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Evolution of «memory studies»: between psychology and sociology

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Purpose

- The purpose of the article is to research the evolution trajectory of the scientific understanding of "memory" from a purely psychological interpretation of the phenomenon to a socio-psychological concept (group memory), to a broad sociological theory (socio-cultural and historical memory) and attempts to return to the psychological component of social memory research to a new level. It is also aimed to show how dialectical interaction of sociology and psychology in the interdisciplinary field of memory studies forms the basis of the heuristic potential of this modern humanities research.

Two stages of memory studies evolution


1. The counter-movement of psychology and sociology in the evolution of memory studies in the first half of the twentieth century.
2. Psychological turn of memory studies since the second half of the XX century.

The counter-movement of psychology and sociology in the evolution of memory studies in the first half of the twentieth century

- «Philosophy of life» Henri Bergson (1859-1941)
 - «Fear of remembering» Pierre Jean (1859-1947)
 - «Psychology of masses» of J.-G. de Tard (1843-1904)
 - «Collective psychology» L. S. Vygotsky (1896-1934) and A. R. Luria (1902-1977)
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- The fundamental difference between astronomical and social time of Emil Durkheim (1858-1917)
 - Idea of qualitative character of social time. P. Sorokin (1889-1968) and R. Merton (1910-2003)
 - «The Social framework of memory» of Maurice Halbwaks (1877-1945)



Psychological turn of memory studies since the second half of the XX century

- The biographical method and oral history of Paul Thompson (1935)
 - «Places of memory» of Pierre Nora (1931)
 - «Temporal mode» of Aleida Assman (1947)
 - «Public history»
-
- Idea of social memory as the most important mechanism of the natural time organization of Anthony Giddens (1938)
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Soviet school of memory studies

If the European "memory boom" the metaphor of individual memory is used to explain the symbolic side of the life of collectives, then in Russian Soviet thought the metaphor of social memory as a kind of mega computer, library, or artificial intelligence was popular.

Yu. M. Lotman (1922-1993)

V.A.Kolevatorov (1932)

Ya.K. Rebane

Conclusions

- The evolution of "memory studies" is a consistent deployment of the program of interdisciplinary synthesis, which initially developed on the basis of the counter steps of sociologists and psychologists to understand the problems of temporality and memory and led in the first half of the XX century to the inclusion of specialists in other disciplines, primarily historians, and the creation of the conceptual apparatus of memory studies. At the second stage of this evolution, starting from the second half of the XX century, there is a psychological turn of memory studies, which is implemented in different ways in national scientific traditions. The psychological turn of memory studies is closely related to the spread of the biographical method in the humanities (including oral history), the achievement use of German and French psychoanalysis and mnemonics for the development of theoretical and applied memory studies.
- In general, this direction of the memory studies evolution can be evaluated ambivalently. On the one hand, it is a manifestation of the general humanization of knowledge and development of scientific interest in a human. On the other hand, in the psychologization of memory studies, one can see the danger of erasing subject-object relations in the process of cognition and closing them in an endlessly repeating hermeneutic circle. We see the way out in the development of a broad program of interdisciplinary research, announced at the first stage of the memory studies evolution, and continued by the Soviet school of cultural studies.

Thank you for your attention!

