

Memory and re-membering pain:

A Meditation on Embodiment of Symptoms

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“Memory is an aggressive act”

Paul Roskies

A Hasidic legend tells us that the great Rabbi Baal Shem Tov, Master of the Good Name, also known as the Besht, undertook an urgent and perilous mission: to hasten the coming of the Messiah. The Jewish people, all humanity were suffering too much, beset by too many evils. They had to be saved, and swiftly. For having tried to meddle with the history, the Besht was punished; banished along with his faithful servant to a distant land. In despair, the servant implored his master to exercise his mysterious powers in order to bring them both home. "Impossible," the Besht replied. "My powers have been taken from me." "Then, please, say a prayer, recite a litany, and work a miracle." "Impossible," the Master replied, "I have forgotten everything." They both fell to weeping.

Suddenly the Master turned to his servant and asked: "Remind me of a prayer - any prayer." "If only I could," said the servant. "I too have forgotten everything." "Everything - absolutely everything?" "Yes, except-" "Except what?" "Except the alphabet." At that the Besht cried out joyfully: "Then what are you waiting for? Begin reciting the alphabet and I shall repeat after you..." And together the two exiled ben began to recite, at first in whispers, then more loudly: "Aleph, beth, gimel, daleth..." And over again, each time more vigorously, more fervently; until, ultimately, the Besht regained his powers, having regained his memory.

Memory is defined the retention of, and ability to recall, information, personal experiences, and procedures (skills and habits).

There is no universally agreed upon model of the mind/brain, and no universally agreed upon model of how memory works. Nevertheless, a good model for how memory works must be consistent with the subjective nature of consciousness and with what is known from scientific studies (Schacter 1996). Subjectivity in remembering involves at least three important factors:

1. **Memories are constructions made in accordance with present needs, desires, influences, etc.**
2. **Memories are often accompanied by feelings and emotions.**
3. **Memory usually involves awareness of the memory¹.**

Two models of thinking which are popular with materialists are the behaviorist model (thinking is a set of behaviors) and that of cognitive psychology (the brain is like a computer). Neither can account for the subjective and present-need basis of memory. The Freudian model posits an area of the unconscious where memories of traumatic experiences are stored. Though unconscious of them, such memories are claimed to

¹ Schacter, Daniel L. Searching for Memory - the brain, the mind, and the past (New York: Basic Books, 1996).

be significant causal factors in shaping conscious thought and behavior. This model is not consistent with what is known about the memory of traumatic experiences. There is a great deal of supportive evidence for the claim that the more traumatic an experience, the *more likely* one is to remember it. Novel visual images, which would frequently accompany traumas, stimulate the hippocampus and left inferior prefrontal cortex and generally become part of long-term memory.

Current studies in neuroscience strongly support the notion that a memory is a set of encoded neural connections. Encoding can take place in several parts of the brain. Thus, neural connections are likely to go across various parts of the brain. The stronger the connections, the stronger the memory. Recollection of an event can occur by a stimulus to any of the parts of the brain where a neural connection for the memory occurs. If part of the brain is damaged, access to any neural data that was there is lost. On the other hand, if the brain is healthy and a person is fully conscious when experiencing some trauma, the likelihood that they will forget the event is nearly zero, unless either they are very young or they experience a brain injury.

Semantic, Procedural, and Episodic memory

Memory researchers distinguish several types of memory systems. *Semantic* memory contains conceptual and factual knowledge. *Procedural* memory allows us to learn new skills and acquire habits. *Episodic* memory allows us to recall personal incidents that uniquely define our lives ²another important distinction are that between *field* and *observer* memory. Field memories are those where one sees oneself in the scene. Observer memories are those seen through one's own eyes. The fact that many memories are *field* memories is evidence, as Freud noted, of the reconstructive nature of memories.

Modern neurological techniques have also distinguished separate layers within the medial temporal lobe of the brain subtending different memory functions known as item and source memory. In this model the central function of memory is to permit an organism to distinguish between stimuli that have been previously encountered and those that are novel. The medial temporal lobe has long been known to be crucial for recognition memory but only more recently has the distinction between recognizing an earlier item versus later recollect specific contextual details about the prior encounter been mapped.³

Although there has been some work on distinguishing implicit and explicit memories based on neuropharmacology ⁴the bulk of the work with human subjects has used anatomy. The primary finding is that a set of interconnected structures in the medial temporal lobe, basal forebrain, and diencephalon support the formation of new explicit memories, but do not appear to contribute to the formation of new implicit memories ⁵if one or more of these sites is damaged, explicit memory is impaired, but implicit memory is not. This finding allows one to assign coherence to explicit memory because explicit memory is anatomically localized--remember, neuroanatomy is the conceptual basis. While there has been some debate about possible differences in the amnesic syndromes caused by damage to the medial temporal lobe vs. that caused by diencephalic damage, it now appears that there is not an appreciable difference between them ⁶This finding does not, however, allow one to assign coherence to what is spared in amnesia. What is spared in amnesia is simply "memory not in the medial temporal lobe, etc." For it to merit the term "implicit memory" there must be coherence in these types of memories within the conceptual basis of the system, in other words, anatomic consistency. Although there were some suggestions that implicit memory

² Schacter, Daniel L. *The Seven Sins of Memory: How the Mind Forgets and Remembers* (Houghton Mifflin Co., 2001).

³ Davachi et al. Multiple routes to memory: distinct medial temporal lobe processes build item and source memories. *PNAS* Feb 18 2003. Vol 100. 2157-2162.

⁴ Nissen, Knopman, & Schacter, (1987). Neurochemical dissociation of memory systems. *Neurology*, 37, 789-794. 1987

⁵ Squire & Zola-Morgan, The medial temporal lobe memory system. *Science*, 253, 1380-1386. 1991

⁶ Squire, Knowlton, & Musen, The structure and organization of memory. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 44, 453-495. 1993

might reside in a single anatomic system ⁷that view has not been popular in recent years, for reasons including the lack of neuro-anatomical specificity and consistency.

I remain concerned with what I consider memories stored in the body of pain, both my own and in those of my patients, repressed and recalled. In reviewing the current neurological and medical literature I find that implicit memory or memory encoded in the unconsciousness is not supported by what is currently known as to how memory works and what non-brain organs are capable of doing. From western and non-western sources we know full well that up until modern times there was a definitive notion that different organs had conscious properties beyond that of the mind's awareness of the brain. ⁸ Explicit memory by definition is easier to work with as a clinician since it is available to consciousness and is usually reported by patients in the initial interview and history-taking session. Most psychologists agree this type is not mature until age three. However implicit memory, which might be encoded of the stimulus, was too traumatic, for instance, is a much harder phenomenon to describe and measure.

The idea of "repressed memory" or "dissociative amnesia," as it is sometimes also known, refers to the theory that an individual could experience a serious traumatic event-- a trauma so serious that it would normally seem unforgettable --and then develop amnesia for that event (i.e. be literally unable to remember the event) for months or years afterwards, only to ultimately recover the lost memory at some point later in life. For example, in modern novels or screenplays, an individual may experience childhood abuse, or an assault, or a rape, and then have amnesia for the event for years afterwards -- almost as if the mind were attempting to protect the individual against the traumatic memory. Then, the individual may "recover" the "repressed memory" years later, perhaps at a moment fraught with considerable emotion.

A literary example that fulfills all of the above criteria is Penn, in Rudyard Kipling's novel, *Captains Courageous*, who develops complete amnesia or for having lost his entire family in a tragic flood. He later goes to work as a fisherman on a Grand Banks schooner. On one occasion, after a tragic collision between an ocean liner and another schooner at sea, Penn suddenly recovers his lost memory of the flood and the death of his family, and recounts the story to other members of the crew.

In my own life and in my patient's stories those implicit memories are the most difficult to access and therefore to treat when they become somatized in the body as pain or RSD. Most of my patients experience chronic pain in the body and it is my belief that this encodes implicit memory although I am unsure scientifically where and what parts of the brain this encodes. It is therefore to other disciplines that I must turn in order to find a system of thought that articulates implicit memory. For that I first turned to my own tradition of sacred science then other traditions that might deal with memory and the body.

I therefore bring to your attention three rabbinic discussions as to the function of memory, each representing different forms and functions and all of them used in discussing spirituality and the soul. The first citation comes from the Talmud. I take license to quote these ancient texts when the scientific and medical texts that educated me in the medical field do not do justice to the complexity of the human souls I treat and failed me. Only then do I resort to other traditions and systems.

⁷ Mishkin, Malamut, & Bachevalier, Memories and habits: Two neural systems. In G. Lynch, J. McGaugh, N. Weinberger, (Eds.) *Neurobiology of Learning and Memory* (65-77). New York: Guilford. 1984

⁸ No better review than that of Hieronymous Bosch's art in which different organs were depicted graphically as possessing virtues and vices. Although his polemic was the Church he reflected the repressed consciousness of pre Christian Greek and even Egyptian mythological motifs in his work. Some scholars have used an alchemical approach to the symbolism, suggesting that Bosch's images are focused in the alchemy that was practiced in his day. Others have sought to interpret the images in terms of general Christian or Medieval symbolism. There is considerable disagreement on this avenue of interpretation as well. Another route is to use either Freudian symbolism or Jungian archetypes as a basis to explore subconscious connections of which perhaps even Bosch himself was unaware. The dreamlike quality of his images certainly suggests that the last route should be included, or at least considered, in an interpretation. See the work of Solomon especially his table of symbols in: http://solomonsmusic.net/Bosch_frame.htm

Memory and mourning

Talmud: Nidah 60b.

“R. Simlai delivered the following discourse: What does an embryo resemble when it is in the bowels of its mother? Folded writing tablets; its hands rest on its two temples respectively, its two elbows on its two legs and its two heels against its buttocks. Its head lies between its knees, its mouth is closed and its navel is open, and it eats what its mother eats and drinks what its mother drinks, but produces no excrements because otherwise it might kill its mother. As soon, however, as it sees the light the closed organ (i.e. its mouth) opens and the open one (the navel) closes, for if that had not happened the embryo could not live even one single hour. A light burns above its head and it looks and sees from one end of the world to the other, as it is said, then his lamp shined above my head, and by His light I walked through darkness (Job: 29:3) And do not be astonished at this, for a person sleeping here (in Babel) might see a dream in Spain...

It is also taught all the Torah from beginning to end, for it is said, And he taught me, and said unto me: *‘Let thy heart hold fast my words, keep my commandments and live’*, (Prov: 4.4) and it is also said, *When the converse of God was upon my tent.* (Job: 29.4)

As soon as it sees the light an angel approaches, slaps it on its mouth and causes it to forget⁹ all the Torah completely as it is said, *Sin coucheth at the door* (Gen: 4.7). It does not emerge from there before it is made to take an oath, as it is said, *That unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear* (Isa: 45.23). *‘That unto Me every knee shall bow’* refers to the day of dying of which it is said All they that go down to the dust shall kneel before Him; (Ps: 22.30) *‘Every tongue shall swear’* refers to the day of birth of which it is said, *He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart, who hath not taken My name in vain, and hath not sworn deceitfully.* (Ps: 24.4)

What is the nature of the oath that it is made to take? “Be righteous, and be never wicked; and even if all the world tells you, you are righteous, consider yourself wicked. Always bear in mind that the Holy One, blessed be He, is pure, that his ministers are pure and that the soul which He gave you is pure; if you preserve it in purity, well and good, but if not, I will take it away from you”

Rav Simlai’s drush or exposition is structured into a tripartite pericope:

- A. A description of the fetal anatomy within the mother’s womb, curled like a “pinkus” or tablet.
- B. B. The claim that a fetus has extra sensory perception (the ability to see from one end of the world to the other as recorded in Genesis Rabba regarding Primordial Adam) and the rhetorical claim that it can be naturally so since an adult dreams in a similar vein, being situated in one part of the world (Babylonia) and dream of himself simultaneously in Spain!
- C. The fetus is then taught the complete Torah in vivo!
- D. The hermeneutic midrashic move, that an angel slap it on the mouth on emerging from the womb (sin crouches at *the door*) presumably the door of the womb. The sin refers to the forgetting of the Torah, which the fetus knew prior to delivery.
- E. The baby is adjured to keep the torah on delivery via an oath in which the baby is warned about the duplicitous nature of people and flattery. To always consider one wicked and not listen to those who say one is righteous.

⁹ This pericope is taken metaphorically by most commentators exemplified as follows: “While the child is still in the womb, its soul is detached from its body. Consequently, the soul is still completely spiritual and is able to know and remember the entire Torah. When the time comes to depart the womb, the soul now enters into and bonds with the body. At this point, the soul is now limited by the physical [capacity of the brain]. As a result, it immediately forgets the Torah it learned... This is the meaning of the angel's slap on the mouth of the child. It signals the completion of the soul's bonding with the body... For the mouth is the organ of speech... As long as the child is in the womb, it has no power of speech. Only when it is time to be born does it receive a slap on the mouth in order to signal that the spiritual soul has completed its bonding to the physical body...” (Maharal : Gevurot Hashem 28).

The delivery of the fetus parallels the change in existential reality of emerging into a duplicitous world. But the delivery also results in a change of posture from the fetal position so detailed in the exposition into an implicit erect stature.

R. Simlai states that the complete Torah is taught to the fetus. Does he mean this to be taken literally? Surely not! The fact that this statement follows his remarks about dreaming... "Do not be astonished! (About the possibility of a fetus' visual acuity being cosmic) for the same thing happens in a dream!" R. Simlai seems to be setting the stage for the type of Torah learning that follows: in the same vein the fetus learns Torah ... *as in a dream*.

Now a dream according to the rabbis, works in ways that either reflect the past day's activities or prophecy future events. Here too the learning of the whole Torah is reflective in its dream like state of an idyllic world.

Forgetting.

In an act of cruelty the angel slaps the baby on the mouth thus causing him to forget all he had learned in utero. The obvious act of trauma sounds quite familiar to readers of analytic theory in which birth and perinatal trauma are assumed to have significant effects on later behavior, neurosis formation and overall mental health. In the trauma there is forgetting or as we would say after Freud, repression. The Torah the fetus learned is thus repressed through the trauma of the angel's act. The point of this Midrash seems to be that Torah learning remains throughout life an act of re-membering and recalling, that which was forgotten. The return of the repressed or the making of consciousness that which was unconscious is accomplished by the continuous act of Torah study, revealing that which had once been known pre-cognitively or in a dream-like state. Some patients with temporal lobe epilepsy and even normal people have experienced the phenomenon of *déjà vu* of a precognitive awareness of having familiarity with what is being said or seen for the first time ostensibly. In addition the type of learning is condemned to be frustrating since it will always fall short of the "complete Torah" experienced by the fetus in its idyllic state of the womb-yeshiva. Always there will remain a funerary quality to the retrieval of memory and torah-as-memory where one learns in order to access a lost memory or a lost dream, always feeling that sense of loss and inability to fully access that reality in its completeness.

R. Simlai's insistence on the very detailed account of fetal posture (which does not escape the commentators' critical eyes) also seems to suggest a parallel between the fetal vision and pre-cognition of Torah (the ability of the world from one end to the other and the learning of the entire corpus of Torah) on one hand with the very posture of the fetal position on the other. I say this because immediately after birth this position is lost forever as is the Torah knowledge as well as presumably the cosmic visual acuity.

In his drush cosmic acuity and Torah knowledge parallel the fetal posture. The corollary is that after birth loss of visual acuity and loss of all Torah skills are mirrored in the new erect posturing of the body now uncurled and the head erect as opposed between its knees.

Memory then seems to be encoded in body posture. Although there is no scientific data to support this claim of implicit memory being encoded anywhere but in the brain I am suggesting that this Midrash seems to parallel cognition and vision with posture. The very body posture, its coupled and doubled over, the head between the legs reminding one of a Rodin sculpture, elbows on knees etc. the graphic detail leaves little to the imagination, he gives us a very literal and anatomically plausible account. In this posture alone does the fetus possess these mythic powers. Once born all is lost, both the vision and the Torah. The sense of loss must be present in the retrieval of Torah throughout life as well. The edenic pleasure of the womb and its satisfying study location where all is taught and all is seen, the pleasure of such wisdom is forever gone and only in retrieval form can an adult get a sense of what

was lost and the idyllic form it took. The very head, once between the knees, facing the genitals¹⁰ is now alone on top of the shoulders (in celibate isolation) yet towering above the rest of the body. What an irony for the head is now empty of all knowledge and visual acuity!

When speaking of re-memorizing the past what kind of memory are we speaking of here?

Rosh Hashanah: Anticipatory memory

The fourth Perek of Mishnah Rosh Hashana lists the takkanot of Reb Yochanan Ben Zakkai and his radical institutions¹¹ in the post-Hurban Judaism of the first century C.E. The radical changes included rituals that were previously confined to the precincts of the temple in Jerusalem. Now, however, these innovations licensed the perpetuation of these rituals outside Jerusalem in the provinces hitherto prohibited. The rationale given by the editor of the Mishnah is “zecher lemikdash” in memorial to the temple rite. Reb Yochanan ben Zakkai was said to have instituted these rituals outside the purview of the temple restrictions precisely to perpetuate a memory of the temple itself ironically by permitting that, which had hitherto been taboo. The question is how could these rituals sponsor memory building effects if in fact the very permitting those rituals hitherto only permitted in the Temple would have the opposite effect. If one is now permitted to perform rituals hitherto taboo and keep the boundaries of the sacred surely this might allow one to forget the previously restrictive rites and blur the very distinction and maintenance of the sanctity of the memory of the temple cult! Surely if *zecher lemikdash* was the operating principle then better non-evocative rituals might have been chosen. The very rituals that were taboo prior to the destruction of the temple might be a poor index for stimulating and perpetuating memory. It seems that Reb Yochanan ben Zakkai was quite astute in preserving the notion of memory but at the same time revolutionizing Jewish practice for the future. The stakes were obvious quite high; the very future of pharisaic Judaism, yet he also had to balance this with the demands of the very conservative elements of authority as evidenced by his exchange with the elders of Baisra. (Talmud op cit).

The HAGGADAH: In memoriam

The other example of memory is *zecher lemikdash ke-Hillel*.¹² The binding of Matzah and Maror in the Seder (Haggadah) was instituted by Hillel the Elder during the late second temple period prior to the

¹⁰ As if to signify the close connection between cognition and eros. See also other references to the head between the knees in Talmud see Avoda Zara 17a.

¹¹ See the Takkanot of Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai JQR, New Ser, Vol 54, no. 4 (Apr 1964) 288-310.

¹² The Gemara (Pesachim 115a) presents the celebrated dispute whether Matza and Maror must be eaten together or separately. The Chachamim believed that the Matza and Maror should be eaten separately and Hillel believed that the Matza and Maror should be eaten together. The dispute hinges upon how to interpret the Pasuk (Bamidbar 9:11) that states, "With Matzot and Maror should one eat it," whether the word "and" implies that the Matza and Maror must be eaten together. (We have merely presented a straightforward explanation of this dispute; a careful examination of Pesachim 115a, Tosafot ad. loc. s.v. Ella Amar Rav Ashi, and Rambam Hilchot Chametz Umatza 8:6-8 reveals more layers of interpretation.) The Rishonim dispute whether Hillel would wrap the Korban Pesach together with the Matza and Maror (Rashi Pesachim 115a s.v. Shehaya and Rashbam ad. loc. s.v. Korchan) or eat the Korban Pesach separate from the Matza and Maror (Rambam Hilchot Chametz Umatza 8:6-7). This dispute accounts for the variations in the text of Zecher Le-Mikdash Ke-Hillel that we recite before eating the Korech (see Baer Heitev 475:9 and Mishnah Berurah 475:21). Some versions state, "He would wrap Matza and Maror and eat then together," in accordance with the Rambam's view. Other versions state, "He would wrap Pesach, Matza, and Maror and eat them together", following the view of Rashi and the Rashbam. The Gemara concludes that since the dispute between Hillel and the Chachamim has not been resolved, we should accommodate both opinions. Hence, we should first recite the Berachot on Matza and eat the Matza, then bless on the Maror and eat it, and then eat the Matza and Maror together Zecher Lemikdash Kehillel (to

Destruction. It seems that Hillel was enacting a ritual in anticipation of the destruction whereby future generations might remember the Temple although he instituted it ahead of the very destruction. Unlike the takkanot of Reb Yochanan that were instituted after the destruction Hillel was cognizant of the end of an era and initiated this custom 100 years ahead of his disciple.¹³

In the three examples cited memory plays different roles. In the fetal example it seems memory is the act of retrieval through Torah learning. The Torah acts as a cipher to stimulate memory and retrieval of that which was lost or at least pre-cognitively acquired in a dream-like state. In the Yochanan Ben Zakkai case, memory is the ruse by which new laws were enacted, as if memory (zecher lemikdash) was a foil and rationalization and justification for enactments that might otherwise have been too controversial to pass through. Memory served as the justification despite the ironic fact that once passed these takkanot served to make people forget the temple since the taboo was now eviscerated and replaced with the very same rituals hitherto forbidden. In the last case memory served as a pure memorial function. Hillel foresaw the end and wished to perpetuate a memorial ritual that would allow people to remember the temple precisely because his name would be forever associated with this innovative ritual that hitherto had not been a Temple-restricted rite.

For all three texts however memory served history. The Rabbis believed that history has a purpose: it will end with the messianic era of universal peace when all nations will recognize the sovereignty of one God. To the biblical writer, all history is a working out of God's purpose for the world. History, then, is directed from above. To remember, therefore, is a religious imperative. That is quite a heavy burden for history to carry. Modern historians like Yerushalmi do not accept these premises. History has no ultimate purpose – it is a record of human activities with no discernable interference from cosmic forces. There is no apocalyptic end to history, nor will a deus ex machina appear to solve the world's conflicts. The word Zachor well elucidated by Yerushalmi has been eviscerated of its former biblical meaning (regarding the imperative to destroy the tribe of Amalek and to always remember) and replaced with Jewish cultural-historical memory. Eliyahu Stern writes that memory is far more powerful than history and in clinical practice this is well born out. Patients recalling and recounting of the past usually differs from the facts of the past vastly. In the gap between reality and perception the clinician (like the midrashist) weaves his craft, finding the fault lines where pathology leaks in and planning the treatment accordingly:

There is a beautiful vignette told by Jorge Luis Borges, about a man named Funes whose life revolved around remembering. After many years of remembering everything, he finally “determined to reduce all of his experiences to some seventy thousand recollections, which he would later define numerically. Two considerations dissuaded him: the thought that the task was interminable and the thought that it was useless.”

Funes' predicament points to just how all-consuming but ultimately unfulfilling memories can become. The obsession with memory is something all of us relate to. As the historian Y.H. Yerushalmi, author of Zachor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory, points out, the Hebrew word zachor appears in the Bible no less than 169 times.

Memory to be sure is not history. It is far more powerful, leaping over time periods and generating meaning from disparate human experiences and events. It collapses time. Many of us grew up in homes where the stories of Auschwitz and Egypt were historically intertwined. Pharaoh and Hitler were synonymous. For many, the lines between Yom Hashoah and Passover were a little blurry.¹⁴

In the very space between historical fact and recall the clinician understands the tropes and twists the patient has made in interpreting the past. All this takes place in memory. But memory fades, resentments intervene, become convenient, and memory reshapes itself. In this reshaping the listener or reader must become aware of the changes.

remember the practice in the Beit Hamikdash according to Hillel). The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 475:1) codifies the Gemara's conclusion.

¹³ T.B. Pesachim 116a: Rashi “Zecher”

¹⁴ Quoted by Eliyahu Stern

The three typologies of memory, what I shall call retrieval, anticipatory and memorial, are not unique to rabbinic thought. Augustine in his *Confessions* discusses the imagistic nature of memory, how knowledge is sometimes acquired without images, and the relationship of memory to mind. His novel contribution lies in his claim that human beings can only access God through memory. Augustine claims to be able to find God by turning inward and reflecting on his own memory. The faculty of memory is much more than the ability to re-member or the act of recall. It encompasses all cognitive capacities. We struggle in modern medicine with those patients who have aphasia versus those with dementia. Loss of recall in the late stages of dementia includes aphasia and some aphasics have loss of recall.¹⁵ It is really difficult to tease out how much is memory loss and how much is affected by language difficulty. Do patients who suffer from receptive aphasia and live without language comprehension have memory?¹⁶ Do children have cognitive abilities prior to language acquisition has long been a debate.

For Augustine memory is the repository of a person's experiences and knowledge. It includes sensations and perceptions, imaginations and dreams, hopes and fears, emotions and awareness of self. Memory is the locus of personal identity, and the focal point of any sense of continuity. In addition to memory of sense perceptions, real or imagined, he also lists memory of emotions and agrees they can be remembered in different ways than they had been experienced.¹⁷ The memory of an emotion does not bring with it the experience of the emotion just like physical pain. In the relationship between memory and mind Augustine claims that memory is part of the soul which enables us to have knowledge even of God. Memory is paradoxical in that it is both a part of the self and at the same time constitutive of that very entity of which it is a part.

For Augustine, true to his Platonic roots, there is truth or the immanence of things, ordinary true things, and then there is that which makes them true or Truth. We have only access to the truth and are supposed to be able to figure out the truth i.e. reality is intelligible. However there are aspects of knowledge beyond our ken, too exalted for us to access. Here the objects are incarnational as the logos or Truth. To know these things requires something beyond ordinary natural abilities. Here comes the need for divine assistance or faith. Without such mediation, memory or mind would not work. Knowledge of God has the same paradoxical elements. Knowledge of God must be representational. Memory is far too circumscribed to contain God. On the other hand it is impossible to represent God.

God is within the mind but not identical with the mind. Augustine is then committed to the paradoxical position of knowing he has knowledge and memory of God that he can never really know.

¹⁵ Indeed there is a rare dementing process named primary *progressive aphasia*. See Northwestern University neurophysiology faculty work on this issue. Power, J.M., Oh, M.M. and Disterhoft, J.F. (2001) Metrifonate decreases sI (AHP) in CA1 pyramidal neurons in vitro. *J. Neurophysiol.*85: 319-322. And www.brain.northwestern.edu/ppa/handbook.html.

Moyer, J.R. Jr., Power, J.M., Thompson, L.T. and Disterhoft, J.F. (2000) Increased excitability of aged rabbit CA1 neurons after trace eye blink conditioning. *J. Neurosci* 20: 5476-5482.

Weiss, C., Preston, A.R., Oh, M.M., Schwarz, R.D., Welty, D. and Disterhoft, J.F. (2000) The M1 muscarinic agonist CI-1017 facilitates trace eyeblink conditioning in aging rabbits and increases the excitability of CA1 pyramidal neurons. *J. Neurosci* 20: 783-790.

Regarding the prescience of animals see Griffin, Donald R, (1992) *Thought's ego in Augustine and Descartes*. Chicago. U of C Press.

¹⁶ What used to be called Wernicke's aphasia.

¹⁷ *Confessions* #10.

THE IMAGINATIVE FACULTY and Memory

This kind of paradoxical knowledge is also seen within my own tradition. Within the history of Jewish philosophy the most celebrated parallel scholar to Augustine was Moses Maimonides. Maimonides speaks of the imaginative faculty as the primary instrument through which one may achieve the level of prophecy:

You know, too, the actions of the imaginative faculty that are in its nature, such as retaining things perceived by the senses, combining these things, and imitating them. And you know that its greatest and noblest action takes place only when the senses rest and do not perform their actions. It is then that a certain overflow overflows to this faculty according to its disposition, and it is the cause of veridical dreams. This same overflow is the cause of the prophecy. (*Guide of the Perplexed*, II, 36)

Man's ability to see Divine visions stems from his imaginative faculty. This is a mixed blessing, for the imagination, as we have already mentioned, is liable to deceive a person, and thus put all prophetic vision that is based upon it into the category of "deceptive visions." [3]

In the mystical tradition the distrust of the intellect becomes more pronounced. Self-deception, especially as applied to religious knowledge and "truth" claims comes to the fore in Hassidism especially in the mystical texts of Rabbi Nachman. Here too the paradoxical nature of knowledge and the very notion of the divine is encoded in memory. The question becomes false memory versus true memory. Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav whose teachings anticipated the modern era yet were prophetic in many areas such as the unconscious despite being written 100 years before Freud. In the following teaching he discusses memory and the imagination but differently from the position taken by Augustine as well as Maimonides. In teaching no. 54 in *Likutei Moharan Kama* he opens with the demand that falls upon every individual always to remember the world-to-come (sect. 1), that is to say, to live with the constant awareness of the existence of the world-to-come. This awareness, according to R. Nachman, brings a person to engage in a continual dialogue with God, "whereby he must deepen his thoughts on the matter and enhance his insight, and understand the specific allusions in thoughts, words, and actions to that day which God has prepared for him" (sect. 2). We are dealing here with the ability to reflect upon the world, and understand that it is merely the external expression of an inner world, to which a person must be attuned. The thoughts that come to man, the words spoken and the actions taken around him are but garments and allusions that God sends to man and expects that he be attentive to.

R. Nachman explains that in order to preserve this memory and maintain this awareness, a person must be careful not to fall into the aspect of "the evil eye" (sect. 4), which is "the death of the heart" that leads to forgetting. We are dealing here with a type of "blindness," insensitivity and failure to listen. "I am asleep, but my heart is awake," cries the loved one in *Song of Songs*, and thus she leaves a window open so that she may hear her lover's knocking even when she is asleep. When "the heart is dead," however, the lover is forgotten, and all the knocking and all the allusions that He plants in man's thoughts, words, and actions, are not heard. We are dealing here with deafness versus listening, openness versus imperviousness, or in the words of R. Nachman, remembering versus forgetting! Seeing and reflecting upon God's actions in the world bring joy: "Whoever is wise, let them consider these things, and let them observe the loving acts of the Lord" (*Ps*: 107:43). This is "the good eye" that looks and listens as opposed to "the evil eye" that is closed to the sounds and sights that God prepares for man.

R. Nachman continues, spelling out that the way to protect oneself from falling from "the good eye" to "the evil eye" is by protecting the eye from "the imaginative faculty." In order to understand the significance of this idea, let us start with the position of the Maimonides.

The imaginative faculty – is the name of the faculty found in animals, or [at least] in some of them, and in man as is well known, by which he imagines everything in his heart, whether it exists or not. He may imagine something that he had already perceived through his senses as he had perceived it, e.g., a person who imagines a person or some other existing thing that he had seen. Or he may put together things which exist separately and combine them in his imagination, e.g., a person who imagines a person, who, in addition to his natural organs, has two wings, and two eyes in his head and two eyes at the back of his neck, and who reaches the sphere of the moon, and other such impossibilities. This faculty is active when a person is awake and when he is asleep, for dreams are also imaginary, say the philosophers. For [the imagination] is stronger during sleep, for then [a person] rests from the senses that vex him with their actions while he is awake. (*Perush ha-Milot ha-Zarot*, letter 'dalet')

According to the accepted philosophical understanding, the imaginative faculty is found in man and in animals, or at least in some of them. Through the faculty of imagination, one can imagine both that which actually exists and that which does not exist, both that which one has already perceived through his senses and that which one has not. As such, argues R. Nachman, the imagination is liable to be even worse than blindness. For a blind person is fully aware that he does not see, whereas one who imagines something, who sets his eyes upon the horizon and sees a certain sight, is unaware that it is his imagination that created what he is seeing.

R. Nachman himself adds that the imaginative faculty is the opposite of intelligence: "For you loathe intelligence...." This loathing of intelligence causes a person to fall under the control of the imaginative faculty. Intelligence, maintains R. Nachman, is the instrument that allows man to protect himself from the schemes of the imaginative faculty. For this reason, R. Nachman sees the imaginative faculty's taking control of man as a lowering of man to the level of the beast, void of reason, guided solely by the faculty of the imagination.

Rabbinic commentators of the philosophical school¹⁸ note that the prophecy of Moses that is a hundred per cent "trustworthy" and the prophecy of the rest of the prophets, the truth of which is in doubt, because they are based on the imaginative faculty. It follows that Moses' prophecy gave rise to the eternal Torah, the standing and authority of which is undoubtedly different from all other prophetic works, holy as they may be.

Maimonides disagrees and writes as follows:

The second notion consists in making known to us the fact that the prophets consider as true that which comes to them from God in a prophetic revelation. For it should not be thought that what they hear or what appears to them in a parable is not certain or is commingled with illusion just because it comes about in a dream and in a vision, as we have made clear, and through the intermediary of the imaginative faculty. Accordingly, [Scripture] wished to make known to us that all that is seen by a prophet in a vision of prophesy is, in the opinion of the prophet, a certain truth, that the prophet has no doubts in any way concerning anything in it, and that in his opinion its status is the same as that of all existent things that are apprehended through the senses or through the intellect. (*Guide of the Perplexed*, III, 24)

¹⁸ Including Reb Nissin Gironi. Drashot haRan 8.

Maimonides then, does not view the imaginative faculty as introducing any doubts about the certainty and truth of prophecy. From the perspective of the prophet, the certainty of a prophetic vision, even though it is based on the faculty of imagination, is as strong as the certainty of that which is apprehended through the senses or the intellect. The foundations of this approach may be found already among the pre-Socratic philosophers, (Xenon and others); even questions the certainty of what is known through the senses, the intellect remaining the sole source of certainty – "I think; therefore I am." This is not the place for further discussion as to the role of epistemology in religious thought however I brought it to your attention to make us all aware that our task in memory retrieval is touched by many different facets including imagination and what used to be called prophecy.

Unlike the medieval philosophers, R. Nachman does not see the problem of the imaginative faculty solely in the context of the ideas of truth and falsehood, but also in the context of the ideas of good and bad. The sinful thoughts that come to man, his lusts, whether for illicit sexual relations, or for food, or for money, come to man from the imaginative faculty, which paints before him the longed for and craved object. Man's imagination can elevate him to divine visions, but it can also bring him down to the level of the lowest beast.¹⁹ Imagination for Reb Nachman as well as other Hassidic masters seems to be a faculty of soul that can be put to good or bad use.

Let me end with a quote from Reb Shlomo Carlebach:²⁰

...The truth is you cannot be a prophet without the utmost, Unbelievable, most infinite **imagination**. A person who has no imagination can never be a prophet. You can be the holiest man in the world, but if you don't have any imagination - doesn't work. What is really a holy soul? Someone who has great imagination. Take Reb Nachman - just to make up the story of the seven beggars²¹ takes the holiest imagination in the world. Or the story of the master of prayer. Way out imagination, right? What is the difference, I'm not knocking it, between the great holy rabbis who only knew gemora and those who were the great kabbalists? Imagination. The more your imagination works, the closer you feel to the secrets of the world. The real truth is that to learn gemora properly you also need imagination the most way out imagination you can put in every word of the gemora. But this is already if you are on the level, because then it becomes also a secret. The holiness of the soul is really the holiness of imagination. What is a person who is really tied onto this world imagining? What is the whole thing of believing in the Messiah or not believing in the Messiah? It is a question of imagination, right? A person says, listen, I see the world. People believe in money, people believe in war. You will tell me that suddenly some day the Messiah is coming and on a donkey! - he'll blow a little trumpet, the whole world will come running, and everybody will say, ich ves, "Shalom Alehem!" It's crazy! It's a question of imagination. If you have good imagination why not? That's all there is to it. Why not?

...Why are we dreaming at night? Because at night the only thing which we have is imagination. And the greatest vessel for dreams

¹⁹ R. Yehuda Ha-Levi describes how the *Chasid* uses his imaginative faculty to comprehend "the spiritual forms that come in place of the pictures that the vital soul paints for itself by way of the imaginative faculty" (*Sefer ha-Kuzari*, V, 12).

²⁰ San Francisco, Iyar 5732 1972. Transcribed by Steven Maimes

²¹ See The Stories of Reb Nachman translated by Aryeh Kaplan

is imagination. Reb Nachman says the most way out thing -- the strongest imagination that you need is to believe that G-d created heaven and earth, and to believe that you really need imagination.

You look at the world and you see a solid world, you need the strongest and holiness imagination that G-d created heaven and earth. Reb Nachman says that all the holy tzaddikim, all the holy people, they had this strong imagination. And if you have this tremendous imagination not only can you receive dreams but you can interpret dreams and even uplift someone else's dreams.

I end with this quotation since I believe that we can also apply his thoughts to memory and its access. Our greatest difficulty is not minimized rather it is placed highest on the priority list. To truly make use of imagination and apply it to the text (and I would add to the texts of our lives and their traumas), we need faith. And the faith we need paradoxically demands the very imagination we think is imaginary which is ultimate faith in a Higher Power. This for Reb Nachman is placed at the top of the list. Without this faith nothing works. He does not shy away from validating the immense leap this demands (remind you of Kierkegaard?).

It is not about truth or falsehood, maybe not even about good or bad, but for me it is about access to the deepest levels of my being and healing. The texts I study provide me a mirror of myself and the sacred texts I study provide me a mirror of my soul. I invite you my patients along this journey we take together on life's path and healing.

We have crossed the boundaries of science mythology psychology and religion, mysticism and faith. That is because the notion of implicit memory and trauma remains refractory to scientific observation as yet and we must make use of other traditions in our search for meaning in our suffering. How has this helped you and me? Our recovery from our traumas and the healing that must take place for the physical body to heal MUST include such faith. Faith then becomes a muscle, which we must exercise as much as we do our physical muscles in order to stay in shape. Our physical healing and what we offer in our clinic must be accompanied by your getting in shape spiritually for true and lasting healing to take place. Let the work begin!