

Comment: How could we overcome memory wars..... if possible?

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Dear all,

As a specialist of French contemporary history, I heard three talks composing this session with full of wonder and a little surprise. For, post-war Eastern and Central Europe is depicted there as a time-space where collective memories are confronted with one another. A kind of memory wars, we could say.

This is a totally opposite image of collective memory from that concerning Western Europe. Western European countries and its nations, of which France is a part, have tried, since the end of WWII, to harmonize their collective, that is to say, national memories, and to create, if possible, a supra-national collective one. Their purpose was clear: these memories must function as a basis for the (at least Western) European unification and integration at the economic and political levels so that they could find a big market named "Europe" necessary for the economic recovery, so that there would be no more devastating war in the Continent, and so that they could confront the USA as a key player in the international politics.

Of course this is just a so called Master Narrative, artificially created and invented with illusion, hope, and certain facts, as is the case with the image of Kazys SKIRPA analyzed in SHIGEMATSU Hisashi's talk. Take France as an example, and we could easily find conflicts among collective memories, such as the conflict between *Collabos* and *Résistants*, the conflict between Français and *Basques*, the conflict between pro-Europeans and sovereignists, and so on.

Thus all the Europe has faced the conflict of collective memories, that is to say, memory wars. We are hearing many academics (and others too) claiming the necessity of resolving it by overcoming such and such collective memory. Collective memory is regarded to have a power to unite certain people into a group, often having a national and official character, who carries out memory wars..... and political/economic/social conflict in some cases. It tends to be evaluated as a cause of possible real conflict in contemporary world.

To adopt, instead, is often proposed some de-centered, un-nationalized, multi-layered..... in a word, de-collectivized memory.

TATEISHI Yoko's talk, however, makes clear that collective memory could have a positive

effect upon certain people, functioning as a kind of stabilizer of their everyday life. For some Russian people, the history school textbook based on officially-framed national collective memory could be a unifier and integrator of always fluctuating contemporary society.

Taking her argument into consideration, we could say that unified collective memory has both advantage and disadvantage. It means, at the same time, that its alternative, that is to say, de-collectivized one, has also both characters: advantage of not contributing to the formation of homogenous group on the one hand, and disadvantage of deracinating the people who need certain collective memory to cling to in order to keep his/her identity.

The dual character of both memories tells us that the question of "which is better, collective memory or de-collectivized memory?" is not a right one to think about. We have to re-arrange the question, to re-construct the frame of comprehension, or to change the rule of game and the playfield, so that we could find a way to deal correctly with the memory and to avoid the memory wars.

But how?

By entangling the two memories, I think. Here I use the term "entangle" as an English equivalent of a French word "croiser" advocated as a method of historical analysis by Michael WERNER and Bénédicte ZIMMERMAN (2004). To be entangled here is not only the two memories or memory holders as the object of research, but also us academics who think about the memory as the subject of research. Some of us say "Yes, collective memory is always necessary" and some others "No, No, it is to be deconstructed into de-collectivized one." Both arguments are not totally correct as I said, and we thus have to be self-reflexive, in other word, to entangle ourselves.

But how?

A clue seems to me to be found out in two historians' famous arguments: Benedetto CROCE said that "all history is contemporary history" (1938) and François HARTOG told that we are seeing today the preponderance of "présentist" history as a regime of historicity (2003). The two share a frame of reference for understanding the relation between the reality and the memory, that is to say, a hypothesis that they reinforce each other. The reality has an impact on the memory, which in turn has an impact on the former.

Suggested here is a fact that, if we would like to solve problems posed by the collective (or, in some cases, de-collectivized) memory as is shown in three talks, we have to change the real and present world in itself. This action consists of intervening the cycle of mutual reinforcement of the memory and the present so that we could "compare and

connect national narratives” as FUKUMOTO Kenshi says at the end of his talk.

This is, however, a very difficult task to carry out. How could we do it? Or what is necessary for us to do it?

I would like here to present some of my ideas concerning this topic as a kind of hypotheses. Just three points. First, we could and should tackle this task at, not the collective, but the individual level. Second, we need a capacity as individuals which Adam SMITH called “sympathy” (1759), that is to say, a capacity of imagining the others’ sentiments. Third, in order to equip ourselves with the sympathy, we must try to listen to the others. To summarize, a power to listen is necessary for us when we look for a solution of memory wars.

Thank you for your attention.