Zerzan, "The Bronze Age: Origins of the One Percent," [in:] J. Zerzan, *A People's History of Civilization*, Port Townsend 2018, pp. 74–105.

[16] J. Zerzan, "Time," p. 85.

up: with one's own life and with others. In the first case, it lies in the separation of some spheres from the life of the agent so that they are neither in their direct control, nor in the shared control of an immediate inclusive community any more. This separation that forms the immediate experience of one's environment is, as noted above, the consequence of the professionalization of religion, emerging from shamans (and later priests) who establish rituals and, as a result, the symbolical. This turn in human functioning enabled the gathering of experience and its accumulation into new reasons for acting and for directing common efforts and large-scale planning, yet at the price of subjecting individual consciousness to the primacy of the will and memory aggregated in ritual. As Zerzan claims:

> Time awareness is what empowers us to deal with our environment symbolically; there is no time apart from this estrangement [objectivization of the environment — P.M.]. It is by means of progressive symbolization that time becomes naturalized, becomes a given, is removed from the sphere of conscious cultural production. "Time becomes human in the measure to which it is actualized in narrative," is another way of putting it (Ricoeur 1984). The symbolic accretions in this process constitute a steady throttling of instinctive desire; repression develops the sense of time unfolding. Immediacy gives way, replaced by the mediations that make history possible — language in the foremost.[17]

Thus, symbolization leads not only to one mediating one's own experience, but also to structuring one's memories by a certain form, available in a given symbolic regime, of expression. The introduction of writing systems (and mnemotechnics before them) not only changes people's relation to their memories, but also those memories' displacement by memories and experiences of other people, both in practical knowledge and in social relations.[18]

Here is where the second kind of alienation emerges. For the tendency to control time is, according to Zerzan, interlinked with the tendency to put in order (understood also as tidiness), not only in the sense of setting a measure for oneself, but also in setting the measure for (ordering) the surrounding world.[19] This not only lies at the base of the reflective (symbolic) development of the natural world, but also — and primarily — is part of the core of development of societies.

Ritual is of key importance here. Zerzan takes it — contra René Girard — as aimed first of all at toning the internal tensions in a community which has lost its natural, spontaneous unity. These conflicts, however, are not only strictly political, but are rooted in the destruction of the primal community by the introduction of religious identities that are independent of one's tribal allegiances and roots in the natural world.[20] Hence, time control is not only the basis of all kinds of alienation (self-distancing), but in its symbolical form, as ritual that reproduces time independently of the memories and experiences of specific agents and builds a common memory and obligations towards others (both real, such as the ruler, and

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[17] Ibidem, p. 58.

[18] J. Zerzan, "The City and Its Inmates," [in:] J. Zerzan, *A People's History of Civilization*, Port Townsend 2018, pp. 44–57.

[19] J. Zerzan, "Time," p. 75.

[20] J. Zerzan, "Civilization Tightens Its Grip: The Axial Age," [in:] J. Zerzan, *A People's History of Civilization*, Port Townsend 2018, pp. 112–113.

irreal, such as a deity), it is crucial for the possibility of domination.[21] For whoever controls time, frames it, and regulates its course and pace, finds themselves in the position of controlling the way in which the process of (self-)domestication of humans is organized.

Lessons from Political Memory

The merit of Zerzan's interpretation, putting aside its historical and anthropological accuracy, lies in its radicalism, which, by reaching the frontier of any possible critique of all forms of power, highlights both the perils of one-sided analysis and the lessons that should be learned from rejecting it. For it might be understood as a form of deep hermeneutics of memory which, in the course of revealing the political aspect of key questions of the phenomenology of memory as raised by Ricoeur: "What?," "How?," and "Who?,"[22] reveals at least some aspects of memory labour. Hence, although I am not going to discuss Zerzan's claims at length, some of the conceptual resources he offers seem to be useful for grasping certain important relations between memory and shared identity.

What needs first to be addressed is the primal alienation that is one of the bases of shared social (focused on some supra-individual, time-extended project with which the agent is bound in their familial, professional or local allegiances, providing them with a moral framework of goods, relationships, and obligations) and political identities. These identities are similar in that they both rest on replacing, as noted above, personal recollections with memories and narratives set independently of the individual's experience. In the case of political memory this works similarly — the history of a political community (for example, a nation) is usually presented not as "people's" history in the sense used by Howard Zinn, but rather as the history of an institution which works as a core of shared identity and centre of power, as well as a hypostasis of experiences of those who populated the land under the control of this institution in the course of its development. At the same time, the shared genealogy of this population is sustained by the institution itself. Because developed and expressed as "ours," history and especially History (that is, the morally loaded justification of a political claim) consists of two features. On the one hand, since it needs to be told (written) as a coherent and concise narrative of a unifying centre (which becomes the subject of the narrative), it has to be reduced to a relatively homogeneous plot. Seen along such lines, history becomes not a story of the lives of people and communities, but rather one of nations and states, which conceals power and control over the ways in which the form of self-presentation and self-understanding of individuals and local communities is organized. The power here concerns the ways of setting the framework in which individuals and communities express themselves (in terms of forms, language and chronology of such expressions), and only secondarily the

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[21] For a discussion of the political significance of nostalgia, see J. Zerzan, "In the Beginning," [in:] J. Zerzan, *Why Hope? The Stand against Civilization*, Port Townsend 2018, pp. 3–9.

[22] P. Ricoeur, *Memory*, p. 22.

actual content being expressed. Hence, the real subject of political history is in fact the power centre, which becomes legitimatized in the course of a history that is told in a certain way. Political history is in fact the history of a narrow group (for example, in Eastern Europe it is primarily the history of the intelligentsia and only secondarily the history of the intelligentsia's attitude towards the rest of the nation that it helps to define), usually of one language and often of one faith (or tensions among a handful of dominant ones). What is important to note is that it is also usually a history told from the perspective of only part of the territory that the power centre makes claims to (as with the relation of Spanish history to Basques or Polish history to Silesians). Thus, the answer to the question "Who?" of the act of memory should include not only those who are in power and who dispense it, but should also include an answer to the sub-question of their dispersal.

On the other hand, the product of history writing is collective identity. Political memory is flexible in its ability to overlook territorial, ethnic and social changes, or rather to subject them to the logic of a developed narrative, while at the same time extending what are in fact absent memories to people located outside the territorial and chronological centre of the story.[23] Thus, to become part of history is to be placed within a chronological framework which might be at odds with the local history and sense of time.

Note that in the case of the hotel owner in the example discussed above a similar mechanism might be expected. For narratives concerning their lives will be adjusted to the chronology of the core project, so that the family history will say: she lived when our hotel was the most respected in the entire country, he ran the hotel during emperor's visit, etc. The chronology of the institution, of the material core of memory, thus becomes a chronology of community (both local, as in the case of a family, and political, for example national), and the identity framed in terms that are governed by this chronology becomes dominant, while the individual significance of local social processes and the dynamics of individual life (the tensions between the circumstances of life and loyalty to the long-lasting project in the historical owners' lives, their struggles with conditions of the times, etc.) place its story on the margins of the narrative on the centre of identity.

In addition, with respect to political memory, the operation of such a centralized chronology is reinforced by subjecting individual and collective life to the rhythm and norms imposed by the state, such as state holidays or the history curricula taught at schools, and by the structuring of "acknowledged" elements of local identity. Here the rise of mass media and spread of uniform literary languages are among the key tools of identity accumulation. Consider, for instance, the kind of TV and radio programmes that reproduce the experience of participants of certain historical events (especially those that cover some longer period of time, reproducing certain sequences of events day by day) and make it part of a residuum of the collective memory of people from other regions of the country, which effort, however, is not accompanied by a similar diligence in the reproduction of the experience of inhabitants of regions outside the historical core.

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[23] Ibidem, pp. 84–85.

The other way in which this kind of accumulation happens is with the rituals of memory. As noted above, according to Zerzan their primary function is to ease tensions within the group and provide it with ideological glue. The reproduction of time here is also crucial, both in the sense of repeatability of such a recreation,[24] and as directing the participants' attention to a sequence of events focused around certain persons of that group of people who are crucial from the point of view of the identity of the political community that is being actualized in the ritual. Preproduction of the chronology of this sequence and its axiological distinction by political indication or empathetic connection establish memories of such a featured group of people as a shared recollection which defines shared past. This form of symbolization, however, might be democratically controlled only to a limited extent.

This aspect of the moral economy of the state is worth highlighting. For memory shows up as another form of capital (in the sense of Pierre Bourdieu), and the production of memory not only works through the actual recollections and the organizing of their chronology, but — in acts of power — the mnemonic labour subjects them to the unifying form of a shared memory with its distinctive chronology and controls the form of time reproduction, its periodicity and axiological direction. If it is analyzed as another form of capital, supplementing Bourdieu's own classification,[25] this can help to explain if not the origin, then at least the durability and vitality of state organizations and the mythologies on which they rest. For even if the origin of politics (and in consequence also the state) might be explained in terms of the rise of accumulation of primarily social and economic capital,[26] the tendency to sustain this kind of organization and internalize patriotic values requires another kind of labour and resource, that is, it requires control over time reproduction (historical time) as a framework of time-extended identity and justification of territorial control. The product of memory labour is thus a supra-individual, shared identity, which extends beyond immediate, person-to-person transmission of recollections and moral ties. Hence, while Booth[27] is right when he claims that institutions and space set the limits of a community (and both his and my standpoints are limited in being able to explain non-state, nomadic communities, such as the Roma), it is important to stress that centralization of time control and memory labour is a key factor in the durability of any project of sustaining a political community.

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[24] Here an analogy between memory and habit as "form[ing] two poles of a continuous range of mnemonic phenomena," pointed out by Ricoeur, might be of use (ibidem, p. 24). For the essence of the political dimension of ritual is precisely habituating the subjects to treating the message framed by the power centre as the effective act of memory which substitutes real recollection. This substitution is also two-dimensional. It is an act of domination where there is no direct social relationship with the actors of recreated event, and, at the same time, it is creating a new or updating an existing relationship of including in fabricated identity. That is why Ricoeur, while discussing habit in relation to "an experience acquired earlier," notes that it is a matter of incorporating it "into the living present."

[25] P. Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," [in:] *Handbook of Theory of Research for Sociology of Education*, J. Richardson (ed.), New York 1986, pp. 241–258.

[26] J.C. Scott, *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States*, New Haven–London 2017.

[27] W.J. Booth, *Communities*, p. 51.

This marks an important distinction between political (state-centred and organized) and social (communal, project-oriented) identities and limits the range of the above-discussed relation. For within large-scale societies some degree of centralization seems unavoidable for the sake of sustaining their supra-individual agency. Note that among communities (Roma again being a notable example) that share identity without subjecting it to a homogenizing institutional core, the shared identity may serve as basis for certain social positions, and thus may shape the possibilities of individual action, but it does not support highly organized, collective action such as that supported (or organized) by the institutional core of the state. At the same time, individuals are subjected to the memory core, as pointed out above, independently of their life projects which remain in a complex relation to the shared aims and interests. However, in the case of social projects that are rooted in personal activity and relationships with a memory-set core (such as hotel-running in the earlier example), the identity is rather based on merging the life projects of past and current agents and as such, in a sense, it is reciprocal. For memory provides current agents with crucial goods, both material and symbolical, and as such it is oriented towards the community members' flourishing, rather than to managing their actions in accordance with some more unified aim. That is to say, that for the sake of which identity is relevant for the actual agent, is their involvement in developing a form of life for which the importance of past generations can be immediately negotiated.

In both forms of organization, however, identity is subject to a similar logic of prestige and debt, just as other forms of capital are. For, just like them, when accumulated, it offers a sense of power. This results from the efforts of the vertical extension of the community's members which enables them to set the range of goods to which an agent, as a member of the chronologically extended group, may claim a right to (territory, resources, and historical artefacts as forms of accumulated cultural capital), as well as the range of powers (based on making distinctions from others), powers whose violation allows agents to claim support from other members of the extended community and its institutional core. Yet the prestige that is based on such an accumulation needs to be — for the sake of clarity — redeemed by limiting the range of political and socio-historical identities within the political community (state) and of life programmes within the integrated collective community (such as family).[28]

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[28] The former consists in limiting the efficiency of these identities which are either oppressive and aim at limiting individual decision making concerning the agents' own life projects and expressions of their form of life, or — contrary — anarchistic to the extent in which their decentralisation of power makes the agency of the core, and hence, any far-reaching projects impossible. The latter consists in "loyalty" to the project (company or family) and loosening one's relation with those who themselves separate form the core project. This kind of (familial) integration proves to be potentially not less oppressive than the political homogenization.

Accumulation of Identity and Time-Oriented *Phronesis*

What is of crucial importance, however, is the mechanism of debt in which the extension of memory ties the actual agents morally with people from the past. In political memory it is not only a matter of the vitality of the myth that defines the way of representing the past,[29] but also of more morally loaded relations with past heroes and victims.[30] Here the debt obligation is framed in two ways. On the one hand, thanks to the personalization in heroic figures, it is aimed at focusing the memory labour on certain identifiable individuals who become substitutes for relatives given in personal (emotional) recollections, and the act of questioning (the unity of) such memory becomes an obscene act. The closeness of familial relations works as a moral paradigm,[31] so that memory relations become unavoidably relations of obligation similar to those one has towards one's parents and grandparents. Failure to do justice to the memory of past generations, whether by only remembering them or by sustaining a time-extended project (family, business, state), is thus met with condemnation and the expectation of repentance. This is based on the duty of justice towards those who are the weaker part of a relation, in this case, past generations who are unable to defend their rights, protect their good name, or support their project.[32]

The situation of the repentant agent, however, differs depending of the type of memory in question. The emphasis on political coherence, historical justification and identity strengthens the obligation to remember and puts it into a solid framework of political rituals, monuments and school curricula, and makes failure to meet this obligation a matter of significant and intentional effort. The political "right to forget" is thus an effect of critical work which requires a range of resources, such as some alternative or sub-identity (for example, being a member of a neglected minority). The situation of a social actor, in turn, is similar to the hotel owner's, as it rests on their allegiance to the life-project and its significance to both themselves and past agents. Hence, it is not only, as Guy Kahane puts it, that "significance of the past is past significance,"[33] but the significance of the past is in part set by the practical, everyday decisions of the agent and the meaning they give to their heritage.

Thus, the duty to remember should be seen as framed not only in terms of justice taken as virtue, but also of *phronesis*, the virtue of practical wisdom. Consider the repentance of the agent who fails to do justice to their ancestors. Their failure, when expressed in terms of the virtue of justice, may rest on an inability to recognize either the value of the work of the ancestor, the significance of the common

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[29] A. Margalit, *The Ethics*, pp. 65–66.

[30] P. Ricoeur, *Memory*, p. 89.

[31] A. Margalit, *The Ethics*, pp. 102–103.

[32] L.S. Temkin, "Rationality with Respect to People, Places, and Times," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 45 [5–6] (2015), pp. 576–607.

[33] G. Kahane, "The Significance of the Past," *Journal of The American Philosophical Association* 7 [4] (2021), p. 583.

project to the life of the ancestor, or the project's significance for the life of the present agent. Moreover, the very reason for which the significance of the project of the past agent should be taken into account by the present one may seem unclear. For even if acknowledged as a historical fact, it needs to be considered not only in terms of Kahane's formula, but also as relevant and effective for the current affairs and present agent. Here, justice to the victims of past violence is established on a different basis than is justice to the founders of companies, heads of families or masters of crafts. The difference lies in the intention, that is, in the engagement with the good or aim of those actions of which memory labour forms a part. To say this is not to give up memory labour to the play of competing interests, however. It is rather to highlight its two aspects: practice-involvement and dependence on social framework. The latter consist in both a shared chronology (of family, business or state) and in the conditions of acting (set by economic and symbolic resources, social and — in the case of state organizations — international position, etc.) which work as a framework for the agent's possibilities of acting. What differentiates the two kinds of memory here is thus the engagement in sustaining the framework itself, which for political organizations is one of the key aspects of their justification. But for the social agent memory labour supports their moral topography not as framework-centred, but as agent-centred, that is, it needs to be incorporated into their system of goals, their intentions, and their life-world in general. The duty of repentance then makes sense not as a general obligation, but only when addressed to the individualized agent, that is to say, when linked to their sense of agency and the goods they aim at.

This meets Aristotle's description of *phronesis*, which is excellence in ordering individual actions so that they constitute a coherent form of life,[34] by enabling proper deliberation on things that are good for the agent both in particular and as a human being, that is, to aid and sustain their flourishing. Here, the "temporal" *phronesis* shows up as a disposition towards deliberation on the value of past events and projects and on the importance of one's relation to past generations in general. Justice and practical wisdom join forces in this respect, as proper deliberation highlights the importance of time-extended projects for the flourishing of the agent and provides a just measurement of distant goods, and justice, in its turn, provides a justification of the good of projects which might be obtained by the present agent.

What good, then, can be obtained by such a time-oriented virtue? The unity of life does not seem to demand this kind of supplement, as the goods that define one's flourishing are primarily those of current undertakings (with some additional role played by those that will be forced by the unpredictability of the future and the consequences of current decisions). However, two features of one's agency and flourishing call for involving the past. Firstly, the role played by significant others in one's life cannot be limited to those with whom one interacts as contemporaries. Just as in Rawls's view the interests of the future inform current decisions, so do the emotional

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[34] Aristotle, "Nicomachean Ethics," transl. D. Ross, [in:] Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, R. McKeon (ed.), New York 2001, VI 5 1141b.

relations with past people and events, whether they be those of love, longing and gratefulness, or of remorse, shame and pity, shape the core of every agent's emotional life. This starts with the development of emotional capacity in infancy and early life, which is reflected as near past, and recognition of the resources available to an agent is, in fact, rooted in reflection on one's heritage. Hence, although gratitude may not be the virtue central to one's overall attitude (*hexis*), the possibilities of one's flourishing need to be recognized in relation to one's own history, that is, in a narrative addressing one's location in the social setting, and the adequacy of such a narrative depends on doing justice to the acts of people from one's past. Thus, the development of just moral attitude requires acknowledgment of the role that the past plays in an agent's current affairs.

Secondly, the crucial resources available to the agent that define their possibilities for social agency, such as assets, education, emotional stability, and social position, not only are to an important (and diverse) degree inherited, but the ways in which they are made available and might be used by the agent are also defined by their past. Consider the hotel owner again. It is not only that they inherited a certain amount of wealth, the running of the business and a social status. These inherited assets are not some unidentified economic resources, but derive from and are centred upon the hotel, which defines not only the social practice towards which the owner is directed, but also certain virtues (for example, hospitality) that will be expected from them, and ties them to a certain geographical location as well. Thus, again, the ordering of the agent's aims, whether they accept their heritage and build their life on it or not, requires them to put in order not only those ends that are freely picked up by them, but also those that come from the past.

It follows from the foregoing that seen along such lines, a time-oriented *phronesis* can be seen as excellence in creating relations with the time-extended community and ascribing value to long-lasting projects. This opens the agent to seeing themselves as an episode in a narrative of great length, which covers efforts ranging beyond one's individual life, aimed at goods of supra-individual significance by a group of significant others distributed widely along the time axis. As such, it also urges the agent to limit their natural egocentrism (which is also a present-centrism). Hence, the repentance expected of those who fail to fulfil the duty to remember is based not (or at least not only) on a general obligation to render justice to the efforts of past generations, but more on a failure to judge one's own position in relation to others, which includes those distant not only in space, but also in time, and the importance of time-extended projects for one's well-being.

The second way in which the logic of debt organizes the economy of memory labour is focused, quite literally, on resources that might be lent and borrowed. For this they first need to be accumulated. As noted above, memory labour draws upon a range of capitals worked out by previous agents woven into a time-extended project of distinct significance for each person in the present. Here another distinction between the two kinds of memory labour can be discerned.

Political memory has got not only a certain topography, but also — in a literal sense — a geography. For it is not only, as Booth (and Maurice Halbwachs before him) observes, that "memories must be tied to physical objects, to a presence in

the world, a locale or space, for example, or a monument,"[35] but they must be tied to some specific region within the historical narrative, in many cases also in the sense that the language (or dialect) of the region will work as the official language of the polity (as is the case with Castilian in Spain). Thus, the memory labour is both institutionalized and centralized so that it marginalizes the memories of the province, permitting the recollections of local history to be replaced by the timeline and moral topography of the centre. Here, the key resources are those that may serve to sustain the identity framework itself. These are both the narrative and symbolic resources of the geographical core, which can be distributed to the provinces so that they supplant local histories and those local histories that strengthen the province's relationship with the core. Yet, when there is growing awareness of local distinctiveness, a periodic updating of the dominant narrative becomes necessary, so that it can accommodate alternative and sub-narratives. Whether the full polycentricity of such a narrative as effective for identity accumulation, without reducing it to technical aspects of social management, is possible, remains an open question.

In time-extended social projects, however, it is not the strength of the framework, but the recognition that grows with accumulated time and effort, that is decisive for the efficiency of identity accumulation. This is what makes giving up one's participation in the project more and more difficult as time passes. For with every generation, and the effort it puts into sustaining the project, this project attracts growing trust, and those who are recognized as being part of the project are judged in relation to it. This makes opting out a matter of either boldly breaking up with the local community as well as giving up its accumulated resources, or trying to transform the entire project and set new goals and create new social roles. This, however, demands a vision not only of the future of the project and one's place in it, but also of its place in social environment. It also requires reshaping the narrative of the efforts and achievements of the past members of the project.

Conclusions

However misleading it could be to reduce all memory labour to the play of interests, it is clear that a moral obligation towards the past appears as unavoidably problematized — it is labour on, and is framed by, the shared, ongoing, time-extended projects that shape the identity and agency of present agents (both individual and collective). That is to say, the obligation is not set by a general moral rule (for the extension of a set of those who should be remembered would have to be infinite), but is based on acknowledging the extended time dimension of human relationships and shared agency. Hence, the first step towards an ethics of memory should not aim at highlighting the merits of past figures and the significance of past events, but rather at providing the actual agent with a sense of the relatedness of their agency. For imposing the duty to remember would be futile without prior recognition of people's allegiances to and dependency on others. Seen along such

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[35] W.J. Booth, *Communities*, p. 78.

lines, the ethics of memory outlined above is agent-centred, with the emphasis put on including the distribution in time of those on whom every agent's self-reflective agency rests.

Thus understood, memory labour rests on the importance of the core project which sustains the relatedness of the agent to the past. Putting memory into a moral framework is thus to evaluate the importance of the project to the well-being and flourishing of the agent, and — especially in the case of politically defined memory — to reflect on both the range of memories and recollections that are being worked out, and the form in which the labour is to be conducted. From the perspective of the moral topography of memory, it is crucial to recognize the heterogeneity of memory, both in the sense of the number of local histories with complex relations to the centralized history of the dominant discourse, and also with respect to diverse time-frames. Time control and the power to set chronological orders is thus a key aspect of memory politics and it marks the difference between the two kinds of memory labour discussed. Because just as for the social agent memory is project-oriented, for the political agent it is framework-oriented, as it is by strengthening the focus on the form of memory that the centralization of labour proves itself effective.

It is thus by focusing memory labour around certain projects, whose range might vary from local companies and families to states and nations, that it might prove possible to sustain shared identities which help to capitalize common effort in far-reaching and long-lasting undertakings.

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