

PSYCHOANALYTICAL ANTHROPOLOGY



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MEMORY: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY

This article discusses causes of the recent interest in anthropology. It argues that anthropologists should reconsider their view of man and actualize the method of “analysis of a distributed whole”. Along with the determination of different aspects of the studied, this method suggests change and reconsideration of the basis, which lies under the description of these aspects. The article suggests that the nature of memory could be understood through the author’s theory of personality and psychic realities and provides the key points of this theory.

According to the enunciated theory, memorization is not fixation, storage and reproduction of past experiences, but a process of reorganization and reprogramming of life. Firstly, it allows freeing human mind and concentration, and secondly, when required, it enables one to construct an event, which incidentally would be identified as a recollection. From this point of view, remembering events is not relevant. What is more essential is to create such organization of living, such schemes and scenarios of life which allow one to function in terms of the events entitled to the so-called memorization. However, the main point is that the event should be not memorized (in sense of fixation and storage), but transferred into a special mode of organization of living and as a result be removed.

On several case studies the author shows that we memorize those events which are necessary for construction of different realities or those which are included in our life scenario. For example, the author analyses one of

the tragic moments in Marina Tsvetaeva's life, which she had fixed down in her diaries. With the help of the diary (provided that Tsvetaeva used to reread it) she could memorize and remember some events and details, which she would likely wish to forget for good. To sum up, one could say that along with the invention of means to expand the abilities of memory appears the concept of a "social body" of memory. First of all it includes different languages and psycho-technics which enable memorizing and forgetting of events. The given case clarifies one other point. The diary gave access to Tsvetaeva's memory for other individuals (readers of the published diaries, internet users). This creates basis for another kind of memory – "social memory". Its subjects are social communities and groups, not individuals.

This article considers the phenomenon of memory both in its natural and artificial-natural modality. The author states that in addition to new possibilities with the semiotic and psycho-technic inventions memory was to some extent released from anthropological bounds. For example, it is now possible to memorize and remember some events which are not part of your life scenario. If today we can read on the internet books from the London Library, our memory is structured, expanded and equipped by computers, by foreign language skills, by our psycho-technic faculties. What shall we make of this, considering the seemingly clear and straightforward belief that memory is based on biological reality? It is true that biological structures underlie memory and other biological faculties. However, in human beings they are transfigured due to languages and psycho-technics. In the same time the invention of new semiotic and psycho-technic techniques, that enrich memory faculties, also brings transformation of memory content. The fact is that to write down some event in a diary or to take a keepsake shot, for example, it is necessary to structure and shape the event in the form each medium requires.

The closing part discusses different kinds of memory. Animal memory is often identified with human memory. However, it is doubtful that animals have memory similar to ours. On one hand, animal memory is based on biological grounds only (it is necessary to consider particularly the case of a memory based on chemical signals), on the other hand, animals have no personality or realities, peculiar to human beings. We could say that on the opposite pole lies our "technical memory", such as a computer memory. It is a way to storage information, i.e. a constituent part of a social body of memory, and not a memory in anthropological sense.

In conclusion, the question arises whether we should consider memory of a modern man and that of a man of past ages equal. The same question concerns child and adult memory. The resulting regular answer is based on the fact that in culture the concept of personality forms only in Antiquity; in ontogeny it appears no sooner than in the adolescence, when we send children to school and intend them to be independent. Besides, memorizing and forgetting techniques widely differ in various cultures. If so, we have to admit

that in different periods of human development (in phylo- and ontogeny) our memory suffers changes. It also differs for adults and for children, for modern man and man of the previous cultures.

Keywords: philosophical anthropology, human being, memory, personality, reality, memorization, forgetting, psycho-technics, world, dreams

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