

voluntary work, and through producing for human needs rather than for market needs. Again, we find ourselves back to human needs as the aim of work. However, now the aim is to make humans the subjects of their own work, in control of

their own instruments and technology, and having choice over the form and content of their work. Changing the way we work may be one of the keys to giving humankind greater control over their lives and a sense of their own creativity.

SOCIETY FOR CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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Boston was the site of the fourth annual meeting of the Society for Cultural Anthropology last May. The conference, "Culture and Memory," was well-attended and attracted both veterans of previous SCA meetings and new participants, especially from the Northeast. Social theorist Paul Connerton of Cambridge University served as general discussant for the conference and kindly provided the following comments on the six invited lectures. Connerton is the author of *The Tragedy of Enlightenment* and *How Societies Remember*.

At the plenary sessions three nodal points emerged: the question of cultural forgetting, the question of multiple authority, and the question of embodied narrative.

1. Julie Taylor considered certain features of institutionalized *forgetting*. She argued that there was something suspect about the massive documentation which, in Argentina after the terror as in other Latin American cases, set out to create an official memory of events with the purpose that these should never again be forgotten. It might be argued that the creation of official memory by meticulous recording shows (to use Thomas Nagel's distinction "the difference between knowledge and acknowledgment") this is what happens and can only happen to knowledge when it is officially sanctioned as part of the public cognitive scene. But it might also be argued, against this, that the form of such bureaucratic documentation is (to use Renato Rosaldo's phrase) "where precision lies"; the experience of terror is lost through the net of precise testimony. Taylor opted for the second alternative, arguing that official memory is cast in forms integral to the judicial process and that these forms suppress the recording and remembering of any motivation that is not individual and, as such, amenable to modes of testimony typical of the legal system. Such official memories simply do not recognize forms of collective action (like the massacres of groups) and of collective motivation (like political activism). Political history becomes juridical history; since recorded memory omits what the power facts of society's hierarchy does not acknowledge, the act of remembering is also a process of forgetting.

Whereas Taylor examined the distorting effects of institutionalized forgetting, Edward Casey argued that the indispensability of certain types of forgetting was phenomenologically grounded. He argued that forgetting, far from being a failure only, a lack or loss, a degradation or decay, possesses a distinctive status of its own. Freud, of course, pointed to the fact that in the realm of the psyche

the most effective defense is to forget what one is defending against, and a still better defense is one that forgets its own action of defending. This is a particularly telling case of what Casey called double oblivion; and one does not have to swallow the entire Freudian ontology to acknowledge that double oblivion, tempting for individuals, is even more tempting for societies, whose manifold ways of forgetting—and then of burying the forgetting itself—by denial, projection, displacement, obfuscation, mystification, and obliteration are at once pervasively present and yet often unconscious to society members themselves. One of the most revealing forms of forgetting, he argued, was in the area of habitual body memory; for to be successfully habitual is to require a forgetfulness that, far from undermining a valid performance, contributes to its own success. Indeed, he continued, there is no efficacious collective remembering except by the agency of the body in its habitual practices; and if this is so, it follows that there is no significant forgetting without the indispensable intermediacy of the body. We may say, then, that the enacting body is frequented by collective forgetting, that the body is the place of passage, and bondage, for forgetting done collectively.

2. *Multiple* authority between cultures was discussed by Kay Warren, multiple authority within cultures by Fredrik Barth. Warren's paper, focused on the Mayas of Guatemala, moved within an intellectual terrain mapped out by, among others, Anderson, Hobsbawm and Ranger, who see nationalism and ethnicity, not just as a temporary holdover from the traditional past, but as historically modern struggles with identity and otherness. The result of this feature of modernity is an ironical encounter between North American anthropologists and Mayan anthropologists. On the one side, leading North American anthropologists now reject their previous essentialism for Mesoamerica—the notion that the real Mayan culture consists of continuities in remote areas of the highlands in contrast to corrupted culture elsewhere, which cannot be authentic because it has been muddied by incursions from outside—because they are increasingly able to appreciate that this perspective ignores the processes involved in the cultural constitution of memory; they now view ethnic memory as a cultural montage in which there is no Mayan identity except as this identity is constructed, contested, negotiated, imposed, resisted and redefined in a never-ending process. On the other side, however, Mayas in Guatemala see the issue as being how to live in the modern world

without renouncing memory; remembering a Mayan past, something dismissed as unimportant by many Mayas less than a quarter of a century ago, is now seen by them as uniquely valuable; they evince a growing concern with who authors the past; they want a memory independent of the definitions of the dominant culture; they seek ethnic continuities and, whatever their current significance, see these as the Mayan culture core. In effect they say: give us back, not cultural identity as montage, but essentialism, because we want to be essential. The encounter between North American anthropologists and Mayan anthropologists is an ironical one, therefore, because the former are turning to constructivist interpretations of identity at the moment when the latter are rediscovering essentialism.

Fredrik Barth raised the question of the persistence of cultural forms. What are the processes that combat the tendency of a tradition to diverge in different directions or to drift unrecognizably from its roots? The ethnography of Bali provokes this question because we find there, on the one hand, a range of multiple authorities engaged in the activity of cultural reproduction, and, on the other hand, the long historical persistence of Hindu traditions. Barth suggested that we find this particular combination puzzling because we misleadingly project onto this cosmology the expectations we bring from our own cosmology, characterized as it is by an elaborate consistency of premises and assertions such that a conceptual disturbance at any point would threaten all other parts of the scholarly construct. But Balinese cosmology is constructed on principles fundamentally at odds with this: because of its principle that whatever is, is continually changing; and because of its principles that an object or phenomenon is often a manifestation of something else and that something may be overtly different but really a manifestation of the same. A tradition of knowledge based on these principles can be reproduced under conditions that would be devastating to the reproduction of a differently constituted cosmology; for, given the way their cosmology is built, Balinese cosmologists can produce a wide range of statements without thereby falsifying other statements or threatening the coherence of their whole cosmological structure. So we need first to be able to see how different systems of knowledge are set up if we are then going to be in a position to be able to work out what is a continuation and what is a transformation of the system; and we will see that the processes necessary for the persistence of a cultural system will depend, not on our ethnocentric assumptions about premises and assertions, but on the basic features of that particular cultural configuration.

3. The exploration of narrative memory by, among others, Barlett and Ricoeur, has shown the complexity of this form of representational remembering, a circumstance linked, by both Nancy Munn and Thomas Csordas, to specific forms of *embodied narrative*. Munn pursued this line of inquiry by developing the thought of Halbwachs that lived spaces function as mnemonic triggers because persons remind each other of past events by virtue of the fact that they occupy together certain narrative spaces. She pressed further the thought that lo-

catedness is intrinsic to the constitution of the self, by focusing on the concern in Kaluli society to arouse biographical memories of having shared certain social spaces with persons now dead, where pastness is represented and evoked in songs that pivot on the absence of particular persons from inhabited landscapes. In these songs place names are the key mnemonic triggers. Place names fulfill this function partly, indeed perhaps most crucially, because the absence of the dead consists in their loss of an essential feature of their ground-based embodiment: place names, being ground names, locate a crucial border zone, the locus of separation between the living and the dead. Hence these narrations have their "objective correlative" in the outsiders' singing of the place names, which initiates the mnemonic cycle and a "subjective correlative" within the rememberers' bodies as grief and anger.

Thomas Csordas made a general point and a particular point about embodied narratives. The general point was that we should ground cultural analysis in the idea of embodiment. Our experience of force, for instance, emerges preconceptually from our own bodily experience of force; we begin to grasp the meaning of physical force from the day we are born, if not before, because we have bodies that are acted on by external and internal forces such as gravity, heat, light, wind and the obtrusion of other physical objects. The particular point—which concerned the Catholic Charismatic healing of memories understood as a particular type of commemorative ceremony—flowed logically from this. Csordas argued that such narratives occupied a middle mode between ceremonial commemorations as public rituals and the intrapsychic commemorations that occur in the process of identification; for in this case the intrapsychic commemoration is executed in explicitly ritual terms. On this middle ground, the duality of the intrapsychic and the intersubjective is challenged more sharply than usual, because bodily actions are imagined as being performed by supplicants or as being performed on the bodies of supplicants. Here the particular point and the general point link up; for if marginal performance is embodied in this way, its efficacy originates in the body as the existential ground of efficacy in general.

These remarks may perhaps best close open-endedly, with a question. Disappointment was expressed during the final discussion session at the fact that, for the most part, the papers at the plenary sessions had backgrounded questions of power, gender, race and class. This observation was interestingly true; and may open up a very general issue. For studies of cultural memory have stemmed largely from one of two main lines of inquiry: a major line, coming from the phenomenological movement, which has generally been inattentive to questions of institutionalization and hegemony, and a minor line, interested in the constitution of memory as a dimension of the operations of institutional power. Hence the question arises: has it been necessarily the case, or has it been simply a contingent—and so rectifiable—feature of recent intellectual history and the academic division of labor, that the two strands from which studies of cultural memory have most profited, the phenomenological debate and the power/knowledge debate, have lived largely separate lives?