

2. Theories of memory

Memory is a phenomenon broadly studied by social scientists from various disciplines, such as history, political science, psychology, sociology, cultural studies, media studies, anthropology and linguistics, and it is obviously a subject of study of the cognitive sciences, neurosciences, and genetics. Thinkers have been trying to understand the capacity of *individuals* and *societies* to conserve and preserve images, experiences and knowledge of things past since ancient times. In addition, remembering things past is vital to the processes of constructing collective consciousness and collective identity. Hence, some thinkers put more emphasis on *mnemonic practices* and *mnemonic tools* to understand how societies recollect, reconstruct and practise memory. This chapter aims to provide an overview of the various theories of memory, starting with oral traditions, institutionalization of the past, modernity and oblivion, and memory as a social faculty. Furthermore, the social dynamics of commemorative practices and the functions of *memory sites* are discussed. Different approaches and concepts of memory, such as *mnemohistory*, cultural and communicative memory and *postmemory* are also examined in the chapter. Finally, collective memory will be related to cultural trauma theory.

2.1 Memory in oral traditions

In his *Dialogues*, Plato cites a conversation about the invention of writing between Theuth and Thamus, the king of Naucratis in Egypt, as told by Socrates. When Theuth invented writing, he is presumed, among other things, to have explained its uses to King Thamus. To convince the king of the usefulness of writing he claimed that writing would help men to improve their memory. He said, “Here O king, is a branch of learning that will make the people of Egypt wiser and improve their memories; my discovery provides a recipe for memory and wisdom.” However, the King was not convinced by what Theuth told him about his ‘great’ invention, and he replied, “what you have discovered is a recipe not for memory, but for reminding. And it is no true wisdom that you offer your disciples, but only its semblance, for by telling them about many things without teaching them you will make them seem to know much, while for the most part they will know nothing, and as men filled, not with wisdom, but with the conceit of wisdom, they will be a burden to their fellows.”

Unfortunately we are not able to know from Socrates' story how much Theuth was disappointed by this response from the King rejecting his invention of writing, but obviously humanity followed Theuth rather than Thamus, even in its desire to invent new techniques for recollecting. The function of memory has been an attractive topic of debate for philosophers since Ancient times. This, and how men can remember better were probably vital questions for our ancient ancestors, who relied on oral tradition.² Why did men need to train memory? Simply put, in ancient times, just as in modern ones, men needed historical continuity in time, and wanted to transfer their experiences and knowledge to the next generations, which required good memory techniques. On the other hand, the transmission of experiences and knowledge to following generations is realized in the form of myths, customs and rituals, which also provide and reassure the identity of groups.

The technique to train memory called *ars memorativa* is also the title of Frances Yates' major work in which she explains the origin of this term known since ancient times through the well-known story of the Poet Simonides. Later, in the medieval period, the technique was often explained in terms of architecture. According to this system of Simonides, which would later be called mnemonics, it was possible to train memory by placing the images of things and words in an imagined place in the mind in a specific order, just like placing furniture in the empty rooms of a house. If we think of the times when man did not have any other container or storage except his mind to store knowledge, we can understand the importance of such a system of mnemonics, as it would certainly provide advantages to those who train themselves in it.

There is, however, nothing social about the technique of *ars memorativa*, which basically entails reducing the recollection of the images of things and events in memory to a technical tool. Remembering, however, involves a process of meaning-making. In mythology, except for myths like the Homeric epics that are close to poetry, the myth-story does not remain the same when it is told by different storytellers (Vernant 2002). Instead, the most important thing is to transfer the meanings and the values of the society that are embedded in the story, which does not rely on a technique for memorizing names, words and their order, but on understanding, perception and remembering. In addition, this kind of storytelling, far from being a technique, is also crucial to the performance of narration. Unlike the technique of *ars memorativa*, the creativity of the storyteller is more important than memorizing things word for word. Storytellers in such societies are seen as performers, and thus they are expected to keep alive the attention of their audiences and they need to be creative. Jack Goody argues

2 With the term 'oral tradition' I do not simply refer to societies that existed historically before the medieval or even ancient period. Rather, the term "refers to a society without writing or to a society in which the capacity to produce and understand written symbols (i.e. Literacy) is confined to a small social, political or religious elite" (Misztal 2003b: 27).

that a verbatim narrative – which can be possible using memory techniques like *ars memorativa* – would prevent creativity, whereas in storytelling “every performance is also a creative act and there is no distinct separation between performer and creator; that dichotomy does not exist” (Goody 1998: 92). This was also the concern of King Thamus when he rejected the invention of writing, a technique, like *ars memorativa*, which would result in better memorizing but not necessarily 'true wisdom'.

2. 2 Institutionalization of the past

The problem of preserving, storing and transmitting images and knowledge makes memory take a new turn in written cultures in Europe with the extensive usage of print technology. However, Misztal writes that understanding the past as historical was only possible two centuries after printing was invented, since “in the Middle Ages, memory enjoyed a high status not only because it was valued enormously as a container of virtues and an instrument of thought, but also because of concern about loss of knowledge, since until the eighteenth century even printed books were not perceived as a safe container of knowledge” (Yeo, in Misztal 2003b: 36).

The institutionalization of memory in the discipline of history was not only due to the invention and wide usage of print technology, and to humanity's interest in recording past events. It was also a result of the fact that the rise of the need to construct a national identity for the new nation states in Europe in the 18th century led to the adoption of new understandings of the past. Memory became used as a political tool to legitimate the nation state by simply constructing national identity through myths, commemorations and rituals. In the introduction to their well-known edited book *Invention of Tradition*, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger argue that “‘traditions' which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented” (1983: 1). A good example of inventing traditions is the introduction of a new calendar after the French Revolution in 1789 marked with new official holidays and commemorations, and also new names for the months. Connerton (1989) argues that imitation – 'mythical identification' – of antiquity when inventing rites was quite common in modern Europe between 1870 and 1914: “Royal jubilees, Bastille Day, and the Internationale, the Olympic Games, the Cup Final and the Tour de France: all seek to restore in a new form the celebration of the exemplary recurrent” (1989: 63).

On the one hand, history was considered universal, archival, linear and in a sense progressive during the Enlightenment, whereas tradition itself was understood as 'irrational' (Misztal 2003b: 38). Storing the knowledge of past events and experiences was necessary for progress in the future. The need for

museums, libraries and archives is generated by a fear of forgetting in modern societies. Misztal writes:

[...] these new means of storing and preserving historical events resulted in the proliferation of documents and archives. These were used by various institutions, such as the medical profession and the police, to record names, dates and cases. The institutionalization of memory in archives and museums, the increased opportunity, due to technological innovation, of keeping a record of the past, combined with the fascination of nationalist movements with the past, the proliferation of national histories, a growing interest in the medieval past and the growing sophistication of historical methods, made the nineteenth century 'the century of history' (Misztal 2003b: 43).

In Aristotle's words, this move from memory to history, from tradition to modern, from storytellers to historians, from group-based memory practices to national histories could also be understood as a move from remembering to recollecting (Aristotle 2004: 47-60). Modern societies tend to 'recollect as much as they can,' store every single piece of knowledge, and aim to circulate it as fast as possible. However, this does not necessarily mean they are also good at remembering. Since the past is preserved by institutions and technological tools, it is argued that men's need to use memory is weakened. On the other hand, unlike oral traditions where story tellers circulate the stories of the past, with the modern understanding of history, historians and official history institutions which claim to be objective in providing 'true' memory appear to have the power to interpret the past, sometimes to legitimate the existence of a nation, or to defend the interests of elites or dominant classes.

The counterattack to the glorification of history came from Nietzsche and Marx, together with futurists and avant-garde artists, who are opposed to 'store-rooms' of collective memory.³ Nietzsche does not totally deplore the use of history; instead, he argues that we need history "for life and for action, not for a comfortable turning away from life and from action or for merely glossing over the egoistical life and the cowardly bad act" (Nietzsche 2010 [1873]: 1). His opposition is to the privileged position of history which prevents men from taking action, continuing to live in the present and moving forward to the future. According to him, a human being cannot reach happiness unless he learns how to forget. In his account, the past is like chains which draw human beings back while they try to grasp the present: "there is always one way in which happiness becomes happiness: through the ability to forget or, to express the matter in a more scholarly fashion, through the capacity, for as long as the happiness lasts, to sense things unhistorically" (Nietzsche 2010 [1873]: 3). Historical culture, for Nietzsche, does not allow human beings action, which also raises doubt about

3 Paul Connerton writes that "the attack of the avant-garde was directed mainly against the store-room of collective memory: museums, libraries and academies. The appeal to forget was at its most stridently uncompromising in the manifestos of the Futurists, who denounced intellectuals as the slaves of antiquated rites, museums as cemeteries, and libraries as burial chambers" (1989: 62).

their existence as 'living' beings, leaving only 'thinking, writing, and speaking machines' (Nietzsche 2010 [1873]: 17).

Similarly, Marx argues that man does not make history with his own free will, but rather “the tradition of the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the minds of the living” (Marx [1852]). Every generation tends to act – as in Connerton's view of the repetition of ancient rites – in the traditional way followed by previous generations instead of taking a revolutionary step which has not yet been taken. Like Nietzsche, he suggests that human beings should forget in order to form their own ways of resisting and struggling. As men borrow their strategies of acting from history, every social class will continue to adopt their allotted roles – whether dominant or exploited – which will prevent the working class from resisting its oppression. Marx, explaining the need to forget, writes “the beginner who has learned a new language always re-translates it into his mother tongue; he can only be said to have appropriated the spirit of the new language and to be able to express himself in it freely when he can manipulate it without reference to the old, and when he forgets his original language while using the new one” (Marx [1852]).

Both Nietzsche's and Marx' critiques are against institutionalized history, which was supposed to be universal and unique, and the unquestioning acceptance of it as the archive of the facts. They were aware that the discipline of history was a product of power relations, history being written to defend and legitimate the suppressing position of the power elite. The problems of objectivity, methods and sources for historians are the basis of debates about different approaches to history.⁴ The turn of memory, however, has been one of the most challenging ones for historians in understanding the past. With this turn, their sources moved from official archives to non-official documents such as letters and diaries, from 'important' figures to 'ordinary' men, from the places of history (e.g. nations) to places of memory (ruins, heritages, rituals, commemorations).⁵ history and memory interact instead of being two different approaches to the past.

It was Halbwachs who demonstrated the interacting and conflicting characteristics of historical memory and collective memory. The term ‘history’ no longer refers to the “chronological sequence of events and dates, but whatever distinguishes one period from all others, something of which books and narratives generally give us only a very schematic and incomplete picture” (Halbwachs 1992: 57). History, in contrast to memory, is not dynamic and open to reconstruction in the present time; neither is it “open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting” (Nora 1989: 8-9). There is an interaction between

4 See, for example: Annales School

5 The term *Lieux de Memoire* (sites of memory) is used by Pierre Nora to argue that in the modern age links with the *milieu de memoire* are weakened. For Nora, we live not in memory but between memory and history, in places which could be named ‘sites of memory’ but not ‘*milieux* of memory’.

history and memory. We tend to remember things related to historical events, and mark our own individual memories with dates, events and names that appear in the history of groups that we belong to, such as families, nations, religions and social classes. Historical memory gives us the basis for reconstructing our group memories and continuity in time, which is crucial to identity.

2. 3 Socially constructed memory

Henri Bergson takes memory as a 'definite example' of his philosophy to show the relationship between mind and matter. He focuses on the perception and survival of images of the past in our minds, and the body's involvement in this process, which were acts totally performed by the individual. However, he did not explain, – nor did he want to – the social frameworks for these perceptions of matter or how images are socially constructed in the minds of individuals. Rather, for him, subjective experience was the essential element of the perception of images. For Durkheim, images of memory, as well as memory practices were formed by *society*. Olick argues that 'by connecting cognitive order (time perception) with social order (division of labour) ... [Durkheim has] provided a *sociological* framework for studying the variability of memory raised by Bergson.' He writes:

Where Bergson rejected objectivist and materialist accounts of time in favour of the variability of *individual* experience, Durkheim rejected such accounts by attending to the ways different *societies* produce different concepts of time: Forms of time, like other basic categories, derive neither from transcendental truths nor from material realities, but are social facts, varying not according to subjective experience but according to the changing forms of social structure (Olick 2008: 154).

According to Halbwachs, it is only in dreams that individuals recall images freed from social constructions and meanings. Apart from that, our understanding of the past depends on our relations with the groups we belong to. "It is not in memory but in the dream that the mind is most removed from society" (Halbwachs 1992: 42). In this sense, Halbwachs is the person who conceived that memory is a matter of social construction and who brought memory into the field of sociology. In the next subsections I will discuss three main aspects of his theory of collective memory: the social frameworks of the concept, the presentist aspect of collective memory, and finally the similarities between the term 'collective memory' and ideology as discussed by Althusser.

2.3. 1 Memory – from individual to collective

Marcel Proust dipped his delicious *madeleine* into his tea and the taste of it evoked childhood memories in his mind, which led him to write his novel *Remembrance of Things Past*, which is often referred to in discussions of individual voluntary and involuntary memories. A taste, a smell, or a vague image can evoke memories in us, the whole picture of which we can hardly complete, or at least mostly we are unable to do so. This does not mean, however, that the memory is individual. The whole picture we are trying to complete in these cases is a picture constructed within society, and the meanings we give to these memories are also shaped by our social involvements. In Halbwachs' words "[...] it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories" (1992: 38).

Nevertheless, Halbwachs does not totally reject the existence of individual memory, which he thinks is possible in real isolation. The recollections of an isolated individual would consist of only images without any social meanings, which for Halbwachs means 'states of the body' but not 'states of the consciousness'. Could perceptions of images without any meanings in terms of consciousness be called memory? What we call the memory of an individual in real isolation is therefore no longer memory but bodily recollections. As soon as an individual enters the world of speech and language, in Halbwachs' term the sphere of consciousness, he finds himself in a process of making meaning of the things surrounding him socially. Individuals perceive things together with their values and ideas, which are open to change as the individual's position in society changes. And when we have a memory of the past, the memory images come together with our perceptions, unlike Bergson's argument that the 'memory images' (content) are preserved in the mind (container) just like the images themselves. An image, or a smell, or a taste, awaken a memory of something or someone which could not be followed in our mind by images, words, or names, but – strangely – it is our perception of that thing or that person which comes first. The construction of the past and recall are based on collective consciousness. However, "it is individuals as group members who remember. [E]ach memory is a viewpoint on the collective memory, [...] this viewpoint changes as my position changes, [...] this position itself changes as my relationship to other milieus change" (Halbwachs 1980: 48).

According to Halbwachs, we develop and adopt the notions, values and ideas that already exist in society, and our perceptions of the past are constructed through them. This process starts with language, with the exchange of words. "People living in society use words that they find intelligible: this is the precondition for collective thought. [...] It is language, and the whole system of social conventions attached to it, that allows us at every moment to reconstruct

our past” (Halbwachs 1992: 173). Through language we organize, transfer and understand the ideas, notions and values of group members, which makes it a precondition for a collectively constructed past. Halbwachs transfers Durkheim's theory of social consciousness and historical continuity for group solidarity to collective memory theory. A collectively shared perspective towards the past is necessary not only for group solidarity, but also a group's identity depends on a common understanding of things past. Therefore, for a better understanding of the social frameworks of memory, Halbwachs analyzes various milieus “in which all men – or most of them – spend their lives” (Halbwachs 1992: 176) e.g. family, religious groups, social classes. By focusing on different groups, Halbwachs also wants to show the multiplicity of collective memory, since individuals are members of various groups (and with modernity being based on needs and mobility this variety is even greater) and every single group constructs its own collective memory based on its changing positions. Thus, “collective memory is by definition multiple because there are as many memories as groups” (Miszta 2003b: 51).

The family is a group that individuals find themselves members of with or without their own will, and which has already its own established system of rules, customs, notions and traditions. It is also the group where we begin to learn and adopt the notions of other social constructions. For Halbwachs, “the family is an institution” in which we construct our very first recollections through the commonly accepted notions and customs of kinship (Halbwachs 1992: 176-177). Religion is, as in the Durkheimian tradition, an even more institutionalized social milieu which imposes a set of complex rules and customs on groups that practise it. Through commemorations and rituals, the believers of a religion maintain the survival of images, events and stories that were even generated thousands of years ago. In fact, in the case of religion Halbwachs does not insist on analyzing the present needs of groups to discover their understanding of the past, but rather suggests looking for the religion's grounding in the past to explain its dogmas and rites, as he thinks “every religion is a survival” (Halbwachs 1992: 178). Christianity, in common with other religions, for instance, constructs its past not only by keeping religious stories alive through rituals and commemorations, but also places marks on time. Our perception of time, whether we practise a religion or not, is marked by the events of religion. Religious time, marked with historical events, is also eternal in its nature; historical because its customs are grounded in the past, and eternal since, unlike other social constructions, religion remains beyond a specific time span. In Halbwachs' words:

Since all the rest of social life is developed within the passage of time or duration, it stands to reason that religion withdraws itself from this. This is the source of the idea that religion transports us into another world, that its object is eternal and immutable, and that the religious acts by which this idea is manifested – even though they occur in a specific place and at a

specific date – imitate or at least symbolize this eternity and this fixity through their infinite repetition and their uniform aspect (1992: 92).

In his analyses of the functions of collective memory among social classes, Halbwachs argues that since ancient times social classes have differentiated themselves from each other with a totality of notions and traditions, which can also be invented if necessary (1992: 134). Amongst the nobility, the names of families, their titles and their histories function as tools to ensure the privileged noble people's relationships to the people from other classes, and are also a way of showing the wealth and rank of a noble family. Therefore, the history of families is transferred to the next generations, just as power relations are reproduced from generation to generation. In the case of nobility it is the names and titles which construct the social frameworks, whereas among the commercial and artisan classes, Halbwachs says, it is the tasks and professions. Therefore “a noble cannot be reduced to his function; he cannot become a simple instrument or a cog-wheel, but is rather an element or component of the very substance of the society” (1992: 128). Considering changes that have appeared in the history of social classes, Halbwachs discusses how constructions of the past, of notions, values and thoughts, have a dynamic structure which makes them open to change according to present needs. In doing this, he is simply pointing out that changes have appeared in the perception of social classes and of their functions from ancient times to the extraprofessional social life of contemporary society, with a special emphasis on nobility, which was weakened by the notions brought by the bourgeoisie. He states that: “... they [nobles] slowly became forgotten and no longer performed the functions that fell into decay and were taken over by people of bourgeois origin. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries an entire section of the old nobility of race, blood, and sword dissolved in this manner” (1992: 132).

However, even though the nobility dissolved as a result of the bourgeoisie's new interests, and social frameworks of memory modified, the function of the nobility has not been dissolved, but instead it has been modified and adopted by the new social classes in terms of professions. It is also possible to say that while it was the nobles who “were the main supporters of the traditions” (1992: 139), it is the bourgeois in commercial and artisan society, since “bourgeois society has continued, the manners of bourgeois values copied and still copy the typical judgments of the nobility” (1992: 143). In capitalist patriarchal society, it is the wealthy upper class which uses traditional values to legitimate its power and wealth.⁶ As Bauman writes “... the group actions derive their meaning from

⁶ Halbwachs writes „In any case, necessary fictions helped to save, if not titles, at least the chief substance of them. Society respects wealth because it respects persons who are rich, in terms of the moral qualities that it assumes in them” (1992: 153).

tradition. Historical action – human existence as such, as it were – is, to borrow Heidegger's expression, a constant recapitulation of tradition” (Bauman 1982: 3).

With this change from a hierarchy of values to a hierarchy of functions, and their strength in constructing the social frameworks of social memory, Halbwachs shows there are some values and notions – which are always generated and transferred through tradition (1992: 146) – that remain the same or are only slightly modified but have continued to function in the same manner from ancient times to modern society. This complex set of values and notions is transmitted by means of the traditions supported and practised by social groups such as the family, religions and social classes.

2.3. 2 The presentist aspect of collective memory

According to Halbwachs' theory of collective memory, to provide solidarity and continuity, groups modify the memory of the past according to the necessities of the present. This is a dynamic process of constructing the past, and of generating a collectively shared present which is based on an 'agreed' common past. In his theory, neither past nor present is prior to each other; rather, he analyzes how the past is active in present constructions, notions and values of present social frameworks, and on the other hand how the present has control over forming the past in regard to meeting its recent needs. He writes:

We might perhaps be led to distinguish two kinds of activities within social thought: on the one hand a memory, that is, a framework made out of notions that serve as landmarks for us and that refer exclusively to the past; on the other hand a rational activity that takes its point of departure in the conditions in which the society at the moment finds itself, in other words, in the present (1992: 183).

In Halbwachs' theory of collective memory it is hard to speak about the present's superiority over the past. Past and present are always in interaction in the collective memory of groups since the continuity and solidarity of groups are essential for their survival. He even writes “[a]fter all, the present, if we consider the area of collective thought that it occupies, weighs very little in comparison to the past” (1992: 183). What he wants to denote with the term 'collective thought' are obviously the notions, values and ideas that are transferred from one generation to another (if not invented under the inspiration of already existing ones) in the collective memories of groups.

However, he is often criticized for his presentist approach, for putting more emphasis on the role of the present in the construction of the past and underestimating the power of the past of societies to construct their recent existences, identities, etc. Barry Schwartz (1982), for instance, argues that Halbwachs' idea of construction of the past according to present needs “promotes

the idea that our conception of the past is entirely at the mercy of current conditions, that there is no objectivity in events, nothing in history which transcends the peculiarities of the present” (Schwartz 1982: 376). However, Halbwachs repeatedly mentions that for a better understanding of collective memory we need to look at the sources of groups' present thoughts and actions in the past. For him, traditions have a strong influence on present rituals, and if a group needs to invent new ideas (new traditions as Hobsbawm would put it), they have to be adopted by society in general to survive: “[n]ew ideas would not succeed if they arose within the family itself – if they responded, for example, to a need for independence and renewal abruptly felt by certain of its members. Tradition would quickly overcome such resistance or such temporary revolts. [...] Principles can be replaced only by other principles and traditions by other traditions” (1992: 185). His theory of collective memory as a twofold process with reconstruction of the past and construction of the present both as active elements is further supported by historian Eric Hobsbawm (1983) in his introduction to the book he edited together with Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*. Hobsbawm's main focus is on how societies transform norms, rituals and traditions of the past – and in their absence they tend to invent new ones based on old customs – in order to fulfil the needs of the society in the present. However, Hobsbawm is more interested in the practices of traditions and the preconditions for construction/invention. At the very beginning of his discussion in *The Invention of Traditions*, he clearly states what he means by the concept of inventing traditions: “‘Invented tradition’ is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past” (Hobsbawm 1983: 1).

As the combination of the terms “invention” and “tradition” risks causing confusion, Hobsbawm warns his readers of two phenomena that should not be understood as tradition: customs and convention, or routine. Tradition is a dominating force in traditional societies, while the functions of the latter are more practical (1983: 2-3). Hobsbawm shows how European countries have invented traditions to legitimize their existence as nations. National anthems, flags, even new calendars are adopted as symbols of a collectively ‘imagined past’, and are employed in rituals and commemorations in order to provide a historical continuity for groups or nations in a wider sense. However, the survival of these newly invented traditions is always dependent on groups using them in practice. In Halbwachs' understanding, when present-day ideas are not in a clear opposition to traditions they take the form of traditions themselves. The process occurs in this way: “[a]s soon as each person and each historical fact has permeated [...] memory, it is transposed into a teaching, a notion, or a symbol and takes on a meaning. It becomes an element of the society's system of ideas.

This explains why traditions and present-day ideas can exist side by side. In reality present-day ideas are also traditions, and both refer at the same time and with the same right to an ancient or recent social life from which they in some way took their point of departure” (Halbwachs 1992: 188). It is clear that for Halbwachs there is no hierarchy of present time, or present-day ideas dominating the perception of the past; rather for him it is a two-fold process of traditions being modified by present-day ideas and the past, in turn, being transformed in the present according to the needs and beliefs of the present.

2.3. 3 *Social frameworks of collective memory as ideology*

Although there are many similarities between Halbwachs' theory of collective memory and Louis Althusser's theory of ideology, this relationship has not been highlighted by researchers into memory. Aleida Assmann (2008), in her article *Transformations between History and Memory*, mentions that “the term collective memory is just another name for ideology” (2008: 52) for Susan Sontag. However she provides no further discussion of Sontag's understanding of ideology. Sontag argues that there is no such thing as collective memory, but rather collective instruction; “[a]ll memory is individual, unreproducible – it dies with each person. What is called collective memory is not a remembering but a stipulating: that this is important, and this is the story about how it happened, with the pictures that lock the story in our minds” (Sontag 2003: 86). As I have previously argued in this chapter, although it is the individual who remembers and who has recollections of images, thoughts, notions and values (which are all constructed socially), apart from dreams – since this is the only case where individuals are isolated from social frameworks – there is no individual memory but only collective. Sontag fails to distinguish between individuals remembering and collective memories of the subject which are always constructed (over and over again) within society. An individual remembering does not mean that his memory is freed from its social construction, which also includes 'collective instructions'. Even memories which to us seem totally individual are collective, because we give meanings to past stories from a certain perspective which we have gained within the social groups we are part of. The notions and values that we hold together with our thoughts are always active during the processes of recollection and remembering. Therefore, it is important to examine the question of how individuals are turned into subjects of collective memories, or, in Sontag's words, 'collective instruction'.

This vital point is explored by Halbwachs in great detail in *On Collective Memory*, where he also demonstrates how remembering individuals are members of groups, and each group also modifies its perspective of the past according to its position among other groups, by analyzing social institutions. The similarity

between Halbwachs' theory of collective memory and Althusser's theory of ideology is not limited to the institutions they both analyze (the family, religion, social classes, etc.) but the definition and the function of both terms are also similar. So far, I have discussed Halbwachs' conceptualization of collective memory, but the term ideology remains behind the curtains (which is also its major characteristic). What, then, is ideology?

For Marx, ideology is a superstructure: "the system of the ideas and representations which dominate the mind of a man or a social group" (Althusser 1972: 158). For Althusser, ideology is practised both by Repressive State Apparatuses (the Army, the Police, Courts, Prisons) – where 'violence' is combined with ideology – and by Ideological State Apparatuses (the family, religion, schools, trade unions etc.) – where ideology is combined with repression. He argues that the material existence of ideology is not an abstract, ambivalent, imaginary thing, but "ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices. This existence is material" (1972: 166). Although it has "an imaginary relation to real relations" (1972: 167) its material existence is realized in practices such as rituals, ceremonies, etc. He writes:

[I]deology talks of actions: I shall talk of actions inserted into *practices*. And I shall point out that these practices are governed by the *rituals* in which these practices are inscribed, within the *material existence of an ideological apparatus*, be it only a small part of that apparatus: a small mass in a small church, a funeral, a minor match at a sports' club, a school day, a political party meeting, etc. (1972: 168).

An imaginary relation (ideology) turns into real relations within the activities/practices of individuals in their participation in group activities, which also turn them into subjects. It is no more individual than the subjects: "ideology interpellates individuals as subjects" (1972: 170) – a practising Christian, or someone's spouse, a member of X football team, a student of Y university etc. "[A]n individual is always already a subject, even before he is born" (1972: 176) since, as Althusser states, parts of his/her identity; such as his/her surname – the social framework so to say of the particular family the child is born into, or in Althusser's term the family ideology – has already been constituted even before he/she was born. Other social frameworks/Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), such as gender roles (he/she becomes a sexual subject), school, religion are all set of rituals and customs embedded in the practices of these institutions/frameworks. Halbwachs also discusses the power of names and naming, which also means transforming an individual into a subject. For him, the functions of first names are to establish kinship links, which refer to collectively shared recollections, as well as being able to address the individual; they are 'material signs' that "give birth to characteristic impressions. For this reason, first names, even though they have been chosen without taking the subject to which they are applied into consideration, seem to be part of their *subject's nature*"

(Halbwachs 1992: 72). For Halbwachs, family is also an institution which transfers values, judgments and perspectives to the next generations, through family memories:

[I]n the most traditional societies of today, each family has its proper mentality, its memories which it alone commemorates, and its secrets that are revealed only to its members. But these memories, as in the religious traditions of the family of antiquity, consist not only of a series of individual images of the past. They are at the same time models, examples, and elements of teaching (1992: 59).

Halbwachs shows how some traditions function by securing or legitimizing the position of certain groups using the example of noble titles. Why did people simply accept that they should respect noble families until the bourgeois demolished their power? Their power was either based on wealth or military successes and was secured symbolically by their family names and titles so that the coming generations also occupied the same high rank in society and were respected by others. This is something people learn in society, and consciously accept or not that they will carry it on depending on the power and benefits of their own groups. This is also how ideologies are practised; they are practised through the memories of groups which have the power of transforming individuals into subjects. Althusser's example of a policeman hailing somebody in a public place clearly demonstrates how this transformation is realized. It is a simplistic example: " 'Hey, you there!'...[t]he hailed individual will turn round. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a *subject*. [...] The existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects is one and the same thing" (1972: 174). We learn the meaning and the function of "the police" in society, as well as the meaning of actions, because none of them are free from values, notions and thoughts, or, speaking generally, customs and traditions. In Halbwachs' words "one gets a glimpse of the character of the actors not just as developed by the role they play in this scene, but also in terms of their habitual style and entire history" (1992: 60).

The second essential similarity between Halbwachs' collective memory and Althusser's ideology is the historical/presentist explanation of the concept. Althusser's thesis that "Ideology has no history" does not imply that ideology is "a pure illusion, a pure dream, i.e. nothingness" (1972: 159) as Marx puts it in *The German Ideology*. He argues that "ideologies *have a history of their own* (although it is determined in the last instance by the class struggle); [...] I think it is possible to hold that ideology *in general has no history*, not in a negative sense (its history is external to it) but in an absolutely positive sense" (1972: 160-161). What does 'having a history of their own' mean, and what do we understand from 'having no history'? The power of ideologies is generated by their ability to function in the present time by restructuring its traditions as realities of the present society. This is what Halbwachs argues with his thesis that collective

memory is reconstructed in the present time, although its notions, customs and traditions are borrowed from the past. He shows how our moral and social values are historically determined by the classes we are members of and widely known by other social groups/other ISAs, such as “families, friends, in the newspapers and in literature” (1992: 150). He writes:

It was acknowledged that, in the wealthy classes more than in other classes, is to be found mastery of self, a spirit of sacrifice, a firm disposition to live up to one's ideas, a sharper sense of honesty and priority, more loyalty and fidelity in friendship, more stable family virtues, and an irreproachable moral purity. Poverty became equivalent to immorality, and legislation concerning the poor treated beggars like culprits. These ideas, preserved in collective memory, became grounded in the experience of the virtues – or at least in the manifestations of virtue – of the wealthy.

[...] When we think of such virtues even today, we call to mind the memory of those who were the first to preach and practise them. The prestige that still today is linked to wealth can be explained at least in part by the feeling that the modern idea of virtue was elaborated in the wealthy class, and that the first and most memorable examples of it can be found in that class (1992: 150-151).

Capitalist societies have a necessity to repeatedly invent new moral social values and traditions to mark and strengthen the power of the ruling class and those who are privileged. The newly invented traditions, however, take their power, and hence their legitimation, from previously adopted values forms and practices. Although they may appear new, they have historical roots. If I may finish my argument by referring to Halbwachs again, he writes: “Behind a title, a virtue, or a quality, society immediately perceives those who possess them. Those groups and persons exist in the passage of time and leave their traces in the memory of people. In this sense, there is no social idea that would not at the same time be a recollection of the society” (1992: 188).

2.4 Cultural memory and communicative memory

Halbwachs' legacy of collective memory, his thesis of the dynamic structure of the phenomenon, its social frameworks, and the presentist aspect of memory is discussed by contemporary thinkers from various disciplines, such as history, sociology, cultural studies and linguistics. Some of the prominent studies focus on how memory is mediated between individuals and groups, some deal with the process of transferring memory from generation to generation; others are more interested in mnemonic practices and products. This section focuses in particular cultural and communicative memory as conceptualized by Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann, their contribution to the theory of collective memory.

Halbwachs' theory of collective memory constituted the basis for later works on memory studies which provide further discussion of the functions of collective memory. If collective memory supports the solidarity and continuity of

groups, how can we distinguish the memory practices among various groups according to their duration and function? Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann argue that memory is cultural and communicative. These characteristics are based on its duration of survival in society and whether it is stable or not. Communicative memory is “limited with temporal horizon” and has “no fixed points” (Assmann J. 1995: 127-129). According to Jan Assmann, this temporal horizon “does not extend more than eighty to (at the very most) one hundred years into the past, which equals three or four generations or the Latin *saeculum*” (1995: 127, original emphasis). Communicative memory is memory which is practised in daily life (the Assmanns also call it “Everyday memory”), but since it has no ‘fixed points’ such as rites, monuments or texts, it lasts as long as it is needed by the existing generation. Cultural memory, on the other hand, is ‘distanced from the everyday’, and has its own fixed points (“faithful events of the past, [...] and institutional communication,” which the Assmanns call “figures of memory” (1995: 129)), and these help it to survive longer. But more important than its duration in time, cultural memory has the characteristic of “the concretion of identity” (1995: 130). Jan Assmann explains it thus: “Cultural memory preserves the store of knowledge from which a group derives an awareness of its unity and peculiarity. The objective manifestations of cultural memory are defined through a kind of identificatory determination in a positive (“We are this”) or in a negative (“That’s our opposite”) sense” (1995: 130).

But how is the knowledge which is stored and transferred through tools (such as rituals, commemorations, texts, monuments, etc.) and institutions (such as the media, archives, museums, landscapes in general) constructed? How is this knowledge, embedded in cultural memory, transferred if not through “everyday memory” – the Assmanns’ communicative memory? Or to put it the other way round, could it not be the case that communicative memory functions as identity construction whether in a positive (“We are this”) or in a negative (“That’s our opposite”) way within the time limits of a group (let us say four generations), without having any fixed points? Here I do not mention the role of memory as identity construction or in storing knowledge in oral cultures, nor do I want to make a comparison between oral and literary cultures to discuss the difference between the Assmanns’ categories of communicative and cultural memory. On the other hand, what is called cultural memory, which is fixed with ‘fateful events’, cannot always survive longer than it is needed and used by the groups who practise it. Due to needs that appear in the present, groups tend to reconstruct the past (not only communicative memory, but also cultural) and invent new traditions (fateful events). This means that there exists a two-fold relation between communicative and cultural memory, where each of them plays an active role in the construction of the other. Therefore, neither communicative nor cultural memories are superior to the other, but they are active parts of collective memory which use different tools.

2.5 Memories in practice

To further the discussion of the questions raised above, at this point a shift from concepts to the practices of memory seems essential. Practices such as commemorations, rituals and the tools of these practices – museums, monuments, myths, symbols and the places of memory – are hence subjects of this part of my study. While Welzer and Hirsch analyzed how memory is transmitted across generations in the family, memories of groups (on a local, national, or global scale) are practised and transmitted – and with more and more various tools in the contemporary era of high-technology – among other groups and generations. Rituals using myths and symbols rooted in the past are institutionalized practices of constructing, strengthening/legitimizing, and finally transferring, collective memory. Durkheim, in his masterpiece *The Elementary Form of the Religious Life* (1912), and following him Halbwachs, in his book *The Legendary Topography of the Gospels in the Holy Land* (1941), emphasise the importance of rituals and symbols in the myths in which the religious believe. As Durkheim argues, it is most probably in religious activity that we are most easily able to observe the functions of the rites and the elements which construct myths.

Other studies which specifically focus on practices of memory in states/nations focus on questions such as how nations create a sense of nationhood and a national identity, or how states legitimize their existence by constructing a continuation of a common past, either of suffering or success.⁷ How are symbols (for instance flags, heroic figures), national ceremonies, monuments, museums and archives used as tools to construct a common perception towards the past, a national identity, so to say, and how are they modified in order to meet the changing needs of societies?

At the centre of recent memory studies dealing with the practices of collective memory, commemorations, ceremonies and rituals has mostly been the question of remembering traumatic past events. Paul Connerton (1989) focuses on the Nazi past for his work on commemorations, rites, and myths. As discussed earlier in this chapter on Hobsbawm's approach to the invention of traditions as a way of legitimizing present existences, power relations and orders in social life, Connerton shows how the National Socialist regime used old Christian myths while inventing new ceremonies which are based on pagan components (Connerton 1989: 43). He refers to this set of events and ceremonies as the phenomenon of ritual action, which he considers not only formal action that has expressive purposes, but also a practice of meaning making and

7 See for example Hobsbawm's "Invention of Tradition" as discussed in the previous part of this chapter, and Benedict Anderson's "Imagined Communities".

internalizing. "Rites have the capacity to give value and meaning to the life of those who perform them" (Connerton 1989: 45). By practising ritual behaviour, members of groups show their loyalty to the group and strengthen the idea of "we." The meanings of the ritual act which are embodied and transferred in and by symbolic texts, images and figures are usually perceived and practised without questioning, but this does not mean that their existence is generated from some kind of abstract spiritual phenomenon (although they often appear to be), but from the material conditions of the present and the concrete needs of groups. As Connerton suggests, instead of seeking "to understand the 'hidden' point that lies 'behind' ritual symbolism" (1989: 53) we can focus on how myths and rituals are formalized and performed, on the ways they are effective in transmitting values, notions, ideas and, in general, social memory.

Similarly, commemorative ceremonies are practices of constructing the past – who/what to remember, how to remember. They are acts of collective remembering which in turn fill the gaps in individual recollections, emphasize some of the names, places and events (i.e. ideas, notions and values) – positively or negatively – and underestimate or exclude 'others'. Commemorations are tools for making sense of history and constructing an agreed past. This does not mean that ceremonies like commemorations are 'evils' which impose their own 'hidden agenda' on the participants; rather, individuals themselves may be in need of remembering collectively, mourning together, crying for the same person, trying to recollect from what others remember, and so on. If there is a kind of sorrow in remembering a painful past, there is definitely something 'healing' in commemorating. "The commemoration does the memory work for us" (Gook 2011: 17). If what is commemorated is not a painful past but something to enjoy, then it is even more enjoyable when commemorated with others like oneself. The commemorating individual is no longer the active agent of the practice of remembering, but becomes the passive subject of collective memory work.

Regarding his participation in the commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall, Ben Gook discusses how ideologies function through feelings:

The Festival of Freedom in 2009 was above all a commemoration that reminded us that ideology is always suffused with affect (Cash, 1996: 67). Ideologies are informed, shaped and animated by emotion. [...] emotion is best understood as a constitutive part of ideological identification. Rational interests may play a role in why subjects identify with a certain ideology, but affect is equally important: 'subjects invest psychic energy in the object world and in the characteristics of the self that the ideology has constructed' (Cash, 1996: 71-2). We might also characterize this as the way structures of feelings are central to the functioning of ideologies (2011: 16).

Commemorative practices provide recall of a past which is not experienced, or remembrance of a person who was never known in person, and thus strengthen the solidarity among members of a group. It is memory in practice, remembering

with other members of the “we” group; in short, generating, strengthening and ‘polishing’ the collective identity. “The remnants of experience still live in the warmth of custom, in the repetition of the ancestral” (Nora 1989: 7). Commemoration and rituals are the medium which carries history/tradition into the present, it is the ‘place’ where individuals can participate in it (even passively), whereas with other memory devices (museums, photos, biography books etc.) individuals remain audiences, observers or visitors.

2. 6 Modernity and forgetting

“We speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left.”
Pierre Nora (1989: 7)

Considering the recent growing interest in past times in the social sciences, in literature and in popular culture, we can assume that our age is the age of memory. With the help of technological tools, we are now able to record and store much more than any history books could do for us. Pierre Nora argues that modern memory is archival and “relies entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image” (1989: 13). The more we (moderns) have anxiety and fear about the present – and the future, the more we want to preserve and archive the past. He writes:

No society has ever produced archives as deliberately as our own, not only by volume, not only by new technical means of reproduction and preservation, but also by its superstitious esteem, by its veneration of the trace. Even as traditional memory disappears, we feel obliged assiduously to collect remains, testimonies, documents, images, speeches, any visible signs of what has been, as if this burgeoning dossier were to be called upon to furnish some proof to who knows what tribunal of history (1989: 13-14).

This kind of memory, “archival memory” as Nora terms it, is generated by a shift from historical consciousness to social consciousness. This has also changed the character of public institutional archives, which used to rely on ‘official’ documents, but since the arrival of the age of archival memory they have started to depend more on private documents, family archives, even diaries and photo albums. Moreover, this shift from historical to social consciousness makes the role of professional historians insignificant and the society itself more explicit in public memory. (Schwarz 2010: 46-47).⁸ Schwarz argues that there are two reasons for the change from historical consciousness to social consciousness: acceleration and globalization. Furthermore, the mass media has had the effect of demolishing the hegemony of historians, whereas “the fixers of the past for the

⁸ Nora 1993c: 15 quoted in Schwarz, Bill (2010) Memory, Temporality, Modernity: Les lieux de memoire. In Radstone et. al. (2010): 41-61.

present are journalists. Collective consciousness is not under the authority of historians (anymore) but mass media” (Schwarz 2010: 44).

Similar to Nora’s argument about modern society’s tendency to archive and the shift from historical documents to personal memory products (biographies, diaries, and family photos) Andreas Huyssen (2003) highlights the media’s role in modifying and controlling public memory, or even causing oblivion. The interest shown toward the past in modern times is called the “memory boom” by Huyssen, and he further explains it as follows:

Since the 1970s in Europe and the United States we have the historicizing restoration of old urban centers, whole museum villages and landscapes, various national heritage and patrimony enterprises, the wave of new museum architecture that shows no signs of receding, the boom in retro fashions and repro furniture, the mass-marketing of nostalgia, the obsessive self-musealization per video recorder, memoir writing, and confessional literature, the rise of autobiography and of the postmodern historical novel with its uneasy negotiation between fact and fiction, the spread of memory practices in the visual arts often centered on the medium of photography, and the increase of historical documentaries on television, including (in the United States) a channel dedicated entirely to history, the History Channel (Huyssen 2003: 14).

For Huyssen, memory is no longer a phenomenon, as it is seen by Halbwachs, nor can it be an alternative way of remembering the past by challenging history, but it is turned into a product which is marketed and consumed, for which collective memory approaches “are not adequate to grasp the current dynamic of media and temporality, memory, lived time, and forgetting” (Huyssen 2003: 17). In the age of the ‘memory boom’ (with the help of technological innovations that enable more storage, such as CDs, external memory tools, etc.) and ‘musealization’, individuals consume fabricated or “imagined memories”, which are “more easily forgettable than lived memories” (Huyssen 2003: 17).

Forgetting is not the opposite of remembering; rather, they exist within each other. The dialectical relation between memory and forgetting is well demonstrated by Freud (1925: 207-212) with his metaphor of the mystic writing pad. A mystic writing pad consists of dark brown wax and a transparent sheet which has two layers, celluloid and ‘thin translucent waxed paper’ (Freud 1925: 209). For him, the upper piece, which is transparent and can be rewritten on many times, is like our way of perceiving things, whereas the wax part functions like our memories. It is more or less like taking notes of the things that we do not want to forget on a piece of paper, but after a while, when these memories are no longer needed, the paper is cleaned to be re-used. Nevertheless, the marks of what was previously written remain on the wax tablet.

If we adapt Freud’s simile of the mystic pad to collective memory research, this dialectical relation between memory and forgetting, not as opposites of each other but as different levels of the remembering process, leads us to ask questions about the politics of memory. How does the mystic pad function in terms of collective memory? Who is writing on the transparent sheet (power

relations; state, media, military, perpetrators)? What remains on the wax tablet (memories of the victims, witnesses, the oppressed)? How should it be re-written (confronting the past)?

For Richard Sennett, the modern economy has turned memory into a property, it “encourages such feelings about memory as private property. [...] People do not remember well because the modern economy does not encourage it” (1998: 25). Here, he is referring to Halbwachs’ theory that memory is constructed within society, that due to detachment from groups, individuals start to forget the past they shared with a specific group. Sennett argues that, due to the way the modern economy is organized, it is no longer possible to remember socially, within the group. What makes the process of recall active is the continuity of the narration; what is missing in the modern economy is a plurality of the narrators, a “plurality of contending voices speaking to one another” (Sennett 1998: 14). His arguments are based on his observations of computer programmers who became unemployed but still accepted “their imminent redundancy with resignation rather than anger” (Sennett 1998: 24). Sennett's focus is on the function of memory of supporting or destroying class consciousness. In his analysis, of something that appears to be common in modern capitalist economies, the prior function of memory – remembering as supportive activity for class consciousness – “requires reopening wounds in a particular way which people cannot do by themselves” (Sennett 1998: 24). He asks why in such experiences of unemployment “those conflictual relations are not taking form, why collective memory of shared injury can become a detour rather than a confrontation with capitalism's current pains” (1998: 23). The prominent characteristic of modern society is its 'individualizing' power, together with instability, uncertainty and insecurity, which damage group solidarity, the common sense of the past.

According to Benjamin, modernity not only disturbs memories through individualization, but also as a result of temporality we lose our ties with the past, since with modernity we have moved from wisdom and knowledge to the age of information. In the age of information, what is missing is the 'storyteller' who experienced the stories told himself, or who has heard the story from those who experienced.

Every morning brings us the news of the globe, and yet we are poor in noteworthy stories. This is because no event any longer comes to us without already being shot through with explanation. In other words, by now almost nothing that happens benefits storytelling; almost everything benefits information (Benjamin [1936] 1968: 4).

Belonging to a group and practising memory together with other group members are essential elements of collective memory in Halbwachs' theory as well. As Sennett shows the disturbing effects of individualization in modern capitalist

societies, Halbwachs considers that separation from a group would weaken memory, and moreover would lead to forgetting (Halbwachs 1980: 24-30).

2. 7 Trauma theories of memory

Trauma is a term often found in studies of memory, both in those which focus on the memories of traumatized witnesses/survivors and those that are more interested in the effects of a traumatized past on collective identities. However, questions regarding trauma – how trauma affects memory, how traumatized individuals tend to reconstruct their memories of the past (whether they choose silence or to talk about it), what the disturbing effects of a traumatic past are in the present lives of individuals/groups, whether trauma is something that exists 'naturally' or is socially constructed – can only be discussed after reflecting on what trauma actually is. How should we collective memory scholars use this blurry term in relation to remembering the past?

Trauma means wound or damage in Greek, “originally referring to an injury inflicted on a body” (Caruth 1996: 16). In medicine, the term is still commonly used with its first meaning referring to damage to the body. However, with the works of Freud and Breuer on hysteria at the end of 19th century, the concept of trauma shifted from bodily wound or damage to a psychological wound in the mind (Caruth 1996; Smelser 2004). In this sense, trauma is defined as a sudden shock which destroys the psyche, and/or leaves marks on it. This basic definition of trauma is obviously very general. Historical catastrophes of the 20th century (World War I, the Vietnam War, the Holocaust, and more recently the Iraq War, the September 11 attacks, the Kosovo War and many others that are unknown to the “Western World”) have left many people with various physical and psychological 'wounds' which could not be defined by the general meaning of the term trauma. The new category of post-traumatic stress disorder emerged in 1980 to define the diagnoses of Vietnam War veterans. Caruth writes that the term “post-traumatic stress disorder” (PTSD) was conceptualized by the American Psychiatric Association as a phenomenon which includes “the symptoms of what had previously been called shell shock, combat stress, delayed stress syndrome, and traumatic neurosis, and referred to responses to both human and natural catastrophes” (Caruth 1995: 3). This wide definition of the term PTSD, Caruth holds, led to other 'diagnoses of some dissociative disorders' such as ‘rape, child abuse, [and] other violent occurrences to be understood in terms of PTSD’ (Caruth 1995: 3). Caruth argues that the definition of the American Psychiatric Association also opens a new discussion by relating trauma to specific kinds of events, from where she moves further to a discussion of understanding trauma as historical experience. Referring to Freud's description of traumatic neurosis as having the characteristic of continual repetition (in dreams and hallucinations) and being able to be healed only when the traumatic event can come into memory and be literally expressed, she discusses whether it is the event itself

which wounds the psyche or the memory of the event. Expressing a traumatic experience literally means that it is presented in a context which is constructed socially. Her emphasis is on the historical experience of trauma, which has its roots in Freud's analysis. As Smelser (2004: 34) writes, "a trauma is not a thing in itself but becomes a thing by virtue of the context in which it is implanted". This emphasis has evoked new ways of thinking about cultural trauma (Alexander 2004: 6). Mitchell (1998) refers to the concepts used by Freud with regard to trauma of '*Nachträglich*' and '*Nachträglichkeit*' which mean 'afterwardness'. She writes "[m]emory comes into being only after the trace which marks it: there is no thing, no event, experience, feeling, to remember, there is only that present which an empty past brings into being" (Mitchell 1998: 99). Similar to the emphasis made by Freud and Caruth in the context of trauma ('it is not the experience itself that produces traumatic effect, but rather the remembrance of it' (Eyerman 2004: 62)), cultural trauma is more involved in the phase of its being remembered than in the subjective experiencing phase of the event. Moreover, remembering trauma is at the level of constructing it. Jeffrey Alexander, carries the discussion a few steps further and writes explicitly '[f]or trauma is not something naturally existing; it is something constructed by society' (2004: 2).

The concept of cultural trauma shifts the focus of trauma from the event and the experience of it by individuals to its characteristic of being a socially constructed phenomenon. Olick emphasizes that trauma is not limited to the event which is traumatic, nor to individuals who have experienced that traumatic past. He writes:

[...] Vietnam was traumatic not just for American individuals (to say nothing of Vietnamese individuals), but for the legitimating narrative that we as individuals produce for us as a collectivity. In this way, for instance, the trauma of Auschwitz will not disappear with the death of the last survivor; nor is it carried only through those – mainly their children – who suffered its personal ripple effects (Olick 1999a: 345).

Rather than sudden shocks, pains or violent acts which each member of a group experiences, the concept of cultural trauma suggests paying attention to how such events affect the consciousness of groups, how groups reconstruct their identities together with the marks of a shocking painful violent experience at a macro level of social structures. Furthermore, 'it is the meanings that provide the sense of shock and fear, not the events in themselves' (Alexander 2004: 10).

Contrary to the *naturalistic fallacy* of Lay Trauma Theories,⁹ which puts the emphasis on the occurrence of events, Alexander argues that 'the events do not,

⁹ Alexander states that the lay trauma theory suggests that "traumas are naturally occurring events that shatter an individual or collective actor's sense of well-being. In other words, the power to shatter – the 'trauma' – is thought to emerge from events themselves" (Alexander 2004: 2). He further distinguishes two versions of lay trauma theory, namely enlightenment and psychoanalytic. The

in and of themselves, create collective trauma. Events are not inherently traumatic. Trauma is a socially mediated attribution' (Alexander 2004: 8). He holds that both lay trauma theories, enlightenment thinking and psychoanalytic thinking, 'share the *naturalistic fallacy* of the lay understanding from which they derive' (Alexander 2004: 8). With the definition of trauma as 'socially mediated' and 'socially constructed', Alexander argues that cultural sociologists are getting involved in epistemology rather than ontology or morality. He writes:

Yet, while every argument about trauma claims ontological reality, as cultural sociologists we are not primarily concerned with the accuracy of social actors' claims, much less with evaluating their moral justification. We are concerned only with how and under what conditions the claims are made, and with what results (Alexander 2004: 9).

The concept of cultural trauma, when considered with its links to collective identity and its social character, shares common features with the concept of collective memory, such as:

- Trauma does not exist naturally, but is produced through meaning-making procedures in a historically existing context: 'cultural traumas are for the most part historically made, not born' (Smelser 2004: 37);

- Cultural trauma destroys, or reshapes 'we' and plays a crucial role in the reconstruction of collective identity;

- Cultural trauma is not a static thing fixed in the specific time and place of the traumatic event; rather, it is a dynamic process depending on changing social frameworks, and the traumatized group's position. The meaning of the trauma, and the ways of confronting it will necessarily show differences depending on changing sociocultural contexts. In Halbwachs' terms, norms, values and ideas that are constructed historically within social frameworks would define whether we as members of groups consider an event (more or less) traumatic or not.

2. 8 Postmemory: transmission of memory from generation to generation

How the past is narrated and transferred from generation to generation is obviously a methodological issue for the present study, and I will elaborate on this when I explain my methods of interviewing and interpreting. However, I would like to briefly discuss the term 'postmemory' and its main characteristics. It is used in studies dealing with the re-narration of the past of the Holocaust, and

former requires a recognition of trauma at the rational level which triggers off a change: "[t]rauma is considered as a kind of rational response to abrupt change, whether at the individual or social level" (2004: 3), whereas the latter focuses on unconscious perceptions of the effects of a traumatic event: "Rather than activating direct cognition and rational understanding, the traumatizing event becomes distorted in the actor's imagination and memory" (2004: 5).

particularly with the transferring of memory among family members from generation to generation.

The term is conceptualized by Marianna Hirsch, as a result of her interest in the transmission of Holocaust memories among family members, but this time the narratives focused on are generated from the memories of the survivors. She argues that members of the second generation, whose parents had to experience a traumatic past, re-remember those events, although they themselves have not experienced them, since those “experiences [...] preceded their births but [...] were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right” (Hirsch 2008: 103). This kind of ‘parental past’ is therefore often identified by second generation authors, and various definitions have been proposed in regard to this borrowed memory. Hirsch writes:

The particular relation to a parental past described, evoked, and analyzed in these works has come to be seen as a “syndrome” of belatedness or “post-ness” and has been variously termed “absent memory” (Fine 1988), “inherited memory,” “belated memory,” “prosthetic memory” (Lury 1998, Landsberg 2004), “*mémoire trouée*” (Raczynow 1994), “*mémoire des cendres*” (Fresco 1984), “vicarious witnessing” (Zeitlin 1998), “received history” (Young 1997), and “postmemory.” These terms reveal a number of controversial assumptions: that descendants of survivors (of victims as well as of perpetrators) of massive traumatic events connect so deeply to the previous generation’s remembrances of the past that they need to call that connection *memory* and thus that, in certain extreme circumstances, memory *can* be transmitted to those who were not actually there to live an event (2008: 105-106).

Hirsch considers that it is necessary to name this second-generation remembrance with a new term, since it has a character distinct to the memories of the first generation that experienced the traumatic past directly. Postmemory is a transmitted memory which is imagined, perceived and internalized in the memories of the later generation. “It describes the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before, experiences that they “remember” only by means of the stories, images, and behaviours among which they grew up” (2008: 106). She comes to the concept of postmemory after her analysis of Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* (1991), which is a best-selling graphic novel about the life story of Spiegelman’s father, a Holocaust survivor. Hirsch is interested in how Spiegelman re-narrates the traumatic past experiences of his father, how he creates that memory which he did not experience himself in his own imagination, and the role of images in transmitting memory, especially the power of photographs.

The term is now quite often used in memory studies, not only studies about the Holocaust, but also, as Hirsch assumed, it is used in studies of memories of traumatic past events and their transmission across the generations. There are also many questions which have been generated concerning Hirsch’s concept of postmemory as remembering a non-experienced past. Sarlo argues that it is not possible for subjects to remember the experiences of others (their parents) as

their own experiences. These kinds of experiences are only possible as a result of memories constructed by groups, such as through education, politics or the family (Sarlo 2012: 80). Experience, for Sarlo, cannot be re-experienced, but only re-narrated by others, and therefore there is no need for a new term to describe second generation memories. In this sense, what plays a crucial role in the memory of a traumatic past is subjectivity, by means of which that memory is transmitted and re-constructed by a journalist, a witness, a soldier or a family member. It is particularly interesting how a story of the past is reconstructed by members of a group who have not experienced the events themselves. Obviously, as argued before, reconstruction of the past is not dependent on recent benefits to groups. Therefore, subjects who lack the experience of the past being remembered tend to interpret the past according to their relations to survivors/witnesses/perpetrators who experienced the event (which could be emotional, rational, or strategic.)

Similar to postmemory studies, Harald Welzer in his research about remembering and generational differences in the memory of the Holocaust, describes how social memory is reconstructed among the members of the family. Welzer argues that, although education in Germany efficiently covers all aspects of the historical events during the WWII and students are well educated about the crimes of the Nazi Regime, this does not necessarily mean that students' interpretation of the past is similar to what they are taught at schools. In their project "Transmitting Historical Awareness", through the analysis of 182 interviews with members of 40 Western and Eastern German families, Welzer and his team try to understand how the Nazi Period is being transmitted through the generations and how it is being narrated in family communications – in terms of Assmann's theory of memory, how the Nazi past is being narrated in the communicative memory of the family members. The results of the study show that there is a strong tendency for the younger generations to distance their grandparents from being involved or taking part, or even from directly being the perpetrators when this has been confessed by the grandparents themselves.¹⁰

Sarlo argues that, similar to parents looking at a photo of their missing child in a period of dictatorship, a historian examines the newspapers. The difference between these two acts is not that it is an activity named "post", but the problem

10 Welzer highlights what he terms "cumulative heroization", a process of healing the past from one generation to the next which appeared in twenty-six of the forty family interviews. Children of the first generation re-narrate their parents' stories, as they did not actively take part in Nazi crimes and sometimes even tried to help the "Jews," whereas the grandchildren narrate them more in favour of their grandparents and try to make a "good story" out of it. The other strategy that emerged from Welzer's research is "victimization", which appears in half of the interviews conducted, "thus two-thirds of all the stories were about family members from the eyewitness generation (or their relatives) who were either victims of the Nazi past and/or heroes of everyday resistance. "Grandpa wasn't a Nazi: The Holocaust in German Family Remembrance" 2005: 1.

of subjectivity. This is what makes second generation narratives special: the effect of subjectivity in re-narrating the memories of first generations. A second characteristic of postmemory, Hirsch argues, is that it is a memory which contains many gaps, instead of providing a pure sense of continuity in narration. However, Sarlo asks if we need to use a new term to define this process of re-narrating parents' experiences by the second generation, which is a memory constructed with marks of subjectivity. Since every one of these reconstructions of the past necessarily has gaps and is subject to the subjective interpretations of the remembering subjects, this is what makes postmemory different. Another question would be how different the reconstructions of the past among the members of the second generation are depending on their parents' roles in the traumatic event as perpetrators or survivors (objects or subjects). Considering the relation between experience and memory, another question emerges: that of how the postmemory of the second generation is affected by their own present experiences in recent social milieus.

In the process of making "sense of the past", of a traumatic past containing genocides and massacres, the way that perpetrators and victims deal with/confront this past, and the way that the process of meaning-making takes place is realized through conversations with family members from different generations. Given that "each memory is a viewpoint on the collective memory, that this viewpoint changes as my position changes, that this position itself changes as my relationships to other milieus change" (Halbwachs 1980: 48), then how would members of a new generation reconstruct the past told by their grandparents? Gabriele Rosenthal emphasizes different interpretations of the same past when presenting findings regarding 'Russian Germans' who migrated or wanted to migrate to Germany from the former Soviet Union after the 1980s. In order to prove their ethnicity, migrants documented the involvement of older family members in the Nazi Party or in the SS.¹¹ This research shows how collective memory is by its nature multiple and is reconstructed according to present conditions defined by social frameworks.

Trauma does not need to be experienced by every member of the group for the construction of "We"; members adopt a traumatic past as part of their collective identity out of solidarity. A threat to a group's consciousness, its identity and existence also reinforces the attachment of its members to that traumatic event. Cultural traumas not only strengthen the solidarity of the group but they can also be a part of the politics of legitimizing a groups' recent position or future aims. Diasporas, for example, keep their attachment to the trauma narrated by their ancestors even for many generations, first as the reason which originally constructed their group identity as a 'diaspora', and second as a matter

11 Gabriele Rosenthal, "On the interdependence of collective memory and individual remembering. The homogenization of collective and familial pasts in the Soviet Union" presented at University of Erlangen. 10. December 2010.

of historical continuity (with previous generations, and with the '*heimar*'). As discussed earlier regarding collective memory, memories of traumas have historical roots and are transferred to succeeding generations. Religious and national trauma narratives are good examples of these kinds of memories, which generations even thousands of years later consider to be part of their existence as "We". Alexander states that Benedict Anderson made a similar argument in *Imagined Communities* (Anderson 1991) with the emphasis on the ideology of nationalism, whereas his emphasis is more on the representation of trauma. He writes:

It is not that traumas are never constructed from nonexistent events. Certainly they are. [...] Our approach to the idea of "imagined" is more like what Durkheim meant in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* when he wrote of the "religious imagination." Imagination is intrinsic to the very process of representation. It seizes upon an inchoate experience from life, and forms it, through association, condensation, and aesthetic creation, into some specific shape (Alexander 2004: 9).

It is perhaps this Durkheimian approach to cultural trauma that best corresponds to Halbwachs' collective memory approach. The imagination is constructed in the collective memory of groups; it is narrated, and transferred through the tools of memory. Not every memory is necessarily traumatic, but every cultural trauma exists, is reconstructed, and transferred within collective memory.

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