



On Collective Memory

Maurice Halbwachs , Lewis A. Coser (Editor)

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How do we use our mental images of the present to reconstruct our past? Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) addressed this question for the first time in his work on collective memory, which established him as a major figure in the history of sociology. This volume, the first comprehensive English-language translation of Halbwach's writings on the social construction of memory, fills a major gap in the literature on the sociology of knowledge.

Halbwachs' primary thesis is that human memory can only function within a collective context. Collective memory, Halbwachs asserts, is always selective; various groups of people have different collective memories, which in turn give rise to different modes of behavior. Halbwachs shows, for example, how pilgrims to the Holy Land over the centuries evoked very different images of the events of Jesus' life; how wealthy old families in France have a memory of the past that diverges sharply from that of the nouveaux riches; and how working class construction of reality differ from those of their middle-class counterparts.

With a detailed introduction by Lewis A. Coser, this translation will be an indispensable source for new research in historical sociology and cultural memory.

Lewis A. Coser is Distinguished Professor of Sociology Emeritus at the State University of New York and Adjunct Professor of Sociology at Boston College.

On Collective Memory Details

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From Reader Review On Collective Memory for online ebook

Marilena says

Good book on memory, history, but the stress is laid on collective groups, collective memory, the individual being defined only within groups.

There are things to which I agree and things to which I STRONGLY disagree.

Anyway the book helped me for my memory studies research project.

Laura says

It's incredible, given how foundational Halbwachs' work is to the field of memory studies and how often it's cited, that this seems to be the one & only English-language version of his unfinished opus that's in print. I'd welcome a different edition & translation, drawing from his earlier work as well as "Cadres sociaux..." (and without all the annoying typos in this one). Halbwachs' memory theory is philosophical rather than empirical in base, and I disagree with much of it. But it was transformative and still worth reading. I wonder how his thinking might have changed, had he not been one of the Holocaust's staggering number of victims.

Yang says

It can be read together with Durkheim's Elementary Forms of religious life.

auria says

21,41

Karen says

I liked this, it made me think in completely new ways. I liked his intellectual explanation of the apostasy of the Catholic Church. My collective memory class all agreed that if Halbwachs had survived the Holocaust, his views of static collective memory would have been different.

Mike says

If you're starting to get interested in collective memory, you should read this early on. I try to keep in mind that Halbwachs is mostly interested in what is now called social memory (which is a subgenre of collective memory, so I am not saying he is wrong). The field has come a long way since this text was written, and collective memory scholars owe a great deal to Halbwachs.

Stephanie C. says

It's simply outdated. Science proves it wrong. Nice source of inspiration nevertheless.

10001010001 says

The edition that I read cut out some of the fractions of the book, making it essentially unreadable. So no ratings.
