

## THE MORAL BURDEN OF MEMORY: THE ROLE OF NATIONAL NARRATIVES IN DEMOCRACY BUILDING

This essay is a meditation on memory and democracy. I will argue that democracy as a way of life is conditioned upon how well a community remembers its past. The concept of democracy as a way of life, as distinct from a particular form of governance, has its origins in the political philosophy of John Dewey. I will approach this issue in a somewhat roundabout manner. In the first part, I will examine a series of Dewey's writings from the early 1920s that resulted from his visit of the newly established Republic of Turkey. I contend that the serious shortcomings in Dewey's analysis of Turkish state nation-building highlight deficiencies in his otherwise laudable and nuanced democratic theory. In the second part, I provide a more sustained analysis of the role of collective memory within a community, especially one that aspires to a democratic way of life. I will then conclude with a few reflections upon issues arising from Turkish collective memory in relation with the Armenian Genocide.

### I.

The impetus for this part of my essay derives from John Dewey's writings in the early 1920s that had their origins in his travels to Turkey. Dewey had accepted an invitation from Mustafa Kemal (later known as Atatürk), the president of the newly proclaimed Republic of Turkey, to visit the country for the purpose of studying the nascent public education system. He was asked to prepare a report of recommendations setting out the direction the Ministry of Public Instruction was to take in building a secular public education system, a system to be built basically from scratch. This was an attractive proposition for Dewey, for he had long struggled in the educational reform movement in the United States but given its local and decentralized character, reform was a slow and piecemeal process. Now he was given an opportunity to make proposals that could be implemented on a systematic nation-wide basis.

Dewey's 3-month trip to Turkey, including visits to Istanbul, Bursa, Ankara, and the rural countryside of Anatolia, produced four short articles for the *New Republic* and two reports to the Turkish ministry of education. Dewey's educational project in

Turkey was clearly in harmony with his educational philosophy in the States. Public education was to prepare citizens to function in a democratic nation-state. In the introduction to his final report he writes: "Unfortunately, there is no difficulty in stating the main end to be secured by the educational system of Turkey. It is the development of Turkey as a vital, independent, and lay republic in full membership in the circle of civilized states" (MW15 275)<sup>1</sup>. Though he doesn't use the word "democracy" here, later in the same report he does emphasize the need to reject methods of instruction and discipline that impede the development of democratic habits: "Methods of dictation, arbitrary control and mechanical obedience do not fit pupils to be citizens in a democracy" (MW15 294). Dewey clearly laid out the goals for public education. These

<sup>1</sup> I employ the standard citation format for all references to John Dewey's writings. The complete works of Dewey are published in three sets: *The Early Works, 1882-1898* (cited EW followed by volume number and page number); *The Middle Works of John Dewey, 1899-1924* (cited MW); *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1925-1953* (cited LW). See Works Cited for full bibliographic reference.

goals were in harmony with his educational writings of the previous decade, especially *Democracy and Education* (1916). Dewey spells out the following three main tasks for these new schools:

Schools must (1) form proper political habits and ideas; (2) foster the various forms of economic and commercial skill and ability; (3) develop the traits and dispositions of character, intellectual and moral, which fit men and women for self-government, economic self-support and industrial progress... To realize these ends, the mass of citizens must be educated for intellectual participation in the political, economic, and cultural growth of the country, and not simply certain leaders. (MW15 275)

Dewey recommends that schools should have a broader social function than merely training “pupils in academic subjects.” They must serve as “centers of community life” (MW15 275). As such schools will play a central role in fostering democracy as a way of life.

In July and August of 1924, John Dewey and his wife Alice traveled extensively in the rural countryside around Ankara and ventured further into the Anatolian plateau. Ten years of war and social conflict had taken a heavy toll on these lands. The economic and agricultural needs of the rural towns and villages were great and schools would serve the vital needs of these communities. Besides training students in the skills and habits needed for economic growth, schools were to serve as community centers to gather and disseminate agricultural, industrial and hygienic information and advice. In addition, all schools were to be equipped with libraries that would serve the needs of both the students and the surrounding communities. Dewey called for an active “campaign at the beginning to take books into the homes of the town until the people form the habit of coming for them” (MW15 279). The goal was to promote and strengthen the reading habits of adults and thereby reinforce the reading habits of school children.

At first blush, these school-community centers have a striking resemblance to the functions of settlement houses, as chronicled in the work and writings of Jane Addams. These Turkish centers would serve as the rural equivalent of Hull House. Dewey argues that these schools and community centers must be adapted to the local circumstances of their communities. He sees a great danger in an overly centralized educational system that would impose a uniformity of curriculum that would stifle “local interest and initiative” and “prevent local communities” from “taking the responsibilities which they should take” (MW15 280). A system needs to be developed that is “flexibly adapted to the varying needs of different localities, urban, rural, maritime, and different types of rural communities, different environments and different industries, such as pastoral, grain-growing, cotton, fruit, etc.” (MW15 280). Yet there is a glaring omission in the diversity that seems to be celebrated here. While there is a passing reference to the need to teach local geography and history, there is no mention of the ethnic and religious diversity of these communities. Granted that as a result of the genocide, massacres and population exchanges, there were no Armenians (except “hidden Armenians”) or Greeks left in Turkey aside from those in Constantinople, there were still significant numbers of other minorities, including Kurds, Alevis, Ezidis, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Laz, Caferis, Roma, Circassians and Jews. Reading Dewey’s writings on Turkey give one the impression that the Turkish state consisted of ethnically and religiously homogenous communities. It is as if we had Hull House minus the immigrants. True, Dewey was in Turkey for less than three months and may have found it difficult to penetrate into the nationalist ethos of the new republic, an ethos that emphasized unified Turkishness over diversity, yet it is still striking how blind this report is to the presence of minorities. One could attribute this to a degree of self-censorship, for we must re-

member that the intended audience for this report was the Ministry of Education.<sup>2</sup>

Let me probe this issue a little further. Dewey was certainly aware of the heightened sense of patriotic nationalism that suffused the life of the Turkish Republic. The new republic had been proclaimed less than 8 months earlier. Independence was achieved after a hard-fought and costly war against British, French and especially Greek occupying armies. But the process of nation-building had begun much earlier. In the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the intellectual and political stirrings of Turkish nationalism were taking place under the centuries-old decaying socio-political structure of the ethnically and culturally diverse Ottoman Empire. The 100-year long dismemberment of this Empire came to a head in the Balkan Wars of 1912 and the First World War. Dewey was certainly not ignorant of the phenomenon of the rise of the nation-state in the Modern era. In his *Ethics*, he writes of this phenomenon:

The most characteristic political phenomenon of recent centuries is the development of national states. ... Internally they presuppose or aim at a certain unity of culture, and a system of common laws supported, usually, by some sort of representative government. The gradual substitution of the word "nation" for other terms which designate supreme political units implies, if not actual popular participation in government, at least a personal attachment and loyalty which had previously been

found only among the members of small city-states. (LW7 367)

The above could certainly characterize the developments that took place in the transition from the Ottoman Empire, beginning with the 1908 restoration of the Ottoman Constitution with its introduction of parliamentary government and restrictions on the powers of the Sultan, to the eventual abolition of the Sultanate and Caliphate prior to the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923.

In the same pages, Dewey goes on to discuss "a certain state of mind" or "social consciousness" that arises in the citizenry of newly emerging nation-states. There is a heightened sense of loyalty and belief in "the intrinsic excellence" of the national mission. Dewey is careful to point out that there are both positive and negative moral consequences to this new social consciousness. On the positive side, the effect is "to widen the sense of social unity, to deepen the civic sense and to generate public spirit, which may be defined as interest in the affairs of the community as if they were one's own concern" (LW7 368). The negative effects are characterized by "increased exclusiveness, by suspicion, fear, jealousy, often hatred, of other nations..." Dewey concludes: "Public spirit is often converted into a belief in the inherent superiority of all significant virtues of one's nation; the native egoism of individuals is swollen to identify itself with an entity designated *the "State"* (LW7 368). Much of the rest of the discussion in this section of the *Ethics* focuses on the negative effects of patriotism as they foster wars between nations. What is striking here and is relevant for my concern, is Dewey's neglect of the effect of this new social consciousness on diverse communities within the geographical boundaries of these new nation-states. He does in passing mention that for the United States, this translates into the belief that any belief that smacks of "internationalism" is deemed unpatriotic and not a hundred-per-cent American.

<sup>2</sup>Under Kemalism community-based educational institutions were developed less than a decade later. First in 1932 with the development of People's Houses in towns and later in 1937 with Village Institutes in the more rural areas of the republic. While both contributed in positive ways to improvements in literacy and economic development, they also were used to suppress minorities and elevate a mono-cultural Turkishness. See Alexandros Lamprou, *Nation-Building in Modern Turkey: The 'People's Houses', the State and the Citizen*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2015.

In an earlier essay from 1916 entitled, “Nationalizing Education,” Dewey makes a similar point. Here he recognizes a genuine American nationalism as an internationalism, by which he means our nation is “itself complex and compound. Strictly speaking it is interracial and international in its make-up. It is composed of a multitude of peoples speaking different tongues, inheriting diverse traditions, cherishing varying ideals of life. This fact is basic to *our* nationalism as distinct from that of other peoples.” He concludes that “our unity cannot be a homogeneous thing like that of the separate states of Europe . . .” (MW10 204). Not only is this last claim false of the Europe of 1916, I would venture to say that it is false of Europe today, evidence, the ethnic and regional diversity found in countries such as Spain, Belgium or the failed cultural assimilation of Muslim minorities in much of Western Europe. What is abundantly clear, is Dewey’s failure to recognize the diversity that characterized the Turkish nation-state in 1924. The great irony is that when these words were written in 1916, a systematic campaign of “race extermination,” to use American Ambassador Henry Morgenthau’s term, against the Ottoman state’s Armenian population had been taking place for over a year. Within a year and a half, over a million Armenians had perished. This was Turkey’s first step in its nationalist project of homogenizing its nation-state, a process that continued well into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

John Dewey met with numerous officials and groups of teachers during his visit to Turkey in 1924. He visited schools in many villages and towns but because it was summer he was unable to visit schools while they were in session. Of particular importance to my concerns was one particular individual that he met in Ankara, Ziya Gökalp (1876 – 1924). Gökalp was a deputy in the Grand National Assembly, chaired the Official Committee on Writing and Translation, and served on the Committee on Education which was responsible for developing new curriculum and textbooks for the national

school system. He was a philosopher, sociologist, poet and popular newspaper columnist, professor at Darülfünun University (now Istanbul University). His writings on Turkish nationalism and Turkish culture laid the foundation for the modern Turkish state founded by Atatürk. Gökalp is a highly celebrated yet controversial figure in Turkish history. The controversy stems from the fact that he was a central figure in the Armenian Genocide. A long-time member of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), Gökalp became a member of its Central Committee in 1911 and remained so until 1918 when the party was dissolved upon Turkey’s defeat in the war. Under the leadership of Talaat, Enver and Jemal Pasha, the CUP carried out the Armenian Genocide of 1915 to 1918. Gökalp was arrested by the successor Ottoman government at the end of the war and placed on trial for the massacres. He denied that any massacres had taken place but stated that he approved of the deportations of the Armenians. He was convicted and imprisoned but soon was transferred into British custody on Malta. He was later released in a prisoner exchange arranged by Mustafa Kemal and soon found himself back in the midst of Turkish nation-building.

Gökalp’s influential nationalist theories are found in his most important book, *The Principles of Turkism* published in 1923. The nation was to be defined in linguistic and religious terms. The Turkish nation was defined as consisting of those people who spoke Turkish or close variants of the language and practiced Islam. This was to be a modern Islam divested of impure elements adapted from more traditional non-Turkic societies (e.g., Arabic tribes). In addition, the Turks shared a common history and culture dating back thousands of years. Gökalp propagated the need for a foundational history of the Turkic people. This was a pre-Islamic history that identified and glorified the “Great Man,” the warriors and sages of the past such as Attila, Genghis Khan, Timur Babur and Süleyman the Magnificent. This “Golden Lost Age” was part of a mythic

history that was to have pedagogical value for the inculcation of values in the youth of the new nation. How this has come to be worked out in the educational curriculum of the Turkish state is beyond the scope of this article. Studies of Turkish history textbooks evidence the highly selective telling of the story of the Turkish people. Other cultures and peoples are downplayed or completely ignored. Needless to say, textbooks for decades made no mention of the Armenians and Armenian Genocide but in recent years have adopted the denialist account that portrays Armenians as “treacherous” and “in revolt,” thus requiring relocation of this traitorous element to areas away from the frontlines. In addition, whole periods of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman history are ignored or selectively described because they portray the decline of the Ottoman state.

In a series of four articles published in the *New Republic* subsequent to his visit to Turkey, Dewey discusses many of the issues facing the new republic. He evidently was keeping up with the events as they were unfolding in Turkey. It is also clear that his encounters with the nationalist leaders and intellectuals were coloring his views on these events. In the first of these articles analyzing the recent abolition of the Caliphate, Dewey applauds the move as reflective of a modern state’s need to separate church and state. He accepts the nationalist’s view that the Caliphate was often used as a tool by Europeans to manipulate the internal affairs of the Ottoman state. He further argues that this is not just the view of liberal “enlightened Turks” but is true of the peasants of the interior. Dewey claims: The succession of wars has left what remains of Turkey – for the first time in four centuries a homogenous and compact people – with a new spirit, a spirit which has touched even remote peasants. They wish above all a free and independent Turkey; they are nationalists to the extreme; and they are convinced that a free Turkey and a modernized Turkey are one and the same. (MW15 131)

One would have a hard time convincing the Kurdish peasants of Dersim, who a decade later would be massacred by Turkish troops, that this “new spirit” of Turkish nationalism was benign. Dewey had claimed in this same article that the “baleful fusion of race, religion and politics” was the origin of the massacres that took place in the Near East. This was all the more reason for Turkey to separate religion from government, for this would serve to “establish the rule of tolerance and liberty.” He concludes that, “Nationalism has its evils, but its loyalties are at least less dreadful than those of dogmatic religious differences” (MW15 132). I do not know how one is to judge such a claim today, given the horrors perpetrated by both authoritarian nationalist and Islamist movements in the Middle East. Who is “less dreadful,” Bashar al-Assad or the Islamic State?

Certainly for Turkey of the last hundred years, the nationalist project was far from benign. The nationalist Turkification of all the inhabitants of Anatolia has generated more evil than “dogmatic religious differences” had ever done. Kurds and Turks both practice Islam but in this case the loyalties of nationalism turned out to be more dreadful than those of dogmatic religion. Kurds have suffered not primarily on the basis of religion but on the basis of ethnicity, an ethnicity rejected by the Turkish nationalist project.

In the two of the remaining *New Republic* articles Dewey takes up a number of problems facing the new Turkish Republic including the negative reaction of the West to the closing of foreign, in particular American and French schools in Turkey. One of these articles entitled, “The Turkish Tragedy” begins with a description of the destruction Dewey had witnessed in the city of Bursa, “the seat of Ottoman power before the capture of Constantinople.” He describes the closed houses and shops of the Greeks and Armenians and the ruins of Turkish buildings destroyed by the retreating Greek army. He remarks that the separating of these popu-

lations is “the only hope for the avoidance of future atrocities” (MW15 140). Words such as these underlie the harsh geo-political calculations that have been used to justify acts of ethnic cleansing perpetrated numerous times over the last hundred years. Dewey continues his melancholic description of the Brusa landscape but interrupts his narrative to highlight one bright spot, the Jewish quarter: “We passed through the Jewish quarter, and found the Jews still in possession of their homes and property, the more flourishing perhaps because of the total absence of their former commercial competitors, the Greeks and Armenians.” He concludes, “Happy the minority which has had no Christian nation to protect it” (MW15 140). This is evidence for Dewey, in line with the Turkish nationalist claims, for the thesis that it was as a result of foreign meddling on the part of the Christian allies of the Greeks and Armenians that the Turkish state was compelled to expel its traitorous minorities. Unfortunately for the Jews, this thesis proved to be incorrect. During the Second World War, a war in which Turkey remained ostensibly neutral, an oppressive wealth tax (*Varlık Vergisi*) was imposed on Jewish, Armenian and Greek businesses, forcing many of merchants in Bursa and Constantinople out of business and throwing many individuals into jail for non-payment. This was the end of the many “flourishing” Jewish merchants Dewey observed in Bursa that day in 1924.

This article on the Turkish tragedy concludes with the most blatant denialist account propagated by the Turkish national narrative. Here Dewey is arguing against those Americans and others who are trying to revive the Wilsonian mandate for an independent Armenian republic in eastern Anatolia that would be protected by the United States or some Western “Christian” nation. According to the Deweyan nationalist reading, this same form of foreign meddling encouraged the Armenians to revolt in 1915 and eventually led to the deprivations they suffered under the Turks:

Few Americans who mourn, and justly, the miseries of the Armenians, are aware that till the rise of nationalistic ambitions, beginning with the seventies, the Armenians were the favored portion of the population of Turkey, or that in the Great War, they traitorously turned Turkish cities over to the Russian \*invader; that they boasted of having raised an army of one hundred and fifty thousand men to fight a civil war, and that they burned at least a hundred Turkish villages and exterminated their population. (MW15 141)

My purpose here is not to point out all the factual inaccuracies and exaggerations in this account and the numerous other errors Dewey has committed in this article. There is a very well-established body of historical research to refute most of what Dewey claims here and in other places in this article.<sup>3</sup> What is clear here is the fact that Dewey has bought into the selective and distorted reading of history that is typical of many foundationalist histories of nation-states.

For someone who was often extremely insightful in his analyses of social problems, Dewey’s reading of both Turkish history and the facts on the ground display either extreme naiveté or unintentional bad faith. Dewey had bought into a mythic national history that is often employed by ruling elites to cover over or justify the crimes they commit. While Dewey was insightfully perceptive regarding the historical myths of his own nation, he uncritically accepted those of the Young Turks and their Kemalist Republican heirs.

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<sup>3</sup>Just to cite three authoritative histories of the Genocide, I refer you to Ronald Grigor Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else”: A History of the Armenian Genocide*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015, Raymond Kevorkian, *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2011, and Taner Akçam, *The Young Turks’ Crime against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012.

## II.

The shortcomings of Dewey's analyses of the conditions for democracy highlighted in part one, especially in nations born out of cataclysmic events of mass ethnic violence, prompted me to think more deeply about memory and the role it should play in fostering a way of life conducive to democracy. A preliminary formulation of my thesis may be summarized as follows:

A community's success in embodying the democratic way of life is conditioned upon how well it collectively remembers its past.

Dewey in many of his writings, but most centrally in *The Public and Its Problems*, highlighted the essential components required for transforming what he called the Great Society into the Great Community. Free and open communication, unhindered inquiry, communal problem-solving modelled upon the successful methods of the applied sciences, all play contributing roles in creating the kinds of communities central to Deweyan democracy. Normatively healthy communication is a prerequisite for a normatively healthy community. A normatively healthy community is a prerequisite for democracy. Communication is not possible at the public level without a set of shared meanings and values. I contend that it is often through collective memory that these shared meanings are created. How we cultivate this collective memory is thus critically important to the success of democratic nation building.

Let me briefly define what I mean by collective memory. First, collective memory does not imply a belief in the reality of a group mind or some mental entity that exists independently of individual human beings. Neither is collective memory merely the aggregation of individual personal memories. While it is impossible to have personal memories devoid of social or situational context, this does not account for the truly collective nature of the memory of which I speak. Collective memory in this aggregate sense fails to capture the socially constituted

nature of collective memory. In contrast to the aggregate view, collective memory is a form of remembering together. Remembering together is a common activity of groups and is self-constituting and re-constituting. Whether it is the shared memories of family members at a family reunion or the collective community activities of ethnic groups who come together to memorialize past wrongs perpetrated on their ancestors, such as Armenians do every April 24<sup>th</sup> for the Armenian Genocide, these conjoint activities both reflect and construct collective memory. The philosopher Jeffrey Blustein calls this phenomenon, "a community of memory." Such activities create collective memory and at the same time foster a sense of community: "Members of a community jointly recall and jointly reconstruct the past and through these joint activities bind themselves together in particular ways."<sup>4</sup> This is especially true in those instances when such memories have broad reach and long endurance. Such a community of memory does not require personal first-hand experience of an event that is collectively recalled. Often through symbolic, artistic or literary re-enactments of the trauma of others, one may have a personally emotional response that is not significantly different from the response one might feel in recollecting a painful personal event in one's own past. One may cry, as I did, in front of the names etched on the polished black granite of the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington DC, even though one did not know the individuals there memorialized. The collective memory of that war deeply marked a generation of Americans despite the lack of consensus as to the war's meaning. "Collective memory can also be passed down through many generations, with each generation creating a new context and content for what will be jointly recalled by subsequent generations."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey Blustein, *The Moral Demands of Memory*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 183.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

Earlier I claimed that Dewey had bought into the Turkish mythic national history. In what sense was I employing the concept of myth and how is it related to collective memory? There are many varieties of myths and accounts of the role they play in society. The one I am particularly concerned with is often referred to as a nation's "foundational myth." The renowned yet controversial Romanian historian of religion, Mircea Eliade claimed that a foundational myth "supplies models for human behavior... it expresses, enhances, and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality... and provides practical rules for the guidance of man."<sup>6</sup> Blustein further elaborates on the social function of these types of myth by identifying three important features:

Myths of this sort [foundational myths] provide symbolic resources for underwriting present identity-constituting values, institutions, ideals, and so forth; they connect a group to its own past and help to distinguish it from other groups [the other] in the eyes of group members [group identity]; and they embody norms that serve as organizing principles of social life, norms that are capable of generating not only intellectual assent but emotional commitment. These features are all essentially independent of the historical truth of what the myths relate, and they explain both the value and the peril of collective memory.<sup>7</sup>

In short, who we are, what we believe and what we aspired to, are strongly influenced by our community's foundational myths. None of these features are necessarily connected with what in a social science sense we call critical history. Such history is governed by a methodology whose focus is upon establishing the truth about past events.

Dewey in *Democracy and Education*, devoted a chapter to the proper role of history and geography in the educational curriculum of a democratic society. As one would expect given Dewey's educational

theory, history as taught in the classroom should not be an accumulation of facts about the past that are learned by rote. In contrast Dewey proposes a genetic approach that connects the study of history to the current social situation:

Genetic method was perhaps the chief scientific achievement of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Its principle is that the way to get insight into any complex product is to trace the process of its making,—to follow it through the successive stages of its growth. To apply this method to history as if it meant only the truism that the present social state cannot be separated from its past, is one-sided. It means equally that past events cannot be separated from the living present and retain meaning. The true starting point of history is always some present situation with its problems. (MW9 222)

Yet there is always a danger of the "present situation with its problems" being so manipulated by the ruling elite that a problematic present is unproblematized. This is easy to do when you have a highly centralized national educational system. Turning back for the moment to remarks I made earlier regarding Dewey's educational recommendations to the Turkish state, I must commend him for having perceived the dangers of such a centralized system in which all curricular content was determined by the Ankara bureaucracy. Dewey had recommended a "thin" coordinating authority. Needless to say, the Turkish Ministry of Education ignored this recommendation along with much else in his report.

Another danger that Dewey warns against in *Democracy and Education*, is the misuse of biography in the teaching of history. While he recommends the use of the biographies of "great men, of heroes and leaders," for they "make concrete and vital historic episodes otherwise abstract and incomprehensible," he cautions against the "sugar coating" these stories in order to make the past "easier to swallow" (MW9 222). Needless to say, modern Turkish history's hagiographic treatment of

<sup>6</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, NY: Harper & Row, 1963, pp. 2, 5-6.

<sup>7</sup> Blustein, p. 198.



Atatürk is central to the foundational myth of the Republic. Mustafa Kemal's own recounting of the war of independence in his 36-hour speech to the Grand National Assembly in 1927, known as the *Nutuk*, was central to this mythic construction. Since 1951 a variety of Turkish laws, most recently penal code 301, have made it difficult to critically examine this mythic history. Denigrating Atatürk, Turkishness, the institutions of the state, have all been criminalized in one form or another over the last 50 years. Nobel Prize winner, Orhan Pamuk stands out as one of the many individuals so prosecuted under this law.

Let me conclude this examination of collective memory by highlighting two important ways by which collective memory is transmitted from one generation to the next: memory activities and memory places or sites of memory. These practices can be used positively in promoting a morally healthy democratic way of life, or misused, as is often the case, to foster ethnic and racial tensions that culminate in crimes against humanity and genocide. Such practices have been much discussed among scholars who study collective forms of memory and can only be mentioned here. Memory activities and memory places are non-discursive forms of collective memory transmittal. Traditional practices, whether of a religious or secular kind, embody collective memory. Public commemorative ceremonies, pilgrimages, and historical reenactments are all forms of memory activities. These activities are often tied to memory places. Archives, museums and libraries are places of memory that serve the explicit function of collecting and preserving memory. Though often they can be used to manipulate and distort memory, as has been the case with Turkish government's cleansing of the Ottoman archives in regard to the Armenian Genocide. Some memory places such as historical monuments and plaques are intentionally created in order to keep us from forgetting important community events. Architectural edifices such as public build-

ings, historical homes, places of worship, and cemeteries are places of memory. Even street names, neighborhood names, and the names of towns and cities all can have a memorial function.

What I have sketched above is important for the claim I made earlier with regard to memory and democracy. Judging how well a community remembers its past is no simple matter. When the community is a nation-state that aspires to become a healthy democracy in the Deweyan sense, the complexity of factors involved in making such a judgment may seem daunting. How do we grade such success? What grade do we give the United States for the place the genocide of its native population plays in its collective memory? Similar questions can be raised with regard to many nations and their treatment of ethnic minorities. My concern in this article has been Turkey. President Obama on April 6, 2009 in remarks to the Turkish Grand National Assembly said that Atatürk's "greatest legacy is Turkey's strong, vibrant, secular cy."<sup>8</sup> Whether you agree with Obama's judgment or not – and there are many in Turkey who would disagree – we can all agree that "a strong, vibrant, secular democracy" ought to be a Deweyan end-in-

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<sup>8</sup> Barack Obama, "Remarks by President Obama to the Turkish Parliament, April 6, 2009." *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*.

[https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-obama-turkish-](https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-obama-turkish-parliament)

[parliament](https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-obama-turkish-parliament).(Accessed 25 December 2015.) In the same address President Obama does call for memory work on the "events of 1915": "History is often tragic, but unresolved, it can be a heavy weight. Each country must work through its past. And reckoning with the past can help us seize a better future. I know there are strong views in this chamber about the terrible events of 1915. And while there's been a good deal of commentary about my views, it's really about how the Turkish and Armenian people deal with the past. And the best way forward for the Turkish and Armenian people is a process that works through the past in a way that is honest, open and constructive."

view for Turkey. There is a growing minority in Turkey, especially in the NGO community, who are actively working toward this end. They have faced strong resistance in the last three years from the current government and nationalists on both the right and left, but their work continues. Central to their work are projects of what some call, “counter memory.” I have been privileged to work with these courageous Turks who have a deep concern with

the health of their community’s collective memory. While Dewey may have misread the facts on the ground with regard to Turkey in the 1920s, I believe he would laud these current efforts at a positive reconstruction of Turkish collective memory. For it is only through such memory work that the end-in-view of Deweyan democracy can be achieved for the Turkey of today.

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