Maurice Halbwachs on dreams and memory
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Why Halbwachs?
In the first two chapters of his 1925 book *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire (The Social Frameworks of Memory),* the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) develops a sustained comparison between remembering and dreaming. Engaging in detail with large bodies of contemporary research in psychology, physiology, philosophy, and linguistics, he aims to combat what he calls the 'surprising' tendency of 'psychological treatises that deal with memory' to treat each of us as 'an isolated being' (1925/ 1994, vi)[1]. In the course of making a case that memory is deeply situated and social, Halbwachs offers a subtle and challenging treatment of dreams.

Halbwachs wrote the book in Strasbourg, where he held the first chair anywhere in France in the new discipline of sociology. After studying with Bergson and writing an early book on Leibniz, Halbwachs had become a key member of the group taking forward the work of Emile Durkheim, alongside Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre, Marcel Granet, Marcel Mauss and others, seeking to expand the new sociological vision and methods into other fields such as history, economics, philosophy, and psychology, while himself producing significant works in economic sociology that deployed statistical and empirical methods to address questions about property, class, and demography (Craig 1983)[2]. In the early 1920s, Halbwachs' interest in the sociology of religions, directly prompted by Durkheim's work, led him to consider cross-cultural evidence on dreaming and the origin of belief in the soul (Durkheim 1912/ 1995; Halbwachs 1922; Hirsch 2012). The work on memory developed in this context, with Halbwachs taking it on as a strategic topic with which to build and defend an ambitious sociological psychology, 'more Durkheimian than Durkheim' (Hirsch 2012, 238, quoting a 1928 letter from Halbwachs to Mauss). Halbwachs identified the individualism he took as his target in philosophers like Bergson, in Freud's psychoanalysis, and across the expanding mainstream experimental and theoretical psychologies of early 20th-century Europe[3]. Thomas Hirsch has shown how strongly the psychologists of the time wanted memory to remain 'resistant to absorption by sociology': even those (like Blondel, Kaploun, and Pieron) who praised the quality of Halbwachs' work still strongly denounced its 'excessive Durkheimism' and 'sociological imperialism' (Hirsch 2012, 235-8; 2015, 19-27).

A hundred years later, we remain divided or uncertain on how best to study memory, on how to acknowledge and integrate its neural, bodily, environmental, and social dimensions at once, and consequently on the appropriate divisions of labour between disciplines, from the molecular and cognitive neurosciences through psychology and philosophy of mind to history and politics, art and sociology, and back again. Halbwachs and his work on memory have come to occupy a particular place in these discussions, especially in English-language research. Halbwachs is 'considered the founding father of collective memory studies' (Olick et al 2011, 5; compare Misztal 2003, 4), and is widely identified as responsible for a vague but totalizing, reified conception of the group, one which has 'resulted in the complete obliteration of the individual consciousness as real and determinant' (Gedi & Elam 1996, 36). Generations of embarrassed social theorists have seen Halbwachs' pernicious influence as leaving them the urgent tasks of 'writing the individual back into collective memory' (Crane 1997) or proposing more metaphysically modest notions like 'collected' rather than 'collective memory' (Young 1993; Olick 1999; see Sutton 2004). The ongoing 'memory boom' in applied scholarship, giving rise to research

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[1] Page references are to Gérard Namer's 1994 edition of Halbwachs 1925. Translations are by Charles T. Wolfe, Barnaby Hutchins, and Cat Moir, from the forthcoming full translation to be published by Oxford University Press in 2023. See the text below for background on the new English edition.
[2] For background on Halbwachs' life and work see Becker 2003, Montigny 2005, and in English Coser 1992, Leroux & Marcel 2021.
[3] Halbwachs' investigations were also prompted in part by bewilderment at finding his mentor Durkheim claiming that dreams often involve reviewing past waking experiences (Durkheim 1912/ 1995, 53; Halbwachs 1994, 1; see also Carroy 2008, Hirsch 2012).

institutions such as the Sage journal *Memory Studies* (from 2008) and the international Memory Studies Association (from 2016), has brought more nuanced appreciation of Halbwachs' contributions, especially in relation to later essays published posthumously as *The Collective Memory* (Halbwachs 1950/ 1980) in which he further develops and defends his account of memory against critics. But more careful and accurate interpretations and uses of the detailed initial theory of memory articulated in his 1925 book remain rare. Sarah Gensburger, in a striking 'archaeology' of memory studies, argues persuasively that this is also true of much work in French (Gensburger 2016, 404-7)[4]: but the situation is particularly dire in Anglophone scholarship.

The sociologist Lewis Coser partially translated Halbwachs' 1925 book *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire,* publishing it alongside some other material in a volume confusingly titled *On Collective Memory* (Halbwachs 1992)*.* Though this remains the only English translation, it simply omits the vast bulk of the material needed to understand Halbwachs' approach to memory. In a brief footnote at the start of the translated text, Coser writes that 'the first four chapters … are largely preparatory for what is to come in the rest of the book. Only relatively brief central pages of these chapters have been translated here' (Halbwachs 1992, 37, editor's note). So while Coser translates fully Halbwachs' chapters on collective memories and traditions in families, religious groups, and among social classes, the material on the psychology of dreams and memory-images, on language and memory, and on the reconstruction and localization of the past in remembering, all but vanishes. Those first four chapters cover 145 pages in Namer's 1994 French edition, but are condensed into 13 pages by Coser, with the crucial first two chapters reduced to three and four paragraphs respectively. The unavailability in English of such a huge and significant portion of this 'landmark work' (Olick et al 2011, 18), and the dominance of Coser's partial translation, may have had some damaging effects on the history of memory studies, and in particular on any prospects for better integrating sociological and psychological approaches to memory (Sutton 2009a). For this reason, I have been working on the first full English edition, with translation by Charles Wolfe, Barnaby Hutchins, and Cat Moir: now nearing completion, this edition is due to be published by Oxford University Press in 2023. It's not so much that Halbwachs needs *more* readers – Coser's edition currently has well over 15,000 citations on Google Scholar – it's that he deserves *better* and *more accurate* readings, readings to entrench him alongside Bartlett and Vygotsky as great harbingers of more integrative, multi-level, culturally-sensitive, simultaneously psychological and social treatments of memory in the future. It is not simply for historical interest that the full work should be available in English: it is also, as I argue in this essay, because Halbwachs' ideas – in this case, about relations between dreaming and remembering – are still interesting and relevant, and operate at a level of theorizing on which we still need all the help we can get.

My main aim here, then, is to offer a detailed critical exposition of themes in the first two chapters of *The Social Frameworks of Memory.* After an all-too-brief reflection on a couple of features of our contemporary debates about dreams and memory which, in my view, make these century-old ideas particularly striking today, I describe Halbwachs' targets and methods. I then sketch the first account of dreams given by Halbwachs, intended to exaggerate contrasts between dreaming and remembering in order to combat individualism about memory. I expand on some surprising features of the emergent account of memory, before addressing a more subtle approach to dreams offered in chapter 2, where Halbwachs acknowledges that his first pass was 'an overstatement'.

At the most general level, the gulf should be obvious between what Halbwachs actually says in these chapters and the stereotyped view that he treats individual minds as dominated by or submerged in nebulous collective psychology. At this general level, his focus here is clearly and squarely on individual memory, on which as his contemporaries realized he offers an ambitiously social and sociological perspective. There is no hint of the kind of neglect of individual psychology or agency of which Halbwachs is sometimes now accused: his intentions were far more wide-reaching and revolutionary. Reviewing his friend's book, the psychologist Henri Pieron wished it had been 'stripped of the metaphysical *hors d'oeuvre* of the first two chapters' and wondered why 'sociologists still persist in wanting to annex all of individual psychology' (Pieron 1926, 537; see Hirsch 2012, 237)[5]. In this essay and with the full translation and edition

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[4] On the history of Halbwachs' influence in France see also Hirsch 2016. For general coverage of Halbwachs' work on memory as a whole see Namer 2000, Brian 2008, Marcel & Mucchielli 2008, Gensburger 2018, Brian 2021.

[5] Alongside some very helpful suggestions, one anonymous reviewer of the current chapter likewise comments that even where Halbwachs does 'attend to the role of the individual in the psychology of memory, we can get the sense that he overstates the role of memory's social dimensions and underplays the role of the individual'.

in progress, I hope to encourage modern researchers, many still occupied with puzzles about how to study neural, cognitive, and social aspects of memory together, to take some time to see what Halbwachs has to offer us[6].

Learning to dream, learning to remember: the slow manufacture of the self
As appetizer for direct engagement with Halbwachs, it's worth briefly indicating a couple of contemporary debates on dreams and memory to which this text might still actively contribute. Constraints of space and the more pressing need simply to bring Halbwachs into these conversations mean that most conceptual links must remain tacit for now, but I return again briefly to these themes in conclusion.

Firstly, we can address the natural concern that no work on dreams from the 1920s could be relevant today, because the revolutionary discovery of REM sleep has shown that both the form and the content of dreaming are driven or determined by neurochemical modulations and subcortical stimulation in the absence of perceptual input (Hobson et al 2000). This once-dominant view has been challenged by impressive evidence that REM sleep is neither necessary nor sufficient for dream experience (Solms 2000). While this in principle reopened the door to more cognitive approaches, in his own positive view Solms retained fairly direct isomorphisms between bizarre dream content and the activity of a dynamic forebrain 'dream generator' network (Solms 2000), thus also suggesting that only contemporary neurobiology can explain dreaming. These distinct but equally reductionist theories have now been widely challenged, both by more cognitive approaches to dreaming in adults and children, which I discuss in a moment, and by a broader pluralist tendency in dream research, on which dreams may have highly variable features over time and across individuals (Sutton 2009b; Windt 2015; Rosen 2018): some dreams may have bizarre content or narrative structure, and seem to have the properties and phenomenology of perceptual hallucinations, while others may be thinner and indeterminate, more like imaginative productions. Jennifer Windt's magnificent book *Dreaming: a conceptual framework for philosophy of mind and empirical research* (2015), and her ongoing constructive research program, set new agendas for the multidisciplinary study of dreaming as a unique but variable state. Halbwachs does not explicitly acknowledge what we would call individual differences in dream experience, or spend much time directly discussing variability: but both his wide range of examples and his firmly psychological or psychosocial approach confirm that he belongs in these broadly anti-reductionist camps.

A more specific connection between then and now can be forged by considering David Foulkes' studies of children's dreams. In remarkable longitudinal studies over twenty years, Foulkes traced the characteristics of dream experience from age 3 to age 15 (Foulkes 1999, 2017; Sutton 2009b, 532-6). Representative sampling of young children's experiences during sleep showed that they dream surprisingly little until around age 9, and that the dreams they do have at younger ages are typically fairly static, 'very brief and insubstantial', rarely feature the self as an active participant, rarely feature complex social situations, and rarely feature rich emotions. These surprising results are not due to children's slower development of verbal skills, or inability to report a vivid dream life: those children with relatively poor linguistic skills were just as likely to report more vivid dreams, while those with more advanced language and narrative capacities were just as likely to report few and bland dreams. Only children's waking visual-spatial skills correlate more with richer early dreams.

While there are ongoing debates about Foulkes' methods and interpretations (Colace 2010; Sándor et al 2014, 2016), influential integrative theorists have incorporated these results into broader cognitive theories of dreams (Domhoff 2003, 2019), which have significant broader theoretical implications. If Foulkes is right, then it takes time, training, and sophisticated cognitive development for rich and bizarre dream experiences to emerge more regularly. Dreaming does not arise inevitably by way of endogenous maturation alone. Rather, in a certain sense, for Foulkes, we must learn to dream, as other cognitive capacities emerge and cohere gradually over the course of childhood, alongside the slow

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[6] I focus here only on themes from these first two chapters of the 1925 book. With the publication of the new edition, it will be easier to assess the trajectory of ideas across the whole book, and to evaluate claims about how much Halbwachs later changed his emphases or views of memory. Though I can't make the case here, I disagree with Namer's (2000) suggestion of a dramatic shift by the time of the essays collected in Halbwachs 1950/ 1980: with some terminological refinement, I think, the ambitious views endure.

manufacture of the self (Sutton 2009b, 535). As I'll show below, though Halbwachs does not discuss children's dreams directly at length, he does draw suggestive parallels between dreaming and the mental life of young children: the core common commitment here, at the heart of a range of contemporary developmental and situated approaches to cognition, is that cognitive development requires substantial enculturation, as we learn to anchor or fix our mental lives within or against social frameworks and norms.

Though Halbwachs initially contrasts memory with dreams, viewing dream cognition as fragmentary and unmoored, he then argues (as I show below) that dreaming too leans on socially sourced spatial, temporal, and linguistic 'notions' or orientations. Dreaming does thus on his considered view turn out to be like remembering, in the further sense that both require the slow knitting together of heterogeneous neurocognitive, affective, bodily, and social resources to function. In the case of memory, the norms, practices and abilities that ground spontaneously remembering personal experiences in a sense soak in from the world. Unique emotional dynamics shape remembering from the start, as Halbwachs later emphasizes in stressing 'the necessity of an affective community' (1950/ 1980, 30-33), as do the rhythms of embodied interaction, and the available norms about interdependence, morality, and self-representation. If these connections, sketching Halbwachs as sociocognitive ecologist, run the risk of anachronism, so be it: it is better, I submit, for rich and complex old ideas like these to be paraded, celebrated, and disputed than for them to neglected even longer.

Halbwachs on dreams and memory: targets and methods

Halbwachs had previously published the provocative views on the relations between dreams and memory which open his 1925 book (Halbwachs 1923). On its own, this first chapter on dreams and memory-images seems a predominantly critical project. But it is enriched and complicated by its context in the book as a whole: enriched in that Halbwachs goes on to deliver the fuller constructive approach to memory against which he wants us to understand dreams, and complicated immediately in that he acknowledges, at the outset of chapter 2, that his earlier claim that dreams remove us from society was 'an overstatement' (1994, 40). There are indeed two compatible but distinct lines of thought at work in Halbwachs' treatment of dreams, both set against a consistent view of memory which comes into clearer focus as we use it to compare the way dreams appear through these two distinct lenses. In developing a fresh interpretation of these striking ideas, I aim to articulate both these two approaches to dreaming and the emerging account of memory.

Halbwachs begins with dreaming in order to identify and reject a complex of views about memory, which he finds in Bergson and in Freud, in many other psychologists and philosophers, and in the wider culture. The key claims that he attacks are:
- that memory is a purely or primarily individual capacity;
- that remembering frees us from the present and from society;
- that to remember is to relive the past, to be immersed in it as it reappears now;
- that all or many of an individual's experiences endure or subsist as rich memories, and are merely typically inaccessible.

If that first and central target can be called 'individualism', then Halbwachs treats the further three target claims as natural and widespread ways of motivating or spelling out an individualist approach to memory. He starts with dreams because Bergson, Freud and others suggest that in dreaming, sometimes, rich and detailed memories emerge from the 'obscure depths' in which they have been 'preserved' (Bergson 1919/ 1975). While Freud acknowledges that often memories appear in dreams only in fragments, he allows for 'exceptions … in which a dream will repeat an experience just as completely as our memory would in waking life' (Freud 1900/ 1999, 20, translation modified; Halbwachs 1994, 4); and for Bergson, images of our past would be most accessible, 'reproduced exactly as they were, with all their details and even with their affective coloration' if we should *dream* our lives instead of living them, at each moment keeping before our eyes 'the infinite multitude of the details' of our past history (Bergson 1896/ 1991, 106, 155; Halbwachs 1994, 37-38). So Halbwachs sees dreaming as 'a crucial experiment' (1994, 2-3). If indeed 'the past is preserved, without change and without gaps, in the depths of the memory', then we might indeed find it reappearing in sleep, reproduced 'in its entirety', whether we recognize it as such or not, as 'memories invade our awareness' (1994, 2-3). If there is any

truth in individualism, if we are indeed 'isolated beings' mentally, this should be most obvious when we consider dreaming: 'it is not in memory but in dreams that the mind is the furthest from society' (1994, 39).

To evaluate individualism and this body of related ideas, Halbwachs reads the recent literature on dreaming critically, examining in particular specific dream reports which had been claimed as revealing complete scenes from the personal past. Halbwachs refers to more than 45 other authors in these two chapters. As well as Bergson, Durkheim, and Freud, most are psychologists, physiologists, and linguists, a representative sample of these rich and rapidly expanding fields in the first quarter of the 20th century. In addition to those developing new experimental methods across a broad range of topics like Henry Head and Wilhelm Wundt, Halbwachs read especially widely in burgeoning scientific literatures on memory and dreaming, on language and aphasia: on dreams, he cites books and journal articles in English, French, and German by Mary Calkins, Alfred Maury and many others. As well as reporting on his consultations with friends and colleagues, and on a process of self-examination[7], Halbwachs revels in working critically through these sources and considering strange or quirky dream phenomena: he addresses what we'd now call sleep onset imagery and hypnopompic hallucinations (1994, 15-16), and reported cases in which the self is absent or doubled in dreams, or in which the identity of the dream protagonist clearly differs from that of the dreamer (1994, 11; compare Rosen & Sutton 2013)[8].

'Never did I discover a memory in dreaming'
Individualism suggests that mental life is at heart independent of external processes, both material and social. Minds may be connected causally with other people and with things in the environment, which serve either as cues and stimuli to thought, memory, feeling, or action, or as their objects. But the states and processes of remembering itself, as of other forms of cognition and emotion, are inside us, sandwiched between perception and action. Individualism has been defended and developed in many different ways, but this much is common across Halbwachs' period and our own. Dreaming is often seen, then and now, as giving individualism some initial plausibility, as a hard case for more situated approaches to cognition.

In arguing, against the individualist, that remembering is in fact intrinsically social, Halbwachs starts with dreaming because it should reveal just what our internal resources in fact do on their own: 'if purely individual psychology looks for a realm in which consciousness is isolated and left to its own devices, it is only in nocturnal life that it will have the greatest chance of finding it' (1994, 39). When we thus examine the untethered mind in dreams, do we find rich and complete memories? Is the individualist's claim to cognitive self-sufficiency borne out?

By the end of his first chapter, Halbwachs offers a decisive answer (1994, 39):
> far from being expanded when freed from the limitations of waking life … consciousness seems singularly reduced and narrowed: almost entirely detached from the system of social representations, images are nothing more than raw materials, able to enter into all kinds of combinations, only combined by chance according to the disordered activity of bodily changes.

Yes, certain isolated images, thoughts, and feelings in dreams derive from waking experience, but these are mere 'fragments of memories' rather than complete scenes, rather than full narrative units: they immediately also 'fall apart … losing their original individuality in new associations' rather than forming components of full representations of the past (1994, 21, 48). Halbwachs closes the chapter with a striking spatial or architectural analogy (1994, 39):

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[7] Halbwachs tells us he had been examining his own dreams since early 1920 'in order to discover whether they contained complete scenes from my past. The result has been decidedly negative' (1925, 3). Dream diaries remain very much in use in contemporary dream science (Fosse et al 2003; Malinowski & Horton 2014; Windt 2015). Hirsch suggests that Halbwachs was in a sense playing the individualists at their own game (2012, 230 note 25). He returned much later in life to re-analyse these dream reports alongside a body of reports gathered from family members (Halbwachs 1946; Carroy 2008).

[8] Readers of the partial Coser translation (Halbwachs 1992) get no inkling of how deeply Halbwachs was immersed in and informed by such contemporary theoretical and experimental work: the few paragraphs Coser includes have only incidental citations of Lucretius and Pascal. On these rich periods in the history of dream research see also Schwartz 2000, Carroy 2012, Morgese et al 2019, Lahire 2020.

Undoubtedly, the images appear in a chronological order – but a succession of images in a dream differs from a series of memories as much as a pile of rough-hewn materials – whose overlapping parts slide over one another, or remain in equilibrium only by accident – differs from the walls of a building supported by a whole infrastructure, and, moreover, shored up or reinforced by those of the neighbouring buildings. This is because the dream rests on itself alone, whereas our memories rely on those of everyone else, and on the great frameworks of the memory of society.

We can briefly Halbwachs' reasons for positing such a sharp distinction between memory and dreams, and specifically for denying that dreams are the occasion for the immersive reliving of past experiences by way of floods of preserved memories.

Halbwachs works through a number of dreams reported in the literature in which full scenes from the dreamer's past seem to be reproduced. In each case, he finds the reports vague or imprecise on vital details: in many cases, the claim that a detailed memory emerges fully formed in the dream is compromised by the key role played by later associations or general knowledge in the reported dream narrative. More recent studies of episodic memories in dreams face the same difficulties. When researchers impose plausible constraints on the relations between a reported dream and a past experience the dreamer later claims as its source – requiring, for example, some similarity between the location of the experienced and dreamed events, and some level of precision in the identification of details across dream and memory – the dominant result now too is that 'true episodic memory is indeed extremely rare in dreams' (Malinowski & Horton 2014, 445). Representative studies find that, while some dreams do include fragmentary memory sources, a vanishingly small number of reports reflect anything like 'intact episodic memories' (Fosse et al 2003, 7; Horton 2017).

Summarizing the examples he has assessed, Halbwachs notes that the raw materials of the dream reports are 'a name, a face, a street scene, a house'. These are 'not complete scenes that reappear', as in Bergson's image of fully preserved memories raising a trapdoor and rushing to 'perform in the night of unconsciousness a great danse macabre' (1919/ 1975; Halbwachs 1994, 9). Under scrutiny, the dream narratives reveal indeterminacy. Far from being passively confronted in our dreams by episodes that transport us back in time, Halbwachs argues, any putative assignment of a dream sequence to a specific past experience is possible only through considerable mental work: 'we must seek assistance in the memory of others, or engage in investigation and objective verification, in order to see that they do correspond to formerly perceived realities' (1994, 9).

An anonymous reviewer objects that Halbwachs sets an unrealistically high bar. Why should individualism about memory require us to identify complete, fully-formed scenes from the personal past in dreams? After all, we also have fragmentary, vague, or imprecise memories while awake. Even if the natural experiment provided by dreaming turns up only partial memories with little detail, does this not still suggest that a mind detached from social frameworks can remember? Halbwachs addresses this concern directly: in scouring dream experience for 'complete events, entire scenes from our past', he asks, 'are we not being too demanding?' (1994, 1-2). One of his responses is to underline the strong form of individualism he finds in Bergson, for whom 'remembering is wakeful dreaming' and 'dreaming is remembering during sleep', such that there should be full reliving of past experience in dreams rather than partial reconstruction (1994, 38). More generally, all agree that when awake we can experience rich memories with complex structure: what's under dispute is how best to explain this fact. Halbwachs attributes such full memories to our embedding in social frameworks, while individualists argue that internal resources are sufficient. Given this dialectic, the search for memories of complete scenes within dream experience is indeed the relevant test. If such were clearly found, the individualist would be proved right, whereas the absence of such rich memories in dreams is (Halbwachs suggests) powerful evidence against individualism about memory.

The past events that Freud, Marcel Foucault, Maury and others found apparently preserved in these dream reports all occurred in the dreamer's childhood or youth[9]. Halbwachs argues that this is significant, and helps us better understand

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[9] Calkins had reported twice dreaming 'in exact detail some event immediately preceding [the dream]' (1893, 323-4), but Halbwachs laments her failure to provide any detail about the contents or contexts (1994, 7). In Malinowski and Horton's recent study (2014,

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both dreaming and remembering. Anything from childhood that is incorporated into a dream narrative turns out on closer investigation to be 'stereotypical', involving mostly 'cliché-images', reappearing only as 'a scrap of our most distant past that rises to the surface' (1994, 9).

More generally, for Halbwachs, there are important similarities between the dreamer's state of mind and 'the conscious life of very small children' (1994, 9). Dreams are not like adult memories, and do not incorporate them: but they are in some respects like children's memories. In both cases there is a lack of 'reference points' to help pin down and localize images, thoughts, or feelings into a connected cognitive life, to attach and integrate them in a shared world (1994, 20). The fact that young children typically do not access or explicitly attend to adult norms and customs reveals the indispensable role of social frameworks in supporting memory (1994, 85-85). Where the young child has not yet entered the real social world, the dreamer has temporarily 'exited the real world' (1994, 16-17). As a result, neither has the cognitive capacities needed to firmly embed experienced events in time, space, or society: 'in order to remember, we must be capable of reasoning and comparing, and we must feel that we are connected to some human society … all conditions that are evidently not met when we sleep' (1994, 21-22). We can now turn to examine Halbwachs' positive view of memory, revealed thus through these sharp contrasts with the dreamer and the child.

Memory as mental work
Halbwachs will, as I noted, complicate this rather deflationary picture of dream cognition as he proceeds. We can first pause to spell out further the conception of memory to which he contrasts dreaming. Remembering, for Halbwachs, is surprisingly active mental work. The idea that it is a constructive process was far from a commonplace at the time he wrote, seven years before Bartlett's *Remembering* (1932). Now there is such solid consensus on this point across otherwise disparate disciplines and traditions in the study of memory that we are used to being told we need to go, or have already gone, 'beyond the archive' (Sutton 1998, 1-2; Brockmeier 2015). The way that Halbwachs develops the idea is striking not only historically but also conceptually and linguistically as he motivates the claim that 'we do not realize all the mental work that is involved in recalling a memory' (1994, 35).

To stress the extent and complexity of the activity necessary in recall, Halbwachs deploys a range of chemical and craft metaphors, seeking to articulate what it takes to put the materials of memory – images, thoughts, feelings and more – into form. If in dreams for example, assortments of images are 'suspended in the mind, much like dye in a liquid that has just been stirred', we can *fix* or *set* some of them on waking, resolving their indeterminacy (1994, 19). Until then, such images have merely 'floated in the mind' but were not themselves memories (1994, 19). Only when we 'attach', for example, more or less determinate emotions to particular images do we 'complete' a memory (1994, 27, 38). This process of completing a memory is active cognitive work. We engage in this work constantly and for the most part easily enough in waking life, in sharp contrast to the fugitive state of the dream. But if we tend to think that the work required to complete any memory is to 'reattach it to those that surround it', to other memories enduring in our minds, this is far from the whole truth. Rather, this work is supported by whole interconnected networks of what we might now call 'scaffolding' (Sutton 2015a): the other memories it has to be attached to endure not inside us but 'around us – in the beings and objects with whom we live' (1994, 38-39). Construction is this process of localizing by reattaching, and it operates right across the board (1994, 38):

> Every memory, however personal it might be, even memories of events we alone have witnessed, even memories of unexpressed thoughts and feelings, is interrelated with a whole set of notions that many others also possess, with people, groups, places, dates, words and forms of language, with reasons and ideas as well – that is, with the entire material and moral life of the societies we are part of, or have been part of.

Such diverse 'notions' are the 'reference points in space and time' that allow us to make precise attributions. They support the assembly or determination of constellations of images, thoughts, and feelings: feelings too, if they are to be recalled, 'must be reinscribed in a set of facts, beings, and ideas that belong to our representation of society' (1994, 30). This is a rich social intelligence, always drawing on and entangled with these various instruments of the social and

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445), the only dream report that was scored as reflecting a full episodic memory concerned a dream experience that was 'exactly the same as' a real argument the dreamer had had the day before.

material realm, which connect our images and feelings 'with the wider picture of our past': our memories 'do not stand alone', and even when we concentrate attention and interest on one, 'we do feel that others are there' in the background, 'exactly as a given line and figure stand out against a scene whose general composition is familiar to us' (1994, 33).

If the individualist ascribes memory, as we might now say, to our basic internal neurocognitive equipment alone, Halbwachs is arguing in contrast that the stability, sense, and coherence of our narratives and memories does not arise thus in isolation. Rather, remembering is *activity,* and a form of activity that 'can only occur in a natural and social environment that is ordered and coherent', that we more or less recognize (1994, 38). If the individualist was right, collective frameworks would merely combine the pre-existing individual memories of the members of a society: they would not explain memory, 'since they presuppose it' (1994, vii). In contrast, Halbwachs ascribes a genuine explanatory role to these instruments or notions, such as place, form, or name: they give us our only firm grip on the past, 'without which we would be left with only a vague, indistinct reminiscence', the swirling flux of the dream (1994, 23).

Halbwachs will go on to consider the work of reconstruction and localization in more detail in chapters 3 and 4 respectively, explaining further what he means by a 'framework of memory'. Here it's worth underlining the thoroughgoing nature of his constructivism. Further metaphorical registers emerge in his accounts of remembering as 'sketching' or 'manufacturing'. Halbwachs explicitly stresses that full and detailed memories do not 'persist in the unconscious state', because 'to reproduce is not to retrieve' or even 'to recreate' a memory: rather, the resources available need only to be 'enough to sketch it out, which, for the mind, is equivalent' (1994, 90, 92). These are operations of selection, approximation, or translation. Gaps are filled and losses are incurred as 'our current consciousness … finds around itself the means to manufacture' the memory. If no memory is produced, 'it is because these means are insufficient': what counts is the ecology, the set of interlocking constraints and notions that surround and envelop us in our overlapping sociomaterial worlds, not the internal resources on their own (1994, 92).

A further implication of this strong emphasis on remembering as activity or practice, as something we *do,* relates to its phenomenology. Again, Halbwachs works from the contrast between dreams and memory. A key characteristic of dream experience is *presence:* we are typically *immersed* in the dream world, and typically experience the dream events as happening now (compare Windt 2010). This is unlike the dual temporality of typical memory experiences, when in the present we are aware of even vividly recalled events as *past* events (Halbwachs 1994, 15). This difference between memory and dreams again drives Halbwachs to claim that in memory, and not in dreams, 'the intellect as a whole is present', and to reject the idea, defended by Bergson and others, that there is a pure form of personal memory in which we 'relive' past events, in which we are 'effectively transported to the period in which these events took place' (1994, 28, 33). He sets his claim that we reconstruct the past as firmly opposed to this view that we relive the past. We might interpret Halbwachs here as casting doubt on stronger ways of understanding the thought that remembering involves some kind of 'mental time travel' (Michaelian 2016): he is either rejecting such talk, or offering a minimal and deflationary way of taking it. It is ironic that Halbwachs has been criticized for a passive conception of the individual, or for treating the individual agent as 'a sort of automaton, passively obeying the institutional collective will' (Fentress & Wickham 1992, ix). In fact, Halbwachs argues that the language of 'reliving' past events in memory unhelpfully treats the individual as passively confronted by fully formed memories bubbling up, experiencing past events in some kind of hallucinatory way, as if we typically think in confusion that we're perceiving those events when we are in fact remembering them (1994, 22). As Halbwachs sees it, the alternative picture by which memories are 'reconstituted' actively on the basis of multiple social frameworks confirms that it is at best 'metaphorically' that we can talk of 'reliving' past events in the present: 'nor is there any reason to accept that everything we have lived, seen, and done endures as it is, and that our present drags our entire past behind it' (1994, 39).

Finally, Halbwachs puts his account of memory to work to answer a more standard issue about relations between dreaming and remembering: as well as his primary concern with whether dreams include memories, whether there are memories *in* dreams, he also asks about our memories *of* dreams, explaining our nebulous or impoverished access to our experiences during sleep. The explanation falls naturally out of his insistence that memory reveals and requires fully engaged intelligence, a sophisticated and interactive cognitive life. Though remembering is constructive, its activity is

simultaneously 'rational', and as such is unavailable during sleep (1994, 38). On waking we may sometimes briefly manage to 'keep a determinate image' in mind: but such images are 'like those tiny pools left in the rocks after the sea has retreated' (1994, 18) in being separated from their source. In some evocative passages on the phenomenology of waking from dreams, Halbwachs argues that we localize such floating images only in retrospect, by finding some other reference points, scaffolding from the shared world, against which to fix them (1994, 19-22). In light of subsequent debates about dreaming, we might say that he is denying not dream experience, but its coherence or connectedness.

Reverse angle: social frameworks of dreams
Halbwachs, as I've shown, used the case of dreaming as a test case or crucial experiment for assessing individualism about memory. If remembering really is an entirely autonomous and internal process, independent of body, world, and society, then rich memories should show up regularly in our dreams, when the brain is cut off from those external influences. But we can now see some puzzling consequences of the 'decidedly negative' result of his enquiries into whether dreams contain complete scenes from the personal past (1994, 3). In rejecting individualism about *memory,* Halbwachs seems to have licensed or supported individualism about *dreams.* In highlighting the essentially social frameworks of remembering, does he give dreaming away?

In that first treatment of dreaming in the first chapter*,* taken from his stand-alone paper of 1923, Halbwachs does for the sake of the dialectic temporarily grant a vision of the dreaming mind as entirely *un*situated – as impermeable and as we might say 'envatted', as if the entanglements between brain, body, world, and society that scaffold memory become entirely unavailable in sleep, the mind's access to them vanishing. By allowing us to think of dream experience as so completely sealed off, Halbwachs could test whether it includes rich narrative memories: that enquiry finds that 'no real and complete memory, such as those we recall in the waking state, ever makes its way into our dreams: our dreams are, rather, made with fragments of memories too mutilated or confused with others for us to recognize them' (1994, 21).

If this conception of dreaming was his final, considered position, we might see Halbwachs as having paid too high a price for saving memory from the individualist. The severe discontinuity between dreaming and waking cognition built in to this initial argument might be read as sanctioning both individualism and reductionism about dreams, as if dream experience is merely the inevitable passive outcome of meaningless endogenous stimuli crackling up from the brainstem. If this first account was all that Halbwachs offered, he would have left no space for either a sociology or even a genuine psychology of dreaming. Some commentators have indeed read this first view as the whole story. According to Roger Bastide, for example, 'Halbwachs ejected dream memories from the social framework of memory' (1966, 199): by allowing the existence in dreams of only 'pure memory, not social memory', Halbwachs has reinforced 'a radical division between the psychic and the social' that rules out any enquiry into 'the social framework of oneiric thought' or 'the sociological structure of the dream' (Bastide 1966, 199-200, 209).

But this interpretation is mistaken. When we follow Halbwachs past the first chapter, we find him acknowledging that it was 'an overstatement' to claim that 'when we dream, we cease to be in contact with the society of our fellows' (1994, 40). Halbwachs manoeuvres delicately in deploying this new lens on dreaming, in adopting this reverse angle: without undermining the case he has made against memory individualism, he very definitely pulls back from those more extreme consequences, to argue now that 'many notions are undoubtedly common to both dreams and waking states' (1925, 40). I aim here to offer just a first sketch of the way he thinks about how some of these 'notions' operate in dreams.

Using a complex dream of Freud's as example, Halbwachs argues early in chapter 2 that even the most basic sense-making processes of dream experience involve complex sets of 'general notions'. Focussing on the nature of dream experience itself, rather than on our waking memory of them, he suggests that the unfolding of dream events themselves reveals the influence of arrays of shared facts which 'have permeated the isolated consciousness of the dreamer, and can only come from the social environment of waking life' (1994, 42). In light of these direct acknowledgements of the existence of social frameworks in dreaming with which chapter 2 starts, we can reread some of Halbwachs' earlier claims afresh. Even in chapter 1, he noted that in dreams there can be 'an attempt at systematization', even if 'the logical, temporal, spatial frameworks in which the visions of sleep take place are highly

unstable'. At that point, still underlining the contrast with waking memory, he suggests that 'we can hardly talk of "frameworks": it is, rather, a particular atmosphere' (1994, 30).

This minimal initial concession to the cognitive sophistication of dreams is significantly boosted in the second chapter. The dreaming mind still works with whatever reference points it's got, and these derive from the same social frameworks as the notions that ground waking cognition. Working through further examples from his own and other dream reports, Halbwachs speculates about the residual openness of dream experience to certain bodily sensations or feelings, where there may be some 'cross-permeation' between the dream content and the dreamer's actual 'physical unease or discomfort' (1994, 45)[10]. He complains that psychologists tend to focus solely or primarily on images in describing dreams, and so fail 'to take note of the major role that reflection and thought itself play in our nocturnal life': though they are particularly 'difficult to remember' because of their incoherence, there are as well as sensory images also 'poorly defined representations in dreams, which imitate the activity of thought, reflection, and reasoning' (1994, 46-47).

Halbwachs is here in no way reneging on his earlier arguments. He repeats that there are 'many differences between the frameworks of waking life and of dreams', and confirms the relative priority, in that 'the latter certainly derive from the former' (1994, 50). These differences also explain why it can be hard to recognize or trace the presence and role of social frameworks in dreams (1994, 50):

> The notions of waking life, as they penetrate our sleeping consciousness, must retract themselves, scatter, and leave behind part of their form or content, like geometrical figures traced on a surface on which the chalk slips, thereby losing some of their contours, a side, an angle, etc.

We can follow Halbwachs in tracing examples of these scattering notions in the cases of spatial and temporal frameworks in dreams.

The dreamer is not entirely out of space and time. Halbwachs notes that dream reports typically include much spatial information, regarding for example orientations, directions, and spatial relations. Yet there are indeterminacies and gaps: 'in dreams, we lack an overall representation both of space overall (of a city, a country) and of the place we really are in, and the more or less extended whole of which it is a part'. We retain a local grasp of egocentric space, as we might put it: 'in a dream, for us not to feel lost, it is enough that we can see ourselves in a "corner of space"'. Such restricted spatial notions might suffice to ground perception and action 'for an isolated man, living only in the present', but they differ substantially from the more objective conception of the interconnectedness of spaces we maintain in waking life (1994, 50-51). Systematic investigation of spatial cognition in dreaming is still in its infancy now, and we may wonder if Halbwachs underestimates capacities for slightly more map-like thought in the way some dreamers may organize spatial reference points (compare now Bernini 2018, Iosifescu Enescu 2015, Katz 2005).

Likewise for time. Typically, temporal orientation in dreams, Halbwachs notes, does involve feelings of succession and duration, as images follow each other, and events are experienced as lasting for certain spans of time. Within a dream, we remember what just happened, 'we understand quite well what before and after are, we can make out periods in which events happen all at once, others in which they happen slowly'. But there is limited access to consistent or continuous temporal frames, limited ability to set the present against the past or the future. As Halbwachs puts it, 'all this temporal data does not form a consistent whole: it is discontinuous, arbitrary, and sometimes false'. We are not wholly unmoored in time, but work with a more minimal or less objective conception, in which there is a limited grip at best on any connected or asymmetric timeline. Without a genuine grasp of past and future, we are not in dreams even 'in the real present, that is, in a moment that we and others can locate in relation to other divisions and periods of time' (1994, 51-53).

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[10] Compare Windt 2015, chapters 7-8 and Windt 2018 for contemporary discussions of residual bodily stimulation and motor output in dreams, harking back to earlier ideas about somatic sources in dream science that suggest the brain may not be quite as sealed off, even temporarily, as we might think. For an account that stresses the skilful nature of dream cognition, see Solomonova & Wei 2016.

Halbwachs concludes these passages on the residual social frameworks in dreams with another striking image:

> We do indeed find elements in dreams of the frameworks of space and time in which we organize our perceptions and memories in waking life, but in fragmentary and strangely broken form, like the irregular pieces of the design of a broken piece of porcelain.

It's not clear whether Halbwachs intends the implication that the connected whole could at least in principle be reconstructed. The absence of 'this cohesive force which keeps the fragments of the spatio-temporal framework tightly connected in waking life' allows us first to examine a mind 'temporarily and partly free' of the influence of group notions, and also to 'ascertain how strong the effect of collective consciousness is, how deep it runs, shaping all of our mental life, since even in the isolation of dreams, we still perceive it – lessened and broken, but still recognizable' (1994, 53). Halbwachs takes this investigation onwards into a study of language and inner speech in dreams, and a systematic comparison of dreaming, in which our access to social frameworks is severely compromised, with aphasia, in which we have access to social frameworks but struggle to grasp the meaning of our notions and conventions (1994, 53-82).

Towards socio-cognitive ecologies

The approach to memory I have excavated in these early chapters of *The Social Frameworks of Memory* confirms, to repeat, how off the mark has been some mainstream commentary on his work in 'memory studies'. As Gensburger (2016) too shows, the complaint that Halbwachs reifies the collective, rendering the group a unitary and deadening influence on the individual, is simply not warranted. It's not even that, as Coser puts it, a residual attachment to Bergson ensured that Halbwachs' 'study of memory … left some trace to individual psychology' (1992, 3). Rather, Halbwachs is entirely and directly concerned here with individual psychology, entering fully and ambitiously the heartland of individualist psychology, and offering the revisionary approach by which 'no memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their memories' (1994, 79). In the later chapters, and on into the later works in which he revisits these themes, Halbwachs develops a rich social ontology of memory at multiple levels. I have shown his stress in these early chapters on the active nature of individual cognition in the processes of construction: he will go on to explore such activity on wider scales as he shows how each individual navigates many distinct social frameworks at once. Far from being passive in the face of a single all-encompassing social framework, we are always actively putting ourselves in particular (physical, cognitive, and social) locations, in the place of, or adopting the perspectives of, specific groups (plural). Individual minds are unique but contingent coalescences of multiple constrained points of view. Halbwachs takes this approach on into the analysis of the operation of particular 'notions' in particular social groups, in what we might call applied socio-cognitive ecological studies (Hutchins 2010).

The intriguing prospect of bringing Halbwachs to bear on further contemporary issues in cognitive theory will have to wait for future occasions. I can point simply now to his remarkable 1939 essay 'The Collective Memory of Musicians' (Halbwachs 1950/ 1980, 158-186), which shows how musical notation and musical culture come to transform expert musicians' capacities, as an example of how to address social and material memory scaffolding at once (see Sutton 2009a, 227). Many memory researchers in our time seek to build a shared vision of the study of remembering as public practice at many scales at once, from microsocial interactions to the intra- and inter-group memory dynamics of larger collectives in negotiating and transforming narratives, practices, and material environments (Brown & Reavey 2015; Sutton 2015b; Wagoner et al 2019, 2020). We enquire as to the historical, cultural, and developmental trajectories by which norms come to be entrenched – criteria, for example, for how to report and think about dreams, for what counts as memory (as opposed to imagining, or testimony), for what counts as accuracy in memory, and for the significance of distinguishing the sources of what is remembered (Jablonka 2017, Craver 2020, Sutton 2020). As we aim to integrate experiment, ethnography, and theory, the risk of sociological imperialism in the cognitive sciences is very distant, and in the embrace of richer and risky modes of active interdisciplinary entanglement (Fitzgerald & Callard 2015), we may find an unexpected old ally in Maurice Halbwachs.

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