The Collective Memory Reader

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Maurice Halbwachs (1877–1945)

French sociologist. Halbwachs, a protégé of Émile Durkheim and earlier a student of Henri Bergson, is the widely acknowledged founding father of social memory studies, though the reception history of his seminal ideas has been rather complicated.

Halbwachs's first major treatise on memory was his 1925 *Social Frameworks of Memory* (*Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire*), which connected logically his work on Durkheim's theory of "collective representations" with his earlier studies of the working class, in which he had developed a Durkheimian take on what Marx had discussed in terms of class consciousness. The 1925 *Social Frameworks* was met with a mixed reception. Two of its most important critiques were from Halbwachs's associates, the historian **Marc Bloch** and the psychiatrist **Charles Blondel**. In 1941 Halbwachs published a second book on memory, a study he called *The Legendary Topography of the Holy Land*, which was at least partly a response to Bloch's call for Halbwachs "to one day study the errors in the collective memory." A third volume on memory by Halbwachs appeared posthumously under the title *The Collective Memory* and includes essays Halbwachs worked on throughout the 1930s and early 1940s; in many of these essays, Halbwachs engaged directly with the critique from Blondel, who argued that Halbwachs over-sociologized the neurological substratum of memory. These immediate critical contexts have been largely forgotten (though the Bloch review is frequently referenced), at least in part because neither essay, until now, has been translated into English.

The reception history of Halbwachs more generally in subsequent scholarship is even more complicated. The first translation of Halbwachs was anthropologist Mary Douglas's edition of *The Collective Memory*, which appeared in 1980 but quickly went, and still remains, out of print. In 1992, the sociologist Lewis Coser published in the University of Chicago Press *Heritage of Sociology* series a volume called *Maurice Halbwachs: On Collective Memory*. The Coser edition contained substantial portions of the 1925 *Social Frameworks* and the conclusion to *The Legendary Topography* (the remaining portions of both are still untranslated into English). The Coser volume, appearing at the beginning of the supposed memory boom, has become the standard reference for Anglophone scholars. In the process, the development of Halbwachs's thought on collective memory over time (that is, between his 1925 book and his later essay collection) has been neglected by many outside of France and Germany. Additionally, writing by scholars influenced by Halbwachs but writing before the memory boom, like **Bastide**, has often been overlooked.

Because Coser's excerpts from Halbwachs's first two books on memory remain easily available and widely known, and because they do not present the developed result of Halbwachs's dialogues with critics, we have chosen to present selections of our never-before-published translations of the Bloch and Blondel responses with selections from Halbwachs's most mature work, *The Collective Memory*.

From *The Collective Memory*

Often we deem ourselves the originators of thoughts and ideas, feelings and passions, actually inspired by some group. Our agreement with those about

us is so complete that we vibrate in unison, ignorant of the real source of the vibrations. How often do we present, as deeply held convictions, thoughts borrowed from a newspaper, book, or conversation? They respond so well to our way of seeing things that we are surprised to discover that their author is someone other than ourself. "That's just what I think about that!" We are unaware that we are but an echo. The whole art of the orator probably consists in his giving listeners the illusion that the convictions and feelings he arouses within them have come not from him but from themselves, that he has only divined and lent his voice to what has been worked out in their innermost consciousness. In one way or another, each social group endeavors to maintain a similar persuasion over its members. How many people are critical enough to discern what they owe to others in their thinking and so acknowledge to themselves how small their own contribution usually is? Occasionally an individual increases the range of his acquaintances and readings, making a virtue of an eclecticism that permits him to view and reconcile divergent aspects of things. Even in such instances the particular dosage of opinions, the complexity of feelings and desires, may only express his accidental relationships with groups divergent or opposed on some issue. The relative value attributed to each way of looking at things is really a function of the respective intensity of influences that each group has separately exerted upon him. In any case, insofar as we yield without struggle to an external suggestion, we believe we are free in our thought and feelings. Therefore most social influences we obey usually remain unperceived.

But this is probably even more true for these complex states that occur at the intersection of several currents of collective thought, states we are wont to see as unique events existing only for ourself. A traveler suddenly caught up by influences from a milieu foreign to his companions, a child exposed to adult feelings and concerns by unexpected circumstances, someone who has experienced a change of location, occupation, or family that hasn't totally ruptured his bonds with previous groups—all are instances of this phenomenon. Often the social influences concerned are much more complex, being more numerous and interwoven. Hence they are more difficult and more confusing to unravel. We see each milieu by the light of the other (or others) as well as its own and so gain an impression of resisting it. Certainly each of these influences ought to emerge more sharply from their comparison and contrast. Instead, the confrontation of these milieus gives us a feeling of no longer being involved in any of them. What becomes paramount is the "strangeness" of our situation, absorbing individual thought enough to screen off the social thoughts whose conjunction has elaborated it. This strangeness cannot be fully understood by any other member of these milieus, only myself. In this sense it belongs to me and, at the moment of its occurrence, I am tempted to explain it by reference to myself and myself alone. At the most, I might concede that circumstances (that is, the conjunction of these milieus) have served as the occasion permitting the production of an event long ago incorporated in my individual destiny, the appearance of a feeling latent in my

innermost person. I have no other means of explaining its subsequent return to memory, because others were unaware of it and have had no role in its production (as we mistakenly imagine). Therefore, in one way or another, it must have been preserved in its original form in my mind. But that is not the case at all. These remembrances that seem purely personal, since we alone are aware of and capable of retrieving them, are distinguished by the greater complexity of the conditions necessary for their recall. But this is a difference in degree only.

One doctrine is satisfied to note that our past comprises two kinds of elements. Certain elements we can evoke whenever we want. By contrast, others cannot simply be summoned and we seem to encounter various obstacles in searching for them in our past. In reality, the first might be said to belong to a common domain, in the sense that they are familiar or easily accessible to others as well as ourself. The idea we most easily picture to ourself, no matter how personal and specific its elements, is the idea others have of us. The events of our life most immediate to ourself are also engraved in the memory of those groups closest to us. Hence, facts and conceptions we possess with least effort are recalled to us from a common domain (common at least to one or several milieus). These remembrances are "everybody's" to this extent. We can recall them whenever we want just because we can base ourself on the memory of others. The second type, which cannot be recalled at will, are readily acknowledged to be available only to ourself because only we could have known about them. So we apparently end up in this strange paradox. The remembrances we evoke with most difficulty are our concern alone and constitute our most exclusive possession. They seem to escape the purview of others only at the expense of escaping ourself also. It is as if a person locked his treasure in a safe with a lock so complicated that he could not open it; he does not remember the combination and must rely on chance to remind him of it.

But there is an explanation at once simpler and more natural. The difference between remembrances we evoke at will and remembrances we seem to command no longer is merely a matter of degree of complexity. The former are always at hand because they are preserved in groups that we enter at will and collective thoughts to which we remain closely related. The elements of these remembrances and their relationships are all familiar to us. The latter are less accessible because the groups that carry them are more remote and intermittent in contact with us. Groups that associate frequently enable us to be in them simultaneously, whereas others have so little contact that we have neither intention nor occasion to trace their faded paths of communication. Now it is along such routes, along such sheltered pathways, that we retrieve those remembrances that are uniquely our own. In the same way, a traveler might consider as his own a spring, an outcropping of rock, or a landscape reached only by leaving the main thoroughfare and rejoining another via a rough and infrequently used trail. The starting points of such a short cut lie on the main routes and are common knowledge. But close scrutiny and maybe a bit of luck are required to find them again. A person might frequently pass by either

without bothering to look for them, especially if he couldn't count upon passers-by to point them out, passers-by who travel one of these thoroughfares but have no concern to go where the other might lead. . . .

While the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember. While these remembrances are mutually supportive of each other and common to all, individual members still vary in the intensity with which they experience them. I would readily acknowledge that each memory is a viewpoint on the collective memory, that this viewpoint changes as my position changes, that this position itself changes as my relationships to other milieus change. Therefore, it is not surprising that everyone does not draw on the same part of this common instrument. In accounting for that diversity, however, it is always necessary to revert to a combination of influences that are social in nature.

Certain of these combinations are extremely complex. Hence their appearance is not under our control. In a sense, we must trust to chance. We must wait for the various systems of waves (in those social milieus where we move mentally or physically) to intersect again and cause that registering apparatus which is our individual consciousness to vibrate the same way it did in the past. But the type of causality is the same and could not be different from what it was then. The succession of our remembrances, of even our most personal ones, is always explained by changes occurring in our relationships to various collective milieus—in short, by the transformations these milieus undergo separately and as a whole.

Some may say how strange it is that our most personal remembrances, offering such a striking character of absolute unity, actually derive from a fusion of diverse and separate elements. First of all, reflection shows this unity to dissolve rapidly into a multiplicity. It has been claimed that one recovers, when plumbing the depths of a truly personal conscious state, the whole content of mind as seen from a certain viewpoint. But "content of mind" must be understood as all the elements that mark its relationships to various milieus. A personal state thus reveals the complexity of the combination that was its source. Its apparent unity is explained by a quite natural type of illusion. Philosophers have shown that the feeling of liberty may be explained by the multiplicity of causal series that combine to produce an action. We conceive each influence as being opposed by some other and thus believe we act independently of each influence since we do not act under the exclusive power of any one. We do not perceive that our act really results from their action in concert, that our act is always governed by the law of causality. Similarly, since the remembrance reappears, owing to the interweaving of several series of collective thoughts, and since we cannot attribute it to any single one, we imagine it independent and contrast its unity to their multiplicity. We might as well assume that a heavy object, suspended in air by means of a number of very thin and interlaced wires, actually rests in the void where it holds itself up. . . .

Collective memory differs from history in at least two respects. It is a current of continuous thought whose continuity is not at all artificial, for it retains from

the past only what still lives or is capable of living in the consciousness of the groups keeping the memory alive. By definition it does not exceed the boundaries of this group. When a given period ceases to interest the subsequent period, the same group has not forgotten a part of its past, because, in reality, there are two successive groups, one following the other. History divides the sequence of centuries into periods, just as the content of a tragedy is divided into several acts. But in a play the same plot is carried from one act to another and the same characters remain true to form to the end, their feelings and emotions developing in an unbroken movement. History, however, gives the impression that everything—the interplay of interests, general orientations, modes of studying men and events, traditions, and perspectives on the future—is transformed from one period to another. The apparent persistence of the same groups merely reflects the persistence of external distinctions resulting from places, names, and the general character of societies. But the men composing the same group in two successive periods are like two tree stumps that touch at their extremities but do not form one plant because they are not otherwise connected.

Of course, reason sufficient to partition the succession of generations at any given moment is not immediately evident, because the number of births hardly varies from year to year. Society is like a thread that is made from a series of animal or vegetable fibers intertwined at regular intervals; or, rather, it resembles the cloth made from weaving these threads together. The sections of a cotton or silk fabric correspond to the end of a motif or design. Is it the same for the sequence of generations?

Situated external to and above groups, history readily introduces into the stream of facts simple demarcations fixed once and for all. In doing so, history not merely obeys a didactic need for schematization. Each period is apparently considered a whole, independent for the most part of those preceding and following, and having some task—good, bad, or indifferent—to accomplish. Young and old, regardless of age, are encompassed within the same perspective so long as this task has not yet been completed, so long as certain national, political, or religious situations have not yet realized their full implications. As soon as this task is finished and a new one proposed or imposed, ensuing generations start down a new slope, so to speak. Some people were left behind on the opposite side of the mountain, having never made it up. But the young, who hurry as if fearful of missing the boat, sweep along a portion of the older adults. By contrast, those who are located at the beginning of either slope down, even if they are very near the crest, do not see each other any better and they remain as ignorant of one another as they would be were they further down on their respective slope. The farther they are located down their respective slope, the farther they are placed into the past or what is no longer the past; or, alternatively, the more distant they are from one another on the sinuous line of time.

Some parts of this portrait are accurate. Viewed as a whole from afar and, especially, viewed from without by the spectator who never belonged to the

groups he observes, the facts may allow such an arrangement into successive and distinct configurations, each period having a beginning, middle, and end. But just as history is interested in differences and contrasts, and highlights the diverse features of a group by concentrating them in an individual, it similarly attributes to an interval of a few years changes that in reality took much longer. Another period of society might conceivably begin on the day after an event had disrupted, partially destroyed, and transformed its structure. But only later, when the new society had already engendered new resources and pushed on to other goals, would this fact be noticed. The historian cannot take these demarcations seriously. He cannot imagine them to have been noted by those who lived during the years so demarcated, in the manner of the character in the farce who exclaims, "Today the Hundred Years War begins!" A war or revolution may create a great chasm between two generations, as if an intermediate generation had just disappeared. In such a case, who can be sure that, on the day after, the youth of society will not be primarily concerned, as the old will be, with erasing any traces of that rupture, reconciling separated generations and maintaining, in spite of everything, continuity of social evolution? Society must live. Even when institutions are radically transformed, and especially then, the best means of making them take root is to buttress them with everything transferable from tradition. Then, on the day after the crisis, everyone affirms that they must begin again at the point of interruption, that they must pick up the pieces and carry on. Sometimes nothing is considered changed, for the thread of continuity has been retied. Although soon rejected, such an illusion allows transition to the new phase without any feeling that the collective memory has been interrupted.

In reality, the continuous development of the collective memory is marked not, as is history, by clearly etched demarcations but only by irregular and uncertain boundaries. The present (understood as extending over a certain duration that is of interest to contemporary society) is not contrasted to the past in the way two neighboring historical periods are distinguished. Rather, the past no longer exists, whereas, for the historian, the two periods have equivalent reality. The memory of a society extends as far as the memory of the groups composing it. Neither ill will nor indifference causes it to forget so many past events and personages. Instead, the groups keeping these remembrances fade away. Were the duration of human life doubled or tripled, the scope of the collective memory as measured in units of time would be more extensive. Nevertheless, such an enlarged memory might well lack richer content if so much tradition were to hinder its evolution. Similarly, were human life shorter, a collective memory covering a lesser duration might never grow impoverished because change might accelerate a society "unburdened" in this way. In any case, since social memory erodes at the edges as individual members, especially older ones, become isolated or die, it is constantly transformed along with the group itself. Stating when a collective remembrance has disappeared and whether it has definitely left group consciousness is difficult, especially since its recovery only requires its preservation in some limited portion of the social body. . . .

In effect, there are several collective memories. This is the second characteristic distinguishing the collective memory from history. History is unitary, and it can be said that there is only one history. Let me explain what I mean. Of course, we can distinguish the history of France, Germany, Italy, the history of a certain period, region, or city, and even that of an individual. Sometimes historical work is even reproached for its excessive specialization and fanatic desire for detailed study that neglects the whole and in some manner takes the part for the whole. But let us consider this matter more closely. The historian justifies these detailed studies by believing that detail added to detail will form a whole that can in turn be added to other wholes; in the total record resulting from all these successive summations, no fact will be subordinated to any other fact, since every fact is as interesting as any other and merits as much to be brought forth and recorded. Now the historian can make such judgments because he is not located within the viewpoint of any genuine and living groups of past or present. In contrast to the historian, these groups are far from affording equal significance to events, places, and periods that have not affected them equally. But the historian certainly means to be objective and impartial. Even when writing the history of his own country, he tries to synthesize a set of facts comparable with some other set, such as the history of another country, so as to avoid any break in continuity. Thus, in the total record of European history, the comparison of the various national viewpoints on the facts is never found; what is found, rather, is the sequence and totality of the facts such as they are, not for a certain country or a certain group but independent of any group judgment. The very divisions that separate countries are historical facts of the same value as any others in such a record. All, then, is on the same level. The historical world is like an ocean fed by the many partial histories. Not surprisingly, many historians in every period since the beginning of historical writing have considered writing universal histories. Such is the natural orientation of the historical mind. Such is the fatal course along which every historian would be swept were he not restricted to the framework of more limited works by either modesty or short-windedness.

Of course, the muse of history is Clio. History can be represented as the universal memory of the human species. But there is no universal memory. Every collective memory requires the support of a group delimited in space and time. The totality of past events can be put together in a single record only by separating them from the memory of the groups who preserved them and by severing the bonds that held them close to the psychological life of the social milieus where they occurred, while retaining only the group's chronological and spatial outline of them. This procedure no longer entails restoring them to lifelike reality, but requires relocating them within the frameworks with which history organizes events. These frameworks are external to these groups and define them by mutual contrast. That is, history is interested primarily in differences and disregards the resemblances without which there would have been no memory, since the only facts remembered are those having the common trait of belonging to the same consciousness. Despite the variety of

times and places, history reduces events to seemingly comparable terms, allowing their interrelation as variations on one or several themes. Only in this way does it manage to give us a summary vision of the past, gathering into a moment and symbolizing in a few abrupt changes or in certain stages undergone by a people or individual, a slow collective evolution. In this way it presents us a unique and total image of the past.

In order to give ourselves, by way of contrast, an idea of the multiplicity of collective memories, imagine what the history of our own life would be like were we, in recounting it, to halt each time we recalled some group to which we had belonged, in order to examine its nature and say everything we know about it. It would not be enough to single out just a few groups—for example, our parents, primary school, *lycée*, friends, professional colleagues, social acquaintances, and any political, religious, or artistic circles with which we have been connected. These major spheres are convenient, but they correspond to a still external and simplified view of reality. These groups are composed of much smaller groups, and we have contact with only a local unit of the latter. They change and segment continually. Even though we stay, the group itself actually becomes, by the slow or rapid replacement of its members, another group having only a few traditions in common with its original ones. Having lived a long time in the same city, we have old and new friends; even within our family, the funerals, marriages, and births are like so many successive endings and new beginnings. Of course, these more recent groups are sometimes only branches of a larger group growing in extent and complexity, to which new segments have been joined. Nevertheless, we discern distinct zones within them, and the same currents of thought and sequences of remembrances do not pass through our mind when we pass from one zone to another. That is, the great majority of these groups, even though not currently divided, nevertheless represent, as Leibnitz said, a kind of social material indefinitely divisible in the most diverse directions.

Let us now consider the content of these collective memories. In contrast to history or, if it is preferred, to the historical memory, I do not claim that the collective memory retains only resemblances. To be able to speak of memory, the parts of the period over which it extends must be differentiated in some way. Each of these groups has a history. Persons and events are distinguished. What strikes us about this memory, however, is that resemblances are paramount. When it considers its own past, the group feels strongly that it has remained the same and becomes conscious of its identity through time. History, I have said, is not interested in these intervals when nothing apparently happens, when life is content with repetition in a somewhat different, but essentially unaltered, form without rupture or upheaval. But the group, living first and foremost for its own sake, aims to perpetuate the feelings and images forming the substance of its thought. The greatest part of its memory spans time during which nothing has radically changed. Thus events happening within a family or to its members would be stressed in a written history of the

family, though they would have meaning for the kin group only by providing clear proof of its own almost unaltered character, distinctive from all other families. Were a conflicting event, the initiative of one or several members, or, finally, external circumstances to introduce into the life of the group a new element incompatible with its past, then another group, with its own memory, would arise, and only an incomplete and vague remembrance of what had preceded this crisis would remain.

History is a record of changes; it is naturally persuaded that societies change constantly, because it focuses on the whole, and hardly a year passes when some part of the whole is not transformed. Since history teaches that everything is interrelated, each of these transformations must react on the other parts of the social body and prepare, in turn, further change. Apparently the sequence of historical events is discontinuous, each fact separated from what precedes or follows by an interval in which it is believed that nothing has happened. In reality, those who write history and pay primary attention to changes and differences understand that passing from one such difference to another requires the unfolding of a sequence of transformations of which history perceives only the sum (in the sense of the integral calculus) or final result. This viewpoint of history is due to its examining groups from outside and to its encompassing a rather long duration. In contrast, the collective memory is the group seen from within during a period not exceeding, and most often much shorter than, the average duration of a human life. It provides the group a self-portrait that unfolds through time, since it is an image of the past, and allows the group to recognize itself throughout the total succession of images. The collective memory is a record of resemblances and, naturally, is convinced that the group remains the same because it focuses attention on the group, whereas what has changed are the group's relations or contacts with other groups. If the group always remains the same, any changes must be imaginary, and the changes that do occur in the group are transformed into similarities. Their function is to develop the several aspects of one single content—that is, the various fundamental characteristics of the group itself.

Moreover, how would a memory be possible otherwise? It would be paradoxical to claim that the memory preserves the past in the present or introduces the present into the past if they were not actually two zones of the same domain and if the group, insofar as it returns into itself and becomes self-conscious through remembering and isolation from others, does not tend to enclose itself in a relatively immobile form. The group is undoubtedly under the influence of an illusion when it believes the similarities more important than the differences, but it clearly cannot account for the differences, because the images it has previously made of itself are only slowly transformed. But the framework may be enlarged or compressed without being destroyed, and the assumption may be made that the group has only gradually focused on previously unemphasized aspects of itself. What is essential is that the features distinguishing it from other groups survive and be imprinted on all its content. We might have to leave one of these groups for a long time, or the

group may break up, its older membership may die off, or a change in our residence, career, or sympathies and beliefs may oblige us to bid it farewell. When we then recall all the times we have spent in the group, do these remembrances not actually come to us as a single piece? So much so that we sometimes imagine the oldest remembrances to be the most immediate; or, rather, they are all illuminated in a uniform light, like objects blending together in the twilight. . . .

Consider matters now from the point of view of the individual. He belongs to several groups, participates in several social thoughts, and is successively immersed in several collective times. The fact that people are not immersed, within a given time and space, in the same collective currents already permits an element of individual differentiation. Moreover, individuals vary in the speed at which and distance to which their thought goes into the past, or time, of each group. In this sense each consciousness may concentrate, in a given interval, on durations of differing extent. That is, in a given interval of lived social duration, each consciousness is occupied with a varying extent of represented time. The range of variation, of course, is quite large.

A quite different interpretation is provided by those psychologists who believe that each individual consciousness has a distinctive duration, irreducible to any other. They consider each consciousness a flood of thought with its own characteristic movement. First of all, however, time does not flow, but endures and continues to exist. It must do so, for otherwise how could memory reascend the course of time? Moreover, how could a representation of time common to more than one consciousness be derived if each of these currents is a unique and continuous sequence of states that unfolds with varying speed? In reality, the thoughts and events of individual consciousnesses can be compared and relocated within a common time because inner duration dissolves into various currents whose source is the group. The individual consciousness is only a passageway for these currents, a point of intersection for collective times.

Curiously enough, philosophers of time have hardly considered this conception until recently. They have continued to picture the individual consciousness as isolated and sealed within itself. The expression "stream of thought," or psychological flux or current, found in the writings of William James and Henri Bergson, translates with the help of an appropriate metaphor the feeling that each of us experiences when he is a spectator at the unfolding of his own psychic life. It is as if, within each of us, our states of consciousness follow one another in a continuous current, like so many waves pushing one after another. This is indeed true, as reflection confirms, of thinking that continually progresses from one perception or emotion to another. By contrast, memory characteristically forces us to stop and momentarily turn aside from this flux, so that we might, if not reascend, at least cut across a current along which appear numerous branchings off, as it were. Of course, thought is still active in memory, shifting and moving about. But what is noteworthy is that only in this instance can it be said that thought shifts and moves about in time. Without memory and apart from those moments when we remember, how could we ever be aware of being in time and of transporting ourselves through duration? Absorbed in our impressions, pursuing them as they appear and then disappear, we doubtless merge into one moment of duration after another. But how can we also represent time itself, that temporal framework that encompasses many other moments as well as this one? We can *be* in time, in the present, which is a part of time, and nevertheless not be capable of *thinking* in time, of taking ourselves back in thought to the near or more distant past. In other words, we must distinguish the current of impressions from the current of thought (properly so called), or memory. The first is rigidly linked to the body, never causes us to go outside ourself, and provides no perspective on the past. The second has its origins and most of its course in the thought of the various groups to which we belong.

Suppose now that we focus on groups and their representations, conceiving individual thought as a sequence of successive viewpoints on the thought of these groups. Then we will understand how a person's thought can go varying distances into the past, depending on the extent of the perspectives on the past provided by each collective consciousness in which he participates. One condition is necessary for this to be the case. Past time (a certain image of time) has to exist immobile in each collective consciousness and endure within given limits, which vary by group. This is the great paradox. On reflection, however, we realize it could not be otherwise. How could any society or group exist and gain self-awareness if it could not survey a set of present and past events, if it did not have the capacity to reascend the course of time and pass continually over traces left behind of itself? Every group—be it religious, political or economic, family, friends, or acquaintances, even a transient gathering in a salon, auditorium, or street—immobilizes time in its own way and imposes on its members the illusion that, in a given duration of a constantly changing world, certain zones have acquired a relative stability and balance in which nothing essential is altered.

Of course, how far we may so return into the past depends on the group. Consequently, individual thought, depending on the degree of its participation in a given collective thought, attains ever more distant remembrances. Beyond this moving fringe of time or, more correctly, of collective times, there is nothing more, for the time of the philosophers is an empty form. Time is real only insofar as it has content—that is, insofar as it offers events as material for thought. It is limited and relative, but it is plainly real. Moreover, it is large and substantial enough to offer the individual consciousness a framework within which to arrange and retrieve its remembrances.