

Signs of Memory and Traces of Oblivion

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Abstract. The main objectives of this paper are to analyze the relation between memory and oblivion and their exterior forms to the level of physical and cultural space. The notion of memory places (defined as accumulations of signs of identity and their materializations) is presented in its two manifestations: as memory landmarks (connection points to the collective past) and as memory signs. The distinction is based on the power of memory to remind us who we are, but also what we forgot about ourselves. We divided the paper in several parts.

Keywords: memory, oblivion, identity, collective memory, memory places, remembrances, cultural memory, memory landmarks, memory signs.

I. MEMORY AND OBLIVION

Guide of knowledge – as it is shown by the light in Mnemosyne’s hand painted by Rossetti – the memory is the keeper of cultural values. Discussing about memory means also referring to the art of memory, the latter having a very important role in education for a long time. The art of memory was in Greek Antiquity an exercise of memory that meant to associate places (‘topoi’) to words, images, representations, and these associations were seen like very rigorous systems. The succession of the places keeps the succession of the information. The art of memory is an art of places but an art based on the capacity of memory to remember easier the images of places instead of words.

We also need to discuss about the ‘context’ of remembrance, because we tend to remember certain information when the context is

suitable and not when we need them. We often remember less than we tell. The details of remembrances are filtered by our beliefs, stereotypes, fears and desires. Another concept that we should bear in mind is that of ‘traces of recollection’, defined as informational fragments which allow the access to a certain trace of memory. As we know from Marcel Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu* the taste and the smell are powerful sources of remembrance and recollection. The ‘traces of recollection’, as we will see further, maintain the connection with the memory places.

Even if the above mentioned concepts are linked with the individual memory we have to underline that this is based on the collective memory, which uses the cultural resources and the social frames. We recollect most of our memories due to the people around us (family and friends), as Maurice Halbwachs said in his works, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* and *La Mémoire collective*. We use our memory to respond to others’ requests, to their questions about the past. The others urge us to remember and their memory and remembrances completes ours.

The other face of the cultural dynamics is oblivion which holds a double meaning: the oblivion as illness of memory and the oblivion as life force. The oblivion offers another side of cultural identity for being analyzed. The best known image of the oblivion appears in the Greek mythology. Lethe is a naiad born in the family of Night (lat. Nox, gr. Nyx) and more important her name is also that of one river from Hades, those who drink from it experience complete forgetfulness.¹ Its water gives oblivion and so, as in Salvador Dali’s paintings, the reality transforms itself into a liquid. In the Greek mythology the river is situated close to the Elysian Plains, its water giving oblivion to the souls of the dead and for those who can’t reach it means eternal pain. That is also Friederich Nietzsche’s point of view. The capacity to forget is the necessary condition of happiness, because each action implies oblivion and so this becomes an active force of life.² The oblivion is opposed to the excess of historicism and that is why it is possible to turn towards the future. In the face of the ideological power and its consequences the society of the XX-th century left behind the art of memory, being confronted especially with the interdiction to remember but also to forget and with the dangers to which the oblivion exposes us.

¹ Harald Weinrich, 1999. *Léthé. Art et critique de l’oubli* (Paris: Fayard).

² Friedrich Nietzsche, 1995. *Unfashionable Observations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press).

II. MEMORY AND OBLIVION ILLNESSES

We consider that the relation between memory and oblivion can suffer from certain disequilibria which we name illnesses. Here we are referring to amnesia, hypermnesia and the manipulation of memory. The amnesia is a general concept which refers to the temporary or permanent lost of a certain part of the memory system and it has various manifestation forms. Aleksandr Romanovich Lurija and Oliver Sacks described in detail such cases.³ This illness can be a defensive mechanism which appears after dramatic events or physical traumas as in the case of Umberto Eco's character from his novel *The Mysterious Flame of Queen Loana*. Giambattista Bedoni sets on a road of memory recollection based on material traces, a road at the end of which he finds his identity but also his death. This character represents the European society, a society which relies on exterior forms of memory but lost the touch with its inner collective memory.

Hypermnesia appears in the case of patients with psychical problems who have a vivid and very exact memory of the past. In the philosophy of culture the excess of memory is a form or a manifestation of hypermnesia as is the case of Mendel, a character created by Stefan Zweig. This excess was analyzed by Friedrich Nietzsche⁴, especially in his *Unfashionable Observations*, and more recently by Tzvetan Todorov who connected this excess of memory with some actions and systems of the 20th century (the totalitarian systems, but also the democracy). The manipulation of memory is the result of the ideological phenomenon, centered on getting the power. In this field expressions like 'memory abuses', 'repressed memories' and 'instrumentalized memory'⁵ are generally used.

³ Aleksandr Romanovich Lurija, 1980. *Higher cortical functions in man* (New York: Basic Books); Aleksandr Romanovich Lurija, 1975. *The man with a shattered world: a history of a brain wound* (Harmondsworth: Penguin books); Aleksandr Romanovich Lurija, 1975. *The mind of a mnemonist: a little book about a vast memory* (Harmondsworth: Penguin books); Oliver Sacks, 1985. *The man who mistook his wife for a hat* (London: Picador).

⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, 1995. *Unfashionable Observations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), see especial the second piece 'On the Utility and the Liability of History for Life'.

⁵ See Tzvetan Todorov, 1998. *Les abus de la mémoire* (Paris: Arléa); Tzvetan Todorov, 2000. *Mémoire du mal, tentation du bien, enquête sur le siècle* (Paris: Robert Laffont) and Paul Ricoeur, 2000. *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* (Paris: Le Seuil).

III. MEMORY PLACES

Through each of the forms taken by the memory illnesses, the identity, which is linked to the memory, suffers mutations and transformations. In this context we can speak about the cultural memory, which has a significant role in the processes of identity construction and maintenance. The cultural memory expresses itself through places and texts, rituals and monuments. For Pierre Nora ‘les lieux de mémoire’, memory places, mean general inscriptions, for example the republican calendar, the flag as national emblem, libraries, museums, commemorations etc. The area of memory places is very large, a memory place can be a material aspect of reality which can be situated from a spatial and temporal point of view, a monument, a museum, archives or an important person in the history of humanity, but also an abstract aspect, a mental construction, a symbol, a motto etc.⁶

We define the memory places as accumulations of signs of identity and their materializations, connected with the capacity to select, this being a specific function of memory and oblivion. The concept of memory places can be interpreted as memory landmarks to which memory returns when the identity needs reinforcement or when it is in danger – but also as memory signs, the interpretation using in this case the symbolism and the implicit value of memory based on the projective function of the memory. At present the process of identity is based on a reversed movement of migration, a return to the memory places and we observe a movement towards the value of collective memory, more exactly to a ‘public memory’.⁷

⁶ Pierre Nora (ed.), 1996. *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French past* (New York: Columbia University Press), vol. 1.

⁷ See Liliane Weissberg, 1993. ‘Introduction’ in Dan Ben-Amos and Liliane Weissberg (eds.), *Cultural Memory and the Construction of Identity* (Detroit: Wayne State), pp. 15-6. ‘But although Halbwachs described memory as a “collective” undertaking, it soon metamorphosed into a “cultural” one, following a shift in stress from the social group to its modes of production. (...) *Kultur* still implies dominant cultural forms, but the culture that cultural studies have in mind relates to “low culture” as well – to popular media and everyday conversations. And a third notion has emerged in recent years – that of “public memory”. This term stresses the transgressive force with which memory, far from being private, displays itself in the marketplace and the political domain. If Halbwachs conceived of “collective memory” as describing social thought, terms like “cultural” and “public memory” comment further on the changes within the social thought and its discourse on memory’.

The break between memory and history is related in Pierre Nora's view to the transformation of memory in an exterior coordinate, which can be analyzed, sorted out and described. The memory becomes a system of gathered information like an archive, an exterior one. In this context the memory places refer to the exterior signs of memory which can support the social conducts in their usual transactions.⁸ Places are offered to the memory in which the memory itself can be present, because abandoning the vivid memory means to redirect its power in different symbolical spaces. In present times, memory places are transformed in places of commemoration, where collective memory is assumed as prove of a past which goes beyond the individual level, but this is a public memory which is taken and manipulated according to the needs of the cultural and ideological space. The memory places become starting points for the reconstruction of the past and for the creation of the present, attracting the historians, the artists and representing the foundation of a new kind of collective memory, one constructed with a known meaning. The present accent on the discovery and construction of the memory places is caused by the break between memory and history, the material transformation of the memory, but also by the permanent seek of identity in a time when we receive signals from outside that this has no special meaning or it can be obtained without efforts, following a given prescription. We turn towards the memory places, towards an interior geography, we seek and we create them in order to define and redefine our identity.

As we mentioned above we are analyzing the memory places as memory landmarks, connection points to the collective past, but also as signs of memory and oblivion, having in mind the signs and symbols, letter and image of the identity.

a. Memory landmarks

The memory places are stable points to which we come back in order to maintain the continuity with our past and which determine the direction of our identity journey. First of all, the remembrances are one of the most important interior memory landmarks, they are part of our individuality and around them the autobiographical memory is centered. The remembrances manage to surprise us when we thought that there were lost forever. We can distinguish certain key identity landmarks through

⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *op. cit.*

which we can access different identity segments.⁹ The vestiges of remembrance can be compared to those of history, knowing that both can be manipulated, even constructed, depending on the national or personal interest; we can talk about false ruins and about false remembrances. The vestiges of history, as admired, fascinating ruins, create a connection to the past, which survived the oblivion. The process of creating the ruins corresponds to the false remembrance.¹⁰ Even if the reinvention of the past centered on the construction of ruins is a clear sign of an artificial memory, as is the case of false remembrances, it is also a sign of the necessity to reinvent the identity, reinvention which appears from the dissatisfaction provoked by the self identity.

In the same time with the development of national history, a new species of collective patrimony was born, the historical monuments.¹¹ These are searched and selected from a variety of past constructions for illustrating the national history and they are invested with a special importance, becoming symbols of national history and of collective memory. The decision of choosing a construction often comes from the desire to manipulate the collective memory and the identity journey as the ideological power required. The changes that occur at the level of memory places are direct referrals to the breaks in memory and to the attempts of changing the interpretation of the past and of the identity reconstruction.¹²

In the same attempt of rewriting the past and offering it new values, there are also some efforts of ethnology and ethnography. Their goal is to present and facilitate the return to the traditional and natural way of life. Tradition was analyzed, systemized and reevaluated in the moments of identity search, identity crisis, as a center of cultural identity. The urbanization, the industrial development, the loss of the stability offered by identity, lead to a symbolical attempt to reconnect to all that is known as traditional. In the same time, the traditional, considered as authentic, is

⁹ Théodule Ribot, 1887. *Diseases of memory, an essay in the positive psychology* (New York: D.Appleton and Company).

¹⁰ Nicolae Râmbu, 2006. *Tirania valorilor. Studii de filosofie culturii și axiologie* (București: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică), p. 261.

¹¹ Anne-Marie Thiesse, 2002. 'La fabrication culturelle des nations européennes' in Nicolas Journet (coord.), 2002. *La culture. De l'universel au particulier* (Éditions Science Humaines), pp. 221-8.

¹² As it was the case in France after the revolution (1789). 'La Révolution de 1789 a marqué en France une rupture historique de la mémoire (...) Tout ce qui rappelait l'Ancien Régime était désormais réprouvé. Le premier devoir du citoyen était l'oubli.' Harald Weinrich, op. cit., p. 155.

analyzed, selected, reconstructed and exposed. We are attracted to the natural style of life, to the simplicity and traditional way of being, but a life which is admired from the comfortable armchair of our houses or visiting the museums, or for those courageous enough, from selected paid experiences. The problem is not the desire to keep the traces of the past, but the tendency to wear out these traces of all their meanings and the lost of their values.

At personal memory level we consider that family and friends represent a special type of memory places, as Milan Kundera mentioned, a mirror of our identity¹³, the connection between them and collective memory being remarkable. Friends, and also family, are part of the identity landmarks which offer us a common return to a past full of sheared significances. The identity is a permanent construction, but a construction that is made through and for the others. Through their simple presence, they remind us of the past and the communicational relation that is established allows a permanent view to the past.

The memory finds different ways of materializing in space and this analysis is centered on two memory manifestations: at the level of the home objects (to the private space, following Baudrillard's writings), where the individual memory is the most important, and the community level of the public space, where the collective memory is the influential one.

The objects around us are signs of memory and their transformation corresponds to the mutation of the values possessed by the memory and the oblivion. The traditional environment was defined by the tendency to accumulate and occupy the space, closing it and offering a precise destination to each space.¹⁴ In this kind of space, arranged using rules that are according to those of the art of memory, the evocation power of the memory dominates and the objects have the purpose to remind us who we are. In this case, the objects are part of the collective memory frames. The heritage of the objects has the signification of an integration form in the history of a family and a community, assuring the continuity with the past¹⁵. Replacing the heritage with new objects and changing them according to the new trends reduces the power of collective memory. The objects lose the power of evocation, of reminding us who we are. The capacity to easily replace all the objects is a sign of a great organizational

¹³ Milan Kundera, 1998. *Identity* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers).

¹⁴ Jean Baudrillard, 1996. *The system of objects* (London: Verso).

¹⁵ See Anne Muxel, 1996. *Individu et mémoire familiale* (Paris: Le Seuil).

function but also of a great opening regarding the human relations¹⁶, the people becoming also easy to replace. We remark the increasing tendency to forget, to use the identity strategies that allow us to remember and to forget according to our temporary interests. Banishing memory from the home transforms it into a sterile scenery without originality and suitable to anyone. That is possible through removing the sources of light, the mirrors and the photos, all these representing the landmarks invested with the power to establish our identity. The photo, as an identity supplement, has an integrative function, an emotional value, transmitting the history of the family and the community, being in the same time a testimony of the individual identity.

For each of us the objects that we keep are landmarks that lead us through a past structured just on the symbolism of these objects. Their function is to remind us of different events from our life and the people we met and who influenced our identity and our direction in life. The abandon of these objects means to tear apart the web of the past. Even if the heritage objects are missing in the modern houses we can still find some symbolical objects which are situated in the center of the house and which are looked with esteem.¹⁷ Those objects have the function of centralizing the whole signification of the collective memory.

The personal space has as representation or extension the territoriality – the spontaneous tendency of a group to control and use some areas of the geographical space. As we know, the personal space is variable from one person to another because of the different habits, education, culture; each of us constructs a personal cognitive map of the places that we know. On this map the memory landmarks are key points and we define our physical and cultural space based on their representation. The relation between these memory landmarks and our cultural identity is obvious in the case of the people who leave their country and chose to live in other place and who feel lost. What they lose is in fact the relation with some of their memory landmarks and sometimes they are in the impossibility of finding a place in the cultural map of their new town and country. We also need to keep in mind that the defence of the personal territory is based, in its subtle form, on the use of the symbols and on gathering things.¹⁸

¹⁶ Baudrillard, *The system*.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ Desmond Morris, 1999. *The Naked Ape* (New York: Dell Publishing).

In this mental map of the personal or public territory, like the city, the memory uses some landmarks which surpass the level of the physical map and are situated on the map of the cultural identity. The memory is reestablished using the exterior landmarks. Many researchers observed that the present was characterized by a change on the level of relation between cities and past; a change that was materialized in the propagation of the preservation societies, of the amateur and professional historians, of the museums and listed buildings.¹⁹ Behind this reality was the idea of authenticity which was based on memory and was opposed to globalization, to the tendencies to forget the differences and to keep in mind just the common aspects. The buildings were invested with certain significances and the collective memory is reduced to the local memory.

The memory of buildings is the city memory and the identity is

the sum of all the traces in the city but likewise if development sweeps buildings away then memory loss and identity crisis threaten and the city loses its typology (its memory forms), and can no longer act as a kind of guide or exemplar for the people living in it.²⁰

As a case study we are referring to the communist and post-communist cities, especially to Iasi, a city situated in the north-east of Romania. In this type of city more important than the buildings were for a long time the historical monuments. These were ordered by the state and could be demolished when the balance of power shifted. Another example is Moscow in Russia: starting with 1991, Moscow had to become the capital of a post-soviet nation. The monuments were either glorified (monuments of World War II, of the Russian Orthodox Church, or the Tsarist era), contested (soviet) or disavowed (removed, closed).²¹ After the fall of the communist regime the statues of Lenin, Marx, and the Soviet monuments constructed after the Second World War, like the Soviet Soldier, all considered as symbols of a dark past were destroyed in many cities. This movement was doubled by the construction of new memorial

¹⁹ Mark Crinson, 2005. 'Urban Memory – an introduction' in Mark Crinson (ed.), *Urban Memory. History and amnesia in the modern city* (London and New York: Routledge), pp. xi-xxiii.

²⁰ Ibidem, p. xiii.

²¹ Benjamin Forest, Juliet Johnson, 2002. 'Unraveling the Threads of History. Soviet-era monuments and Post-Soviet national identity in Moscow' in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 92, no. 3 (Sep. 2002), pp. 524-47.

monuments and the restoration of the historical and religious places that were forgotten for 40 years.²² The implication of the post-communist episode on the collective memory level seems to contain common elements with the post-Vichy episode in the French memory, oblivion applied as a collective silence over a painful or a shamed past.

The post-communist cities were confronted with the necessity of adapting to a world that continued to move while they were stationary, so they practiced a sort of selective oblivion. The monuments that lost their importance in the new face of the city were forgotten, the statues were moved in the secluded places of the public parks or on the small streets (for example Park Isskustv – The park of arts in Moscow, considered to be a graveyard of statues)²³, and these activities were accompanied by those of bringing new faces in the public sphere. The attempt to reinforce the identity was and continues to be made through the statues of important historical figures which are placed with great honor in public spaces. The social activity also transforms the forgotten buildings in places invested with the power of collective memory and symbolism.²⁴

The communist period had as characteristics the damage of the public space – a space of the collective memory – the space of the squares, of the open-piazza-like areas, of the street cafeteria; all these places were abandoned or destroyed. After this period people rediscovered with great difficulty the pleasure of being on the streets and of sharing a public space. A long time this space was just for political discourses. The public space as place where you could meet your friends, you could wander around, or you could just relax, is beginning to be real 20 years after communism. It passed a long time for the pedestrian friendly streets, like Lapuseanu street (one of the Moldavian princes) in Iasi, to become again 'le flâneur's' places.²⁵ A similar situation was present in Banská Bystrica, a city in central Slovakia. After 1948, the main square, which used to be a place of human diversity, became a traffic junction for public transport. Fortunately in

²² Kenneth E. Foote, Atilla Toth, Anett Arvay, 2000. 'Hungary after 1989: Inscribing a new past on place' in *Geographical Review*, vol. 90, no. 3 (July 2000), pp. 301-334.

²³ Benjamin Forest, Juliet Johnson, 2002. 'Unraveling the Threads of History. Soviet-era monuments and Post-Soviet national identity in Moscow' in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 92, no. 3 (Sep. 2002), pp. 524-47.

²⁴ Jennifer A. Jordan, 2006. *Structures of memory: understanding Urban Change in Berlin and Beyond* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), p. 9.

²⁵ See Walter Benjamin, 2007. *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books).

1995, the square was reconstructed and once again filled with pedestrian zones.²⁶

Another process is the change of the street names. The change in the political power results in a change in the names of streets, sometimes a return to the old names. For example in Iasi: Karl Marx Street becomes again Lascar Catargiu street (an wise Romanian man who was four time Prime Minister), Carol I street (the first king of Romania, when the country knew a glorious time) becomes 23rd of August street (when Romania became the ally of the Soviet Union) in the communist period and than again Carol I street, the 9th of May street (the celebration of the victory against the fascism) becomes Agatha Barescu street (important Romanian actress) and the examples can continue, as in the case of all cities that knew different kinds of political regimes.

These types of cities are trapped between two kinds of oblivion. The first is forgetting the communism and returning to the glamour of the old times, the restoration of buildings, the knotting of collective memory's wire, but without the remembrance of the communist period and its traumas. Several buildings considered as memory landmarks were restored following the original architecture (for example The University was restored and the two lions that used to be on the steps of the entrance were reconstructed, the same thing happened with other buildings). Similar cases are found throughout Europe, for example in Berlin the Hohenzollern City Palace is meant to be reconstructed, after being demolished in 1950's. The second is the total oblivion of the past, no matter of its nature, and the attempt to rebuild a new city which will be as modern as the rest of the occidental cities. This tendency implies new buildings, sometimes of mall-type, an acceleration of the city life materialized in the lost of the structure, of the green spaces and of the historical center that managed to survive the communist period, but is now destroyed (for example the Palace project where the green space that surrounded the Palace of Culture, situated in the city center and constructed during the reign of king Ferdinand, becomes a site for future office buildings). All these actions cannot make the traces of communism period disappear, but even worse, the city becomes a space where three architectural directions stand together: the historical buildings, the

²⁶ Alexandra Bitusikova, 2003. 'Post-Communist city on its way from grey to colourful: the case study from Slovakia' in *Economic Growth and Innovation in Multicultural Environments*. http://www.eukn.org/netherlands/themes/Urban_Policy/post-communist-city_3673.html, 12th of October 2009.

communism blocks of flats and the mall-type constructions (for example, after reunification, the new Berlin was described as being a large architectural exhibition of old and new).

The continuity of memory is affected by the traumatic events of the past, but also by the economic growth and the necessity to catch up to the rest of the occidental world.

In the same time, all the memory landmarks, wherever they are, are exposed to the danger of being transformed into pilgrimage places by the tourists who just want to check on their lists the places they saw, giving less importance to their meanings. The collective memory transformed, as we saw, in the local memory, loses its final contact with the community.

b. Memory signs

Another aspect regarding the memory places, as we mentioned before, is the memory signs, which represent another form of their externalization, the language and the images being the ways used by memory to communicate the identity information. The language is a memory sign because it is a vehicle of identity that allows the integration in a cultural community and it has a direct role in the identity construction. And in its specificity of a shared object the language has an important dimension for the collective identity.²⁷ The breakage between history and memory is discovered also at the language level. The language becomes an exteriorization of the habits of memory. Michel Foucault in his work *Order of things – an archeology of the human sciences*, analyzes in detail the language problems and the connection between language and memory.

Having become a dense and consistent historical reality, language forms the locus of tradition, of the unspoken habits of thought, of what lies hidden in a people's mind; it accumulates an ineluctable memory which does not even know itself as memory.²⁸

Studying the cultural memory we also need to remember the myth of writing, as it appears in Plato's *Phaedrus*. Theuth presents his new discovery, the writing, to king Thamus. 'This invention, O king, will make the Egyptians wiser and will improve their memories, for it is an elixir of

²⁷ Gilles Ferréol, Guy Jucquois, 2005. *Dictionnaire de l'altérité et des relations interculturelles* (Paris: Armand Collin).

²⁸ Michel Foucault, 2005. *Order of things – an archeology of the human sciences* (London and New York: Routledge Classics), p. 324.

memory and wisdom that I have discovered'. The answer of the king becomes more real now than ever because the writing seems to bring the oblivion in a world full of writings.

and now you, who are the father of letters, have been led by your affection to ascribe to them a power the opposite of that which they really possess. For this invention will produce forgetfulness in the minds of those who learn to use it, because they will not practice their memory. Their trust in writing, produced by external characters which are no part of themselves, will discourage the use of their own memory within them.²⁹

We could also compare two types of writings: the traditional letter and the e-mail. The value of the writing swings from communication to a simple transmission of information, the absence of the hand writing is an absence of the collective memory. We transmit information and we put in brackets our profound identity, not the one which is defined through our age, sex, profession and passing interests. The letter is centered on sharing thoughts and events that put a print on our identity. The e-mail brings a short road for presenting our identity, being focused on the transmission of clear and suggestive information. What is lost is the power to build a common context, a collective memory. In the same time, the identity becomes fluid; we can present ourselves as we want without having to manage with the consequences of this action.

On the other hand the images and their symbolism are now more important than ever because we also abandoned the writings and we seem to embrace the power of images. The self image presented to others is actually a constructed image, a response to the requests that we perceive coming from the world, to the roles that society imposes us.

CONCLUSIONS

Nothing is most suitable for the end of this paper than Walter Benjamin's interpretation of Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus*, an angel that does not give but takes instead.³⁰

²⁹ Plato, 2005. *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito. Phaedo, Phaedrus* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), p. 563.

³⁰ Theodor Adorno, 2003. 'Commitment' in Thodor Adorno, *Can one live after Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader* (Stanford: Stanford University Press).

A Klee painting named "Angelus Novus" shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.³¹

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³¹ Walter Benjamin, 2007. *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books), pp. 257-8.