

The Sources of Memory

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# The Sources of Memory

*Jeffrey Andrew Barash*

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“What does it mean to remember?” This question might seem commonplace when it is confined to the domain of events recalled in past individual experience; but even in this restricted sense, when memory recalls, for example, a first personal encounter with birth or with death, the singularity of the remembered image places the deeper possibilities of human understanding in relief. Such experiences punctuating everyday life highlight the central place of memory as a source of human identity.

With a few notable exceptions, such as Henri Bergson or Maurice Halbwachs, this central role of memory was rarely a topic of interest in the theoretical orientations of our century. It played only a peripheral role in the different philosophical orientations and in the human sciences of this century until, very recently, new attempts have been made to comprehend the significance of memory, above all in the fields of intellectual history and philosophy. Without dealing exhaustively with the bibliography of works on memory, I will mention what seem to me to be the signs of a recent renewal of questioning in this area of interest to historians and philosophers alike. This will lead me to the specific problem I will address in the pages that follow.

One of the chief sources of the historian’s recent interest in memory has been the historians’ conflict (*Historikerstreit*) of the 1980s concerning the interpretation of the German and European past since the rise to power of Nazism and in the aftermath of World War II. As the generations who lived through and—from a given perspective—*remembered* these events increasingly disappear, the question concerning their precise historical meaning has reemerged with a new urgency. In this vein, for example, as the relatively new periodical *History and Memory: Studies in the Representation of the Past* and the collection of essays *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the “Final Solution,”* edited by Saul Friedlander, amply attest, the relation of memory to historical narrative is as important as it is problematic: to the extent that eyewitness memory claims a status of objectivity beyond the fictional sphere of

the imagination, its role in informing historical narrative involves the very issue of objectivity itself.<sup>1</sup>

Independently of this query concerning the relation of memory and history in recent scholarship focusing on the twentieth century, a number of studies have attempted to place the idea of memory in historical perspective during premodern periods. In this regard, we may cite Janet Coleman's recently published work, *Ancient and Medieval Memories: Studies in the Reconstruction of the Past* and Mary Carruthers's treatment of the subject of memory in the medieval period in *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*.<sup>2</sup> A number of other recent works in the field of intellectual history have attempted to grapple with the intriguing problem of the historicity of the phenomenon of memory in the West. This idea of the historicity of memory has been inspired at least in part by Pierre Nora's essay, "Between Memory and History," which introduced the multi-volume series he directed, *Les Lieux de mémoire*. In this vein, Patrick H. Hutton's *History as an Art of Memory*, Matt K. Matsuda's *The Memory of the Modern*, and Richard Terdiman's *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* all center on the historical transformations to which, according to the different perspectives of their works, "memory" has been subject.<sup>3</sup> Like Nora, they link this historicity of the social and cultural role of memory to the radical transformations that Western civilization has undergone in the modern period.

In a philosophical perspective David Farrell Krell's work, *Of Memory, Reminiscence, and Writing: On the Verge*, presents a very different idea of the phenomenon of memory.<sup>4</sup> Where the intellectual historians of modernity stress the mutations in the role of memory, Krell, following in the footsteps of Jacques Derrida, emphasizes one essential line of continuity that, to his mind, has tied

<sup>1</sup> Saul Friedlander (ed.), *Probing the Limits of Representations: Nazism and the "Final Solution"* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992). In this regard see the critiques in this volume of Hayden White's theory of historical representation by Christopher Browning and Carlo Ginzburg as well as Hayden White's response to these critiques.

<sup>2</sup> Janet Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories: Studies in the Reconstruction of the Past* (Cambridge, 1992); Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1990).

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Nora, "Entre mémoire et histoire," *Les lieux de mémoire*, vol. I: *La République* (Paris, 1984); Patrick H. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory* (Hanover, Vt., 1993); Matt K. Matsuda, *The Memory of the Modern* (Oxford, 1996); Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca, 1993); also the work on history and memory by Jacques LeGoff, *Histoire et mémoire* (Paris, 1988), the review of Patrick Hutton's *History as an Art of Memory* by Daniel Gordon, *History and Theory*, 34 (1995), 339-54, and on *Les Lieux de mémoire*, *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 50 (1995), 1219-36; François Hartog, "Temps et histoire: Comment écrire l'histoire de France?" and 1271-77; Lucette Valensi, "Histoire nationale, histoire monumentale: *Les lieux de mémoire* (note critique)."

<sup>4</sup> David Farrell Krell, *Of Memory, Reminiscence, and Writing: On the Verge* (Bloomington, 1990). Concerning the philosophical implications of memory see also Edward S. Casey's phenomenological study of this theme in the earlier work, *Remembering* (Bloomington, 1987).

together the tradition of philosophical reflection on memory from Plato and Aristotle up until Freud: the metaphoric reference to memory as the faculty of imprinting images. This is the memory which aspires to an aim that lies at the foundations of the traditional “metaphysics of presence”: a full recuperation of the past by the present.

In the pages that follow my own brief inquiry concerning the phenomenon of memory will adopt a somewhat different orientation than the intellectual, historical or deconstructive viewpoints that inspired the works cited above. My inquiry will center neither on the history of theories of memory or on the traditional role of memory, which, from one perspective, appears to have been irretrievably transformed while, from another, it still needs to be overcome.<sup>5</sup>

In dealing with the philosophical pertinence of the question “What does it mean to remember?” I intend to reach beyond examination of the ways in which the traditional answers to this question since the classical investigations of memory by Plato and by Aristotle have determined specific philosophical orientations; my purpose is to focus, above all, on the *scope* of the question itself. An analysis of the scope of the question situates memory in relation to other faculties—intellect and imagination—in their determination of Being or “reality.”<sup>6</sup>

To some readers the investigation of the question from this angle might seem to obscure the matter by confining it within the opaque domain of philosophical abstraction. My purpose, however, will be to argue that the most influential philosophical arguments regarding the *scope* of memory, far from being isolated theoretical matters, owe their persuasive force in given historical periods to the fundamental convictions they express concerning the larger issue of human identity. According to my argument, it is primarily in answer to the question concerning the scope of memory as a source of insight into the larger theme of human identity that the full implications of the historicity of interpretations of memory may be brought to light. My analysis of this question aims to prepare further reflection on what I take to be the particularly problematic relation between memory and identity in the post-Nietzschean world.

I. Since it is my task to ask the question, “What does it mean to remember” from a philosophical standpoint, I will begin by inquiring into the presuppositions that such a standpoint involves. To this end I will set in relief the responses of

<sup>5</sup> I address these topics more directly in a work currently in progress.

<sup>6</sup> Such analysis must distinguish the historicity of interpretations of the scope of memory from that of its socio-cultural role, measured in relation to mnemotechnics as an “art of memory.” Here the question arises—which I cannot attempt to answer in the scope of this brief article—whether the art of memory corresponds to that phenomenon of memory which is most pertinent to historiography, either premodern or modern, or whether, on the contrary, concentration on the *technics* of memory has too often obscured reflexion on its scope.

three past philosophical orientations to this question less for their historical interest than for their seminal role as sources of the presuppositions concerning memory in the Western philosophical tradition. Beyond investigation of the extent to which such presuppositions bequeathed by the past continue to provide the conceptual framework for understanding, my investigation concerns whether such presuppositions can be legitimately allowed to function *as* presuppositions, establishing the theoretical horizon within which the question of memory itself becomes intelligible.

Certainly, it is not due to its persuasive force in the modern context that we are struck by the first of these orientations: the interpretation of memory originally elaborated in terms of the Platonic theory of *reminiscence*. Indeed, it is perhaps the legacy of thought in what we have come to think of as a post-metaphysical age that the Platonic doctrine of reminiscence, after inspiring centuries of philosophical speculation from neo-Platonism to medieval and Renaissance revivals of Plato and finding a distant echo in the thought of Leibniz, has all but forfeited its traditional persuasive force.

At the heart of this doctrine stands Plato's interpretation in the *Meno* and *Phaedo* of the metaphysical scope of reminiscence as ἀνάμνησις. Where sense perception, according to this seminal argument, reveals only ephemeral figments of the senses, reminiscence recalls what *is* eternally, such as the good and the beautiful to which we refer, as Socrates argues in the *Phaedo*,<sup>7</sup> as copies to the original, all the objects of sense perception. In virtue of this ontological priority of recollection over sense perception, Socrates advances the famous thesis, primarily in the *Meno* and the *Phaedo*, according to which learning is in truth reminiscence.

To appreciate the full ontological scope of this Platonic interpretation of memory, we must not forget the context in which it is presented in the *Phaedo*. At the outset of the dialogue *Phaedo*, who witnessed Socrates' death, is asked to recount Socrates' conversation during the last hours of his life. Socrates' thoughts during this momentous day turn toward the theme of reminiscence since this faculty, in its capacity to recall eternal being, at the same time gives testimony to the immortality of the soul which reminisces: "If these [eternal] realities exist," as Socrates explains to Simmias, "does it not follow that our souls must exist too even before our birth?"<sup>8</sup>

If the Platonic doctrine of reminiscence as the immortal soul's recollection of the a priori source of ultimate truth has lost its persuasive force in the modern context, its main rival has been all the more influential in setting the conceptual framework for understanding memory's scope. At the outset of the modern

<sup>7</sup> Plato, *Phaedo*, 76<sup>d</sup>, in *Collected Dialogues*, ed. E. Hamilton and H. Cairns (Princeton, 1969), 60.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 76 <sup>e</sup>, 60.

period the last great representative of Platonic reminiscence, Leibniz, brought into question the basic presuppositions of this rival position that he traced to Aristotelian psychology and metaphysics which, to his mind, found its radical culmination point in Locke's empiricism, as expressed in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. "There is something solid in what Plato called reminiscence," Leibniz writes in the preface to his *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding*, referring to the doctrine of the innate ideas, recalled by ἀνάμνησις. Then Leibniz introduces his critique of Locke's rejection of innate ideas in the following terms:

[A]lthough the author of the *Essay* says a thousand fine things of which I approve, our systems differ very much. His has more relation to Aristotle, and mine to Plato, although we diverge in many things from the doctrines of these two ancients.<sup>9</sup>

In relating Lockean empiricism to Aristotle in this manner, Leibniz recalled the ancient shift in perspective that Aristotle inaugurated in relation to the metaphysics of Plato. In terms of this shift Aristotle articulated the key presuppositions concerning the scope of memory upon which Locke would later draw. At the same time Locke's empiricism reached far beyond the confines of the Aristotelian tradition, just as Leibniz freely adapted Plato to his own very different frame of thought.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Leibniz takes account of these differences, as we noted, referring to the "many things" which mark his and Locke's divergence from the doctrines of the ancients. Nonetheless, Leibniz does not elaborate, at least in this regard, on the originality of Locke's theoretical standpoint in relation to the Aristotelian tradition; it is, however, this originality of Locke that concerns us above all, as it will enable us to set in relief for our analysis a second set of traditional assumptions regarding the scope of memory.

Aristotle redefined the scope of reminiscence above all in his short treatise "On Memory and Reminiscence" included among the treatises of the *Parva Naturalia*. Whereas in this treatise Aristotle attributed memory not only to humans but also to the more developed animal species, he limited the faculty of reminiscence to human beings. Memory, according to the Aristotelian theory, is defined as mere retention of past sense images, and reminiscence as the

<sup>9</sup> G. W. Leibniz, *Nouveaux essais sur l'entendement humain*, in *Die philosophischen Schriften*, ed. C. J. Gerhardt (Hildesheim, 1978), V, 41-42.

<sup>10</sup> A more direct source of the Leibnizian theory of reminiscence was probably the philosophy of St. Augustine. Although he drew on the Platonic theory of the eternity of the soul and of the ideas recollected by reminiscence, St. Augustine criticized, due to its incompatibility with Christian doctrine, the Platonic presupposition of the preexistence of souls before birth. Leibniz adopted a similar argument in the *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding*, *Nouveaux Essais*, 75. See in this regard St. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, in *Oeuvres*, vol. XVI, book XII, 15, 24 (Paris, 1991), 256.

consciousness of past images, capable of deliberately employing them to recall ideas that have been forgotten and of associating them in a coherent order. The decisive point is that, for Aristotle, the faculty of reminiscence deploys images that *originate* with sense-perception. Reminiscence recalls not a priori ideas, in the Platonic sense, of which sense objects are considered to be mere fleeting copies, but images *derived* from sense perception. In this way the scope of reminiscence confines itself to the horizon of sense experience. Here reminiscence reveals a decisive affinity to its sister faculty, imagination: both memory and imagination, for Aristotle, are rooted in the perceptual image, of which their representations are simply weaker copies.

Finally, in this Aristotelian perspective even the intellect depends upon sense experience for the objects upon which it works. A presupposition that Locke would push to its ultimate limit with his notion of the mind as a *tabula rasa* is the famous scholastic dictum according to which nothing is in the intellect which has not first been in the senses.

One readily understands why the decisive question for Leibniz, in his defense of innate ideas and the Platonic doctrine of reminiscence against what he sees as the Aristotelian inspiration of Locke, is in his words

whether the soul in itself is entirely empty, like the tablet on which nothing has been written [*tabula rasa*] according to Aristotle and the author of the *Essay*, and whether all that is traced thereon comes solely from the senses and experience; or whether the soul contains originally the principles of several notions and doctrines which external objects merely awaken on occasions, as I believe, with Plato, and even with the schoolmen, and with all those who take with this meaning the passage of St. Paul ["Romans," 2, 15] where he remarks that the law of God is written in the heart.<sup>11</sup>

As we hinted, Leibniz's comparison of Locke to Aristotle does not do justice to the originality of Locke's innovation. This originality comes to light above all where Locke radicalizes the Aristotelian doctrine by extending it in a way that Aristotle had not anticipated. Like Aristotle, Locke places in question the autonomy the Platonic tradition had accorded to reminiscence; for Locke as for Aristotle the images deployed by memory/reminiscence<sup>12</sup> are, like those of imagination, weaker copies of perceptual images. Locke, however, completely revised the Aristotelian doctrine, since he situated not only memory and imagination but also *intellect* within the confines of sense experience.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>12</sup> Locke does not distinguish between the functions of memory and reminiscence but regroups all of the mnemonic operations under the general heading of memory.

For Aristotle intellect ( $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ ), like reminiscence and imagination, operates on objects furnished by the senses, but this did not mean that its grasp was limited to the mutable aspect of its objects presented in sense experience. Clearly, as we can read in Book III of *De Anima*, the active intellect distinguishes itself from both reminiscence and imagination by its capacity to make intelligible the eternal structure of Being underlying both sense objects and the soul itself.<sup>13</sup> Thus, Aristotle's limitation of the scope of reminiscence which depended not on eternal ideas but on sense perception did not bring into question the identity of the rational soul in its capacity to delve into ultimate metaphysical principles underlying the mutable perspective of this experience.

Leibniz's distress over Lockean empiricism, as becomes clear in his *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding*, stems above all from the radical new vision of the self presented in Locke's *Essay*. In Locke's perspective the self emerges against a horizon of profound opacity, for the transparency and fixity of its identity as a creature capable of attaining definitive metaphysical understanding of its own substantial being and that of its world dissolve. This novel conclusion follows directly from Locke's stipulation that intellect or "understanding" not only operates on objects presented by the senses but is confined to the sphere of sense experience. Nor, for this very reason, could understanding, any more than memory or imagination, extend beyond the horizon of sense experience, to comprehension of the ultimate metaphysical structure of reality. Not only Being comprising the substance underlying external objects but even that substance constituting the metaphysical identity of the soul itself remained beyond the purview of the finite human intellect.

It is here that we reach the decisive point: once self-understanding is conceived in terms of personal experience of the self rather than of intellectual insight into the substantial principle of the soul, memory itself changes its scope. As Locke recalls in chapter 27 of the second book on his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, entitled "On Identity and Diversity," beside my physical identity only personal identity is given to me in my experience of myself. But what then is personal identity? Personal identity refers for Locke to my perception of myself over time. Personal identity, in other words, is nothing other than the traces of the different moments of perception of myself that memory retains. With the evaporation of any traditional claim to metaphysical knowledge of the self as substance, only memory remains to assure the ongoing coherence of personal identity. In Locke's own eloquent terms:

[T]o find wherein personal identity consists, we must consider what *person* stands for;—which, I think, is a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, as the same

<sup>13</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima*, 430<sup>a</sup>, *Works*, ed. R. McKeon (New York, 1941), 391-92.



thinking thing, in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness which is inseparable from thinking, and, as it seems to me, essential to it: it being impossible for any one to perceive without perceiving that he does perceive. When we see, hear, smell, taste, feel, meditate, or will anything, we know that we do so. Thus it is always as to our present sensations and perceptions: and by this every one is to himself that which he calls self:—it not being considered, in this case, whether the same self be continued in the same or divers substances..., and as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person.<sup>14</sup>

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of the Lockean model of the self whose identity, insofar as it reaches beyond the mere physical sameness of the body, rests on present consciousness nourished by the memory of personal experience. It would reach beyond the context of the present paper to deal with the enormous impact of this model on later philosophical and psychological orientations up through the twentieth century. Suffice it to note that even such original twentieth-century works as Bergson's *Matter and Memory*, which explicitly attempt to overcome the Lockean model of the self, remain prisoner to his fundamental presupposition.<sup>15</sup> Bergson's theory of memory gives ample testimony to this: when not limited to the mere accomplishment of habitually remembered, mechanical acts, the memory "imagines," in his words, drawing on the singular images of past personal experience.<sup>16</sup> Even if memory is by no means simply reducible to imagination, Bergson, in stipulating that it is dependent on images of the personal past, reasserts the Lockean assumption that memory arises within the sphere of personal identity.

In what way, however, might one break out of the limited scope of the personal sphere and conceive of memory in more comprehensive terms? The very persuasiveness of the Lockean model in our age tempts us to ask how an alternative theory might be envisioned.

This leads us to a third orientation. It is that which bursts beyond the confines of the personal self, shifting emphasis from the recollection of personal experience to a broader notion of collective remembrance, which, in its historical movement, gives sustenance to personal identity. We recall in passing Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit* for its restitution to memory of its absolute privilege

<sup>14</sup> Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, II, 27, 11.

<sup>15</sup> And this in spite of the fact that Bergson places in question one of the fundamental assumptions of Locke's theory of memory, inherited from the Aristotelian tradition: the presupposition that the images of memory, like those of the imagination, are but weaker traces of perceptual representations.

<sup>16</sup> Henri Bergson, *Matière et mémoire* (Paris, 1941), 87.

in terms of remembrance (*Erinnerung*). From this vantage point, remembrance designates the historicity of the Spirit. It describes the coherent movement of the Spirit as an interiorization (*Er-innerung*)<sup>17</sup> which maintains itself amid its shifts, retrievals, and successive reconfigurations. In the course of this movement, the object of remembrance, far from originating in the immutable Platonic dimension of Being, is itself reelaborated in the movement of interiorization.

At the same time the autonomy accorded to remembrance radically distinguishes it from the sense images deployed by sense perception or by the imagination. Far from constituting the original source of remembrance, the sense image—the “representation” (*Vorstellung*)—designates only a preliminary aspect of the Spirit’s object, elaborated in the course of its movement. Without retrieving Platonic reminiscence, Hegelian remembrance, as interiorization and recollection of the Spirit’s movement, thus recovers its absolute priority over the sense-imagery of perception and imagination. One readily understands that even after the critique of its ontological scope, the idea of remembrance as historical movement retained its vitality in the historicism of Droysen (*Grundriss der Historik*) and Dilthey (*Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften*).

II. This extension of the scope of remembrance beyond the sense-imagery of the personal sphere in the guise of historicity, gives us the occasion to reformulate the question we raised at the outset: what does it mean to remember? Or as we can now rephrase this question in terms of the scope of memory: is it legitimate to trace remembrance to a source which does not flow from the imagery of the perceived past, thus defying reduction to imaginative reelaboration?

My response is in the affirmative. To my mind any attempt to refer memory and imagination to a common source in perceptual images, in accordance, for example, with the empiricist paradigm, fails to account for memory’s essential dissimilarity both to perceptual images and to imagination which supposedly draw on them. This dissimilarity arises from the inner cohesion of the field of memory, which, while nourished by perceptual images and by the imagination, cannot be reduced to them. It is a cohesion which cannot be derived from the succession of perceptual images retained by consciousness over time, since the synthetic unity of the field of memory takes precedence over the different moments which it comprises. It is a unity which, in constituting personal identity, reaches outside the narrow sphere of personal experience to encompass underlying symbolic structures embedded in often opaque sources. These are sources which are neither wholly impersonal or anonymous, nor yet personal. I would characterize them as trans-personal and meta-personal dimensions of the past.

<sup>17</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Frankfurt am Main, 1970), 591.

Where the orientation inaugurated by Hegel set the unity of this field of memory in relief in its distinction from the concatenation of perceptual images, this field presupposes a kind of unity which, nonetheless, Hegel did not anticipate: a movement which is not a product of the coherent activity of the spirit or subject in the Hegelian or historicist sense. This unity not only elaborates itself in terms of what is explicitly remembered but, as both Nietzsche and Freud brought to light, also includes what is neglected, unrecollected, or repressed; it encompasses even those forgotten episodes which it implicitly omits. Above all the cohesive field of memory underlies the activity of the subject as a precondition which it cannot master.

On the basis of these comments on the scope of memory, I would like both to reinforce and to conclude my argument by relating it to the theory of memory which, to my mind, has had a particularly forceful impact on the twentieth century: that of Nietzsche.

In his youthful writings Nietzsche reached surprising conclusions concerning the scope of memory, as he tended to blur the limits between the memory of personal experience and the meta-personal preconditions upon which memory draws. In a fragment composed in 1872 Nietzsche wrote the following lines on this theme:

Memory has nothing to do with nerves, with brain. It is an original property. Since man carries within himself the memory of all past generations. The *image* of memory is something very *ingenious* and very *rare*.<sup>18</sup>

Given the enormous weight of memory which Nietzsche situated in this meta-personal perspective, it is perhaps not surprising that, as historical remembrance, memory would reveal itself to be less an acquisition than a burden in his essay of 1872 "On the Use and Abuse of History for Life." In this context the weight of historical memory, which modern man entertains the illusion of being able to master, represents a particular danger to the coherence of modern identity. Nietzsche's antidote to the burden of historical memory is particularly illuminating for our discussion: he advocated nothing less than the imaginative act expressed in artistic creation, liberated from all subservience to perceptual experience and, above all, from the life-inhibiting force of a hyperactive modern memory. In this vein Nietzsche wrote in "On the Use and Abuse of History for Life":

Only when historiography tolerates being transformed into art, and thus becoming a pure artistic creation, can it maintain or perhaps even

<sup>18</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, 1872-1874, *Werke*, III, 4 (Berlin, 1978), 58.

arouse instincts. Such historiography would, however, completely contradict the analytic and inartistic traits of our time, for which such transformation would represent a falsification.<sup>19</sup>

Due to what he takes to be the oppressive character of memory conveyed in the guise of modern historical consciousness, Nietzsche forsakes it for the creative activity of the imagination. But given what I have described as the unity of the field of memory, extending beyond the limits of personal experience—a unity which Nietzsche himself would seem to admit—is not this assumption that one can “transform” what is attested by the past in the name of art simply a misapprehension? Does this assumption not regard memory and imagination—albeit in the Nietzschean sense of historical memory and the artistic imagination—as interchangeable functions? If the answer is affirmative then, as I believe, Nietzsche’s antidote to the burden of memory rests on a fundamental illusion. It is this illusion which has so often been represented or misrepresented by those in the twentieth century for whom creative invention of myth presents a persuasive means of mastery in the contemporary era. Its ultimate fruit, stemming from an ideal of mass manipulation that has little to do with Nietzsche’s original philosophical convictions, is the illusion that the fictions of imagination, produced and propagated by technological means, can replace cohesive fields constituted by remembrance.

Certainly Nietzsche’s notion of memory breaks its ties with traditional empiricism, and with the empiricist assumption that memory, like imagination, is the simple product of the perceptual image. Nonetheless, does it not misunderstand, no less than empiricism, the irreducible uniqueness of the scope of remembrance which we have attempted to place in evidence?

With this question I recall another, which I asked at the outset: What does it mean to remember?

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<sup>19</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, “Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben” in *Werke* (Frankfurt am Main, 1980), I, 252.