



Embodiment, Collective Memory and Time

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What Gets Left Out of History Books

People don't sigh. There's no burping.

(Ellen D. Watson)

Take the word *remember*: It comes from the Latin *re* (to pass back through) and *memor* (mindful, mind): *remember* means passing a segment of time back through the mind. Logical as this seems, it is not, however, the only alternative. In Spanish, *Recordar (re-cordis)* means passing a segment of time back through the heart. Implied here is a suturing (Sanskrit *sutra*: string and memory aid), sensuous in nature, that ties me to an otherwise loose past. Recall as well Marcel Proust's famous passage where the taste of a 'little piece of madeleine' shoots him back to his childhood. Beginning on the tongue, the madeleine makes its way up to become a nostalgic memory, an abstraction, and part of an identity. Proust can thus speak of how an 'involuntary memory' becomes a 'voluntary' one, which implies that a felt memory, something embodied, can become a conscious cognitive memory. 'The past,' he says, 'is somewhere beyond the reach of the intellect and unmistakably present in some material object (or in the sensation which such an object arouses in us)' (in Benjamin, 1969: 158). It seems to me that the French

Body & Society © 2006 SAGE Publications (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi),

Vol. 12(3): 51-73

DOI: 10.1177/1357034X06067156

word *souvenir* (*sub-venire*: ‘comes from below’) is Proustian, in that it suggests that a memory can come from below, from the body, if we follow Plato, to then go up and gather around the abstractions of the mind.

But the English *remember* is a Cartesian verb of sorts. It seems to invoke a straight through faculty of the mind, where the Cartesian body – ‘this whole machine made up of flesh and bones’, this ‘corpse’ commanded by a ‘ghost’ (Descartes, 1988: 81, 119) – has little to do with remembering. The verb *remembering*, that is, encourages the impression that memory is a Cartesian effect of the mind and underestimates the mnemonic importance of the body. Lakoff and Johnson (1999) tell us that memory has been represented according to the ‘folk model of faculty psychology’ as a kind of ‘mental entity’ that inhabits the ‘Society of the Mind’, where we find all the other (disembodied) faculties or citizens of the mind, like perception, imagination, etc. ‘After several hundred years,’ they say, ‘a version of this folk theory of the mind [made-up of metaphors and stereotypes] is still influential in philosophy of mind, as well as in the cognitive sciences’ (1999: 410–13). This is also true of many writers on collective memory. Le Goff (1992: 200–5) and Olick and Robins (1998) have spelled out the exceptions to this, but collective remembering is often understood in terms of disembodied psychical faculties. And we have seen very little theoretical and empirical integration of the mental, bodily and cultural elements of collective memory.

Of course, Collective Memory Studies (CMS) have been very useful in helping us understand commemorative rituals and events; or how social groups understand time, especially the past; or how, more generally, we enroll in universes of collective reminiscences and symbols. But at the same time, encouraging age-old Platonic biases with respect to the body, CMS have, first, discouraged the idea that collective memory involves embodied dimensions and practices that work ‘below’ and beyond consciousness. And second, most of these approaches have distracted us from thinking about how *embodied* social actors collectively relate to time. By contrast, expanding upon the French School and the French sociological tradition, I will argue, first, for an approach to collective memory that links up bodily schemata, to mental schemata, to social frameworks. And, second, I will argue that this perspective can give us a distinctive understanding of how social groups relate to time. On the one hand, it can help us understand how collective pasts become sedimented in individual and ‘collective bodies’, so that the past thus becomes vivified in shared presents; and social groups thence ‘naturally’, ‘intuitively’ march toward inherited futures. But on the other hand, I will also argue that an embodied perspective can help us understand how social actors detach themselves from what that the past prescribes for their bodies (e.g. the value of pre-marital virginity), and hence bring to life new practices, new standards, and new futures.

The French School

Although Durkheim was indebted to Descartes and Plato, the French School stepped out from the dominant Cartesianism, from Platonism, and from the sway of the Kantian ‘Copernican’ revolution and its a priori subject. And though Descartes, Kant and Hegel were the dominant figures of this end of the century, many and lasting changes were portended by the French School.¹ To be sure, the Durkheimians established a turning point in epistemology, gradually shifting the focus of attention from mentalism to embodiment, particularly through Mauss’ theory of the techniques of the body. And this was also a turning point in sociology and the locus of a long lasting impulse increasingly concerned with what Heidegger, after Husserl, called the ‘problematic of embodiment’.²

What the Durkheimians said about the connection between body and mind, body and memory are of obvious importance here. So, I will speak of the three main figures of the French School, Durkheim, Mauss and Halbwachs, to lay out the basic premises upon which I will then discuss how embodiment, collective memory and time are connected. Why this trio? Durkheim had much to say about effervescent rituality; about how it instills meaning and cohesion in social groups; about how the embodied social actor, inserted in this kind of periodical effervescence, thus participates in the production and reproduction of social meaning, social renewal, cohesion and creativity. Bear in mind that, because of their effervescence, these rites are highly embodied, and they lean – almost analytically, to use Freud’s language – on the presence and actions and interactions of intensified bodies.³ In turn, following Durkheim, Mauss and Halbwachs put together a theoretical framework to account more fully for what Durkheim’s theory left mostly abeyant – social order ‘in between’ the peak moments of effervescent rituality – Mauss through a theory of *habitus* and techniques of the body, and Halbwachs through a theory of collective memory.

Durkheim’s theory of morality and of the ‘schools of morality’ (1973) did give us a picture of social order in times of ‘calm’. But what Aristotle calls an ‘efficient’ causal account, a ‘mechanical’ account telling us just *what* pivots, what moves and sustains the socio-moral order in times of ‘calm’, was better developed by his two students. By Mauss, first, who showed that although embodiment was at its peak in effervescent rituality, the techniques of the body were first and foremost sedimented through everyday rituality and social habits. What he argued, in fact, was that social order was carried at the very level of the body and expressed every day in and through the techniques of the body. Walking, for example, because it carries not only biological but also cultural markers, can thus leave a trace of meaning befitting certain social positions and cultural contexts.

Walking can thus signal and enact social meaning. To be sure, anticipating Foucault, Mauss suggests that history and society, social ranks included, were inscribed upon our bodies and were thus daily performed by us.

Similarly with Halbwachs: although he thought that collective memory gathers depth through rituality (for example, through commemorative rituals), he also emphasized how it is sedimented through collective mnemonic practices to thus become ‘organically anchored’ within the life and the flux of the social world. So collective memory, he implied, thus carries social order precisely through collectively shared memories, which are linked to mores, beliefs – practices. Hence Halbwachs makes his famous distinction between history and collective memory, where history belongs to a dead past and collective memory lives organically in the present. Here, the *past* is organically anchored within the collective and thus within the *present*; the past is thus actualized, acted out and re-presented by the person. (And so ‘person’ here has the almost performative sense of *per-sonare*, ‘to speak through the mask’, a mask that is given by a collective past and performed individually in the present, a mask that is thus present and past, individual and collective, unique and common.)

As I will show, Halbwachs discusses memory (emphasizing the mind) in terms that are very compatible with Mauss’ discussion of *habitus* (emphasizing the body). And both theories complement the bigger Durkheimian framework, which speaks of two poles of *homo duplex* – precisely, body and mind.

Emile Durkheim

Durkheim was a rationalist in the Cartesian tradition. As he writes,

[We] remain the land of Descartes. . . . No doubt, Cartesianism is an archaic and narrow form of rationalism. . . . But if it is necessary to transcend it, it is even more necessary to conserve its principle . . . of distinct ideas which is at the very root of the French spirit and the root of all science. (In LaCapra, 1972: 8)

From the Cartesian tradition he inherited a *homo duplex* (mind-body) way of thinking. The person, he thought, was one part body, biology, sensory experience, desire, desire for things, things individually valued, the ‘vulgar impressions’, related ‘states of consciousness’ – egotism. Another part, ‘the soul’, as carrier of moral conscience and conceptual awareness, enabled the person to rise above egotism and to join in the social; and the social, thus, as in Freud, is and has to be endowed with some kind of supra-individual moral meaning. The body here is closer to individuality and egotism and the soul closer to collectivity and gregariousness.

For Durkheim the body is thus the pre-social element of *homo duplex*. But although *individuated*, the embodied element is not *separate* from the social. It

is instead profoundly embedded in the social, so that the ‘vulgar impressions’, the ‘sensory experience’, indeed the desires of the lower pole of *homo duplex* arise from everyday interactions with external things. Somewhat as in Freud, for Durkheim the individual and the supra-individual, the body and the ‘soul’ are separated *and* linked in that the former things are the substratum of the latter ones and there is tension and an energetic economy in between. The body, for Durkheim, is the substratum of consciousness in that individual consciousness is released through the overcoming of the egotistical demands of the body, so that consciousness thus tends toward the collective. In Durkheim, collective consciousness, the collective soul which touches *our* individual soul, is akin to super-ego in Freud in that both are the representatives of external, supra-individual demands, law, morality – culture. Durkheim thus speaks of the ‘empire’ that society ‘holds over consciousness, which is often contrary to our most fundamental inclinations and instincts’ (1965: 237). Collective consciousness is hence necessarily released through the overcoming of the egotistical demands of the body, which is its substratum. In fact, for Durkheim, because collective consciousness does transcend the purely individual, it has historically been misperceived and misrepresented through magical and theological languages of transcendence.

This is also the precise point at which Durkheim moves away from Kant: for the French, structural categories of sensible intuition and understanding are supra-individual, phylogenetically – but not transcendental, as in Kant; they are historical instead.

Though concerned with universals and giving us a framework inclusive of enlightenment rationalism and positivism, Durkheim thought, against Kant’s a-priorism, that mental categories are not subjective, universal, and God-given endowments. Durkheim thought, instead, that they are constituted historically, by the very fact that we have to reach others, and through the social (and historical) bonds that human beings need to establish (Durkheim and Mauss, 1963). ‘The fundamental notions of the mind,’ Durkheim writes, ‘the essential categories of thought are products of social factors’ (1965: 170). Categories such as time and space, for instance, are socially constructed: notions of space being effected by territorial morphology, and time by the ‘rhythm of social life’ (1965: 488).⁴ To be sure, for Durkheim categories live and die with social groups. Durkheim and Mauss said indeed that our mental categories *in toto* come out of the morphology of historically attained social bonds; ‘logical relations,’ they said, ‘are, thus, in a sense, domestic relations’ (1963: 84). Meaning in general, for Durkheim, is ontologically attached to our relations to things, and to the types of links we create with other people; even morality is ‘closely akin to material things because [it is] conceived of in tangible forms’ (in Janssen and Verheggen, 1997: 294).

Durkheim's historicism with respect to the categories of the mind can be also compared to David Hume's empiricism, insofar as for the Scot the categories of the mind come from hypotheses infinitely tested through human experience, which thus give us a causal understanding of the world. But in contrast to Hume, Durkheim is interested in the experience of *homo socialis*, which by its intrinsic nature *must* share, must form larger units, fellowships, etc., and therefore must have *shared* forms of thought and understanding (*societas* means unity through shared understandings). This is why Durkheim is very different from Hume. Whereas Hume's perceptionism made him believe that individual selves 'are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions' (in Russell, 1972: 662), for Durkheim individual selves are well defined, fundamentally by the collective, and endowed with a structuring capacity, which already contains categories of understanding – acquired phylogenetically through the social life of the species.

With all this, and under the banner of the French School, a fledgling historicist sociology progressively began to conquer academic territory otherwise under the sway of the Kantian 'subjectivist turn'. Neither partaking from Kant's rationalism, nor going back to Kant's empiricist competition ('irrationalism' for Durkheim, see 1965: 27), the French School began to call our attention to how the subject is subjectified in profound ways by objective and historical conditions.

The Body and Collective Effervescence

The cognitive dimension was surely important for Durkheim. But much as 'his' universal, his cognitive is also a historical and so to speak 'sociologizable' dimension of human nature; a dimension, that is, which is more amenable to scientific sociology than to speculative philosophy. But notwithstanding his interest in the cognitive, one can hardly say that Durkheim is a cognitivist thinker. In contrast to his rational, idealist side, and moving from Plato to Aristotle, Durkheim also said that, 'To live is above all things to act, to act without counting the cost and for the pleasure of acting' (in Janssen and Verheggen, 1997: 295).

Janssen and Verheggen (1997) have said, moreover, that besides the 'cognitivist' Durkheim there is also an intuitivist and non-rationalist Durkheim who places his stakes in collective effervescence, and in its concomitant – non-deliberative, non-mentalist – effects in social meaning. Connerton also says that 'Durkheim . . . does indeed have a non-cognitive performative account' (1989: 103). There is a Durkheim interested in the various ways in which social representations (beliefs, meanings, ideas about the world) are disseminated into the social world by effervescent – thus highly bodily – collective rituals. Here, the

notion of effervescence is crucial, because it opened a new pathway for social epistemology by positing human nature not just as a mental reality but as an (act)ual, experiential, ritual, and indeed intensely bodily, reality. When he writes about effervescence, Durkheim seems to have in mind a strong sense in which social order leans anacritically on embodiment, where the lower pole of *homo duplex* is thus an active substratum of social order.

For Durkheim the key moment of meaning is the act. And key instances of social action often involve rituality. And ritualistic social action involves not always rationalistic social actors but also embodied actors who are more and more 'embodied' as the ritualistic momentum increases. Ritual effervescence, that is, has the effect of progressively lifting consciousness into abeyance – much as extreme pain or extreme exhilaration, often the basic ingredients of effervescence, tend to suspend the workings of consciousness. Against Descartes – for whom affects and passions are 'thoughts of the soul' that obey 'movements of the spirits' and need not have an embodied dimension (1988: 229) – Durkheim's ideas about ritual effervescence highlight the embodied and collectively shared dimension of affect – and hence the social construction of affect and the affective construction of social meaning.

For Durkheim, social meaning and social cohesion are attained by way of ongoing ritual acts which, precisely, get their strongest impulse during the effervescent ritual. This is the peak moment in which social construction of meaning can literally harrow meaning into the very skin of the participants of the rite. A vivid example of this is the funerary rites of the Australian aborigines, who severely wound each other during the funeral, the widow of the deceased burning her breast, her thighs, arms and legs. The Kurnai in North America 'would gash themselves with sharp stones and tomahawks until their heads and bodies streamed with blood' (Durkheim, 1965: 439). The effervescent ritual, highly corporealized, is thus the peak moment in which social order is constructed and reconstructed, and meaning is pierced deep into both the individual body *and* the social body. To a degree, collective representations thus rest on the presence of, and the interplay between intensified bodies.

The body for Durkheim was therefore more than a metaphor for social life. Janssen and Verheggen have said that for Durkheim, 'the body is *the* ultimate substratum for society' (1997: 297, emphasis in original). They show that the Durkheimian social order is created through collective acts and representations whose function is 'penetrating the individual's conscience' where culture is something that 'imprints' its own characteristics 'on the members it comprises', and 'shapes the body and vice versa' (1997: 298).

Halbwachs and Mauss: The Higher and Lower Poles of Homo Duplex

Durkheim showed that collective effervescence constitutes a spindle of social meaning where inherited symbolic universes are vivified, shared and legitimized. But as Lewis Coser points out, collective effervescence begs the question of meaning produced during times of social 'calm' (in Halbwachs, 1992: 25). Coser says that Halbwachs' theory of collective memory filled and fed 'the apparent void between periods of effervescence and ordinary life' (in Halbwachs, 1992: 25).

For Halbwachs, to be sure, the glue that holds social groups together is constituted in part by collective memory, which is thus a synergist of social meaning and action, and of individuality and collectivity. Groups, he shows, have collectively relevant experiences and related viewpoints that traverse individual lives. And thus, universes of social things irradiate their particular colors through the glasses of individual consciousnesses and identities. We thus partake from the stakes, the rhythm and the memories of our milieu, and therefore feel this or that collective grief, and this other sense of pride, or of normality. Thus we come to think of a 'we' and a 'them'. Halbwachs implies, in fact, that even our most intimate, 'individual' memories can be structured by social frameworks, and can take on a related slant or degree of importance. He often speaks with an ontological undertone that tacitly speaks of *being*, my *being*, what I *am* – which is not separate from my memories. Think of severe forms of memory loss: what one *is*, our coherence, affects and ties to the world can vanish hand in hand with our memories. What Halbwachs implies is that, as loss of memory brings non-being into us, acquisition of memory, by contrast, brings us into being, into my mode of being, into what I am. And, because memory is permeated by the collective, our being is therefore permeated by collectivity, and by time and place. Thus, memory shelters us from radical loneliness; for we *are*, ontologically, part of a collective, individuated but not separate.

Much as Durkheim, Halbwachs also speaks of time not as a Kantian or mathematical thing, but as something subjective. In fact, Durkheim's idea that time is something collective and historical was taken by Halbwachs who, turning from Bergsonian individualism to Durkheimian collectivism, made it the spindle of his theory. And so collective memory, for Halbwachs, is in a strong sense about how collectivities *live* common understandings of time, especially of the past.

Perhaps, as Coser says (Halbwachs, 1992: 25–8), Halbwachs overemphasized the role that the present has over the past, suggesting that we constantly impose present imperatives upon the past. And thus, perhaps he underestimated the *presence* of the past; how the past flows unto the present to impose its character; how we presently carry our past. For my part, I will argue that an embodied perspective (Mauss) can not only complement Halbwachs' ideas about collective

memory, but can also help correct his presentist slant. On the one hand, as I will argue below, embodiment can help us see how we can ‘naturally’ carry, in our bodies, the strong presence of the past; for example, when traditional forms of engenderment become incarnate in us. But embodiment can also help us see how social actors relate to the future; for we can also disentangle ourselves from the requisites of the past, of tradition, and thus open our lives unto the new. Think of feminism, for instance, and of the modalities of embodiment it bequeathed to modernity (new sexual, gestural, affective, sartorial standards). These imply breakages with, and the creation of, embodied traditions, where nonconforming bodies began to call forth the things of the future; including, of course, not only new things of embodiment but also new laws, new gendered divisions of labor, a new cultural logic, new traditions (and hence also new struggles and anxieties). Feminism opened up, in sum, new futures for embodied social actors and groups.

Halbwachs’ theory of collective memory is a part of the puzzle that, under the leadership of Durkheim, the French School tried to put together to address the old Hobbesian question of order and the questions of meaning and action. But this puzzle is incomplete without the work of Durkheim’s nephew, Marcel Mauss: Whereas Halbwachs was concerned, one could argue, with the higher pole of the Durkheimian *homo duplex* (at the level of groups), Mauss was concerned with the lower pole (also at the level of groups). As I will show, Mauss and Halbwachs are in constant dialogue with one another. And this dialogue is indeed about the possibility of synergy and integration between collective minds and collective bodies, the lower and higher pole posited by Durkheim. And further, the dialogue is about how these social poles impinge upon the *individual* minds and bodies – triggering, through their mutual implications, *individual* meaning and action. What is further suggested by them is that the question of individuality, in the last account, is not first and foremost a question for an individualistic psychology or for a philosophy of consciousness, but for sociology, and more generally, a question about how collective and historical processes sediment individuality.

Mauss’ ideas on habitual bodily practices (1973) involve original insights that, like Halbwachs’ theory of collective memory, also account for meaning in ‘between’ periods of collective effervescence. Mauss’ theory of the techniques of the body speaks of meaning produced across mundane and minute rituals in everyday life. Drawing from Aristotle, he is interested in cultural practices that operate at the level of habit – or more precisely, of *habitus*. As he says,

For a good many years I have had this notion of the social nature of ‘habitus’ . . . The word translates infinitely better than ‘habitude’ (habit or custom), the hexis, the ‘acquired ability’

and ‘faculty’ of Aristotle [*habitus*] does not designate those metaphysical habits, that mysterious ‘memory.’ In [*habitus*] we should discern techniques and the work of collective and individual practical reason. (Mauss, 1935: 6)

For Mauss the body belongs not only to biology and psychology but also, crucially, to sociology and consequently to history. For him, the body is a crucible of social meaning because its potentialities, though born in nature, are ultimately realized through culture. In his oft-quoted ‘Techniques of the Body’, Mauss sets up a whole taxonomy of bodily techniques (by gender, by age, by ‘output’, and by type of transmission of the technique), which are sub-classified into techniques of birth, of infancy, of adolescence, of adult life, which are still more complexly sub-categorized. Under the Techniques of ‘Care for the Body’, sub-division of ‘care of the mouth’, for example, he writes the following:

[C]oughing and spitting technique. Here is a personal observation. A little girl did not know how to spit and this made every cold she had worse. I made inquiries. In her father’s village and in her father’s family in particular, in Berry, people do not know how to spit. I taught her to spit. I would give her four sous (coins) per spit. As she yearned to have a bicycle, she learned to spit. She is the first person in her family who knows how to spit. (Mauss, 1935: 16)

Harkening back to Plato’s *techné* and forerunning Alasdair MacIntyre’s Aristotelian view of tradition (1988), Mauss says that a technique is an act

... that is traditional and efficacious (and you see in this respect that is no different from a magical, religious or symbolic act). It has to be *traditional* and *effective*. There is no technique and no transmission if there is no tradition. (Mauss, 1935: 8, emphasis in original)

The body here is the first realm of technology; a technology that is traditional and works efficaciously within a certain social order. Here Mauss is one step ahead of his uncle, by showing that the body has dimensions that are clearly not pre-social. Indeed, with this renewed theory of the social role of the body, the nephew gave a greater impulse to the objections that Durkheim had posited against philosophies of the agent, based on an idealist, radical autonomy of consciousness. And in the spirit of the Neo-Pythagoreans (Galileo, Kepler) who contested the dominant deductionism and the teleological biases of scholasticism, Mauss posited a non-teleological and inductionist framework for sociology. ‘[W]e must proceed,’ he said, ‘from the concrete to the abstract and not the other way around’ (1935: 3). And so he opened up a new epistemological approach dealing with the relationship between nature and culture, and the concrete and the abstract. Henceforward, questions about human nature – now outside teleological, a-prioristic, rationalistic and subjectivist frameworks – increasingly began to be formulated from the point of view of the historical crisscrossing of biology, psychology and sociology.

The French School thus provided something of a *Novum Organum* for the social sciences, which was embodied in Durkheim's treatise on method (1982), and in Mauss' tiny but important essay on Total Man; 'total' insofar as it was inclusive of biology, psychology and sociology (1923). Here a sort of 'total sociology' was insinuated and passed on to us, which was 'totally' heedful of psychology and biology. (And which has been overlooked, to an extent, by mentalisms of various sorts.)

Again, there are striking parallels between Halbwachs' theory of memory and Mauss' theory of the body. If Halbwachs says that 'It is in society that people . . . acquire their memories' (1992: 38), Mauss implies that it is in nature that we acquire the body, but it is in society that it is released in its potentiality (1935). If Halbwachs suggests that our memories vary along with the variations of the social, Mauss suggests that our bodies vary with social time and space. Our body techniques and habitus, Mauss says, 'vary not only just with individuals and their imitations; they vary especially across societies, educations, proprieties, fashions' (1935: 6). If Halbwachs, according to Patrick Hutton (1993), shows that 'memory is only able to endure within sustaining social contexts . . . [because] individual images of the past are provisional' (1993: 6–7), Mauss shows that the body is also sustained by specific social contexts, in which tradition and technique are rehearsed. Halbwachs shows that memory is a marker and a yardstick of social and historical differentiation; and Mauss shows that the body is a marker and a measure of social differentiation (thus anticipating Elias and Bourdieu). If against the grain, Halbwachs says that memory is a non-individualistic creation, Mauss, against the grain, says that the body is largely a non-individualistic social construction. Individual memory, for Halbwachs, cannot function but through 'shared interactions'; for Mauss, the body is the product of social interplay. Halbwachs says (1) that 'the life of the child is immersed in social milieus through which he comes in touch with a past stretching back some distance. The latter acts like a framework into which are woven his most personal experiences' (1992: 68); and (2) that, 'collective memory provides the group a self-portrait that unfolds through time, since it is an image of the past' (1992: 68). Mauss could have written these sentences having in mind the ways in which the body is incorporated in society and tradition: to paraphrase Halbwachs adding Mauss' language: the 'most personal experiences' of the child are the 'most personal [bodily] experiences in touch with a past stretching back some distance'. According to both Mauss and Halbwachs, we perceive our bodies and our memories, as unique, autonomous, and original – despite their entrenched social nature (and again Bourdieu is anticipated). And to be sure, both of them speak with an ontological kind of ring which suggests that bodies and memories have very much to do with what one *is* and with how and why one is.

The continuities between Halbwachs and Mauss are not coincidental, for memory and the body are largely assembled through the labor of socio-historical apparatuses. Much later, Paul Connerton (1989) in a sense subsumed the work of both students of Durkheim into an integrated theory of embodied collective memory. Against the 'current orthodoxies', Connerton says, 'Every group . . . will entrust to bodily automatisms the values and categories that they are most anxious to conserve. They will know well the past can be kept in mind by habitual memory sedimented in the body' (1989: 102). Memory, he suggests, is not only 'inscribed' through the construction and display of cultural texts like printed media, etc., but also 'incorporated' in bodily practices. Collective memory is thus not only about conscious commemorative practices but, at a different level, is also a dimension of a socialized body. And in turn, the culturally integrated body is a dimension of collective memory. To twist a phrase by Nietzsche, cognitive memory recollects the historical 'I' while the body *does* the historical I.⁵ Collective memory is not inscribed on the body as a dead letter, but it is vivified by 'it'; and thus embodied memory becomes 'organically' integrated into the world, as Halbwachs wanted it. 'Organically', that is, not only because embodiment is an integral part of the social 'organization'; but also in a more literal sense, in that culture is hence transubstantiated in the materiality of bodies, their movements, pleasures, etc. Bodies are thus mnemonic media for the social. On the one hand, their criteria are habit and rituality, and their function is vivifying the past through ritual and habit-oriented practices, so that the past can be organically, 'naturally' tied to the present. Peter Burke (1989) has determined certain means of transmission of collective memory: oral history, written records, visual record, commemorative spaces, and actions (e.g. rituals). Bodies are also means of transmission of collective memory, whereby tradition and the past are vivified. But on the other hand, and precisely because bodies are media of transmission of memory, they can also be sites where embodied collective memories are rendered lifeless – and, whence, where tradition and culture are rendered discontinuous.

The Life of the Past and the Life of the Possible

Some examples might thicken what I have discussed so far. What I call embodied collective memory involves a constellation of things of embodiment. Though Mauss emphasizes the gymnastic body, it is enough to browse through the literature (Feher et al., 1990) to see that a vast variety of embodied expressions organically tie the individual to the supra-individual, the internal world to the external world, the concrete to the abstract, and social life (in the present) to tradition (the past).

This is suggested by a vast empirical and analytical corpus that touches on things such as the history of bodily embarrassment and scatology (Elias, 2000; Paster, 1993); the anthropology of hygiene and bodily purity and profanity (Douglas, 2000: 21; Durkheim, 1965: 339; Goffman, 1971: 49); the genealogy of pleasure and sexuality (Foucault, 1976, 1984a, b); the sociology and history of gender and engenderment (Butler, 1993; Bourdieu, 2001); the history of sentiments (Camille, 1998; Paz, 1995); of gesture, and the ethics and aesthetics of gesture (Bakhtin, 1984; Elias, 2000; Goffman, 1971; Schmitt, 1990), etc. Even if we take such an intimate and ‘individual’ emotion as weeping, for example, we can find, incarnated in it, the specters of the collective. Weeping is ‘not exclusively psychological or physiological phenomena, but social phenomena eminently stamped by non-spontaneity and by the most complete obligation’ (Maus, 1921: 21). Collective experiences, past and present, can make us weep; and our social group can therefore unite around shared sentiments. But social frames and traditions can also make us weep in collectively articulated ways, so that not only *why*, but *how* we invoke and perform shared sentiments can also unite our social group. The abstract images in the memory of the weeper and the concrete ways in which he sheds and manages his tears are points of intersection that connect the individual to the collective, nature to culture, and the present to the past. Even our senses partake from the historical (Berger, 1991; Debord, 1977; Merleau-Ponty, 1964; Plato, 1987: 98–106). Walter Benjamin says that, ‘The manner in which human sense perception is organized, the medium in which it is accomplished is determined not only by nature but by historical circumstances as well’ (1969: 222).

I cannot discuss these references in detail here. But I will say that they speak of collective symbols and institutional orders that become incarnated in the minutiae of gestures, movements, pleasures, tastes, affects, in certain bodily taboos, etc. They suggest that the individual’s intuition – on the brink of the muscular, the mental and the cultural – ‘naturally’ partakes from the logic of culture. And that we thus learn to speak the sign language of history, of faith, of class, of gender. The literature also speaks of concerted vivifications of the inherited imperatives of the symbolic order. It implies that culture gives rise to balletic enactments that are carried out by people who act with various degrees of automatism or awareness. These cultural enactments can stand ‘beyond the reach of consciousness and explicit statement’ (Bourdieu, 1990: 69). And here, social frameworks become entrenched in some forms of embodiment (in certain forms of engenderment, for example Bourdieu, 2000); so that, hence, social actors share rather unconscious cultural mnemonics. But embodiment also involves more consciously performative actions: Ervin Goffman shows that habitual yet performative corporeal signaling is at the basis of institutional and social orders

(1971). Front-stage laughter, for example, is part of our embodied rhetoric, which we deploy – on the brink of habit, rite and choice – to put our social exchanges on a conventional footing (1971).

In general, there is a sense in the literature in which ‘the world of institutions appears to merge with the world of nature’ (Berger and Luckmann, 1967: 90). Or, more radically, Jacques Derrida has said that in fact, ‘There is no nature: only naturalization or denaturalization’ (quoted epigraphically in Butler, 1993: 1). For my part, I suggest that, though social actors can carry in their bodies the weight of social frameworks and the weight of their past, they can also respond to the social forces that gravitate over their bodies and imaginations – as shown by the previous example of feminism and its responses to traditional forms of engenderment (I will discuss this in the final section).

The Politics of Embodied Collective Memory

I have recurrently returned to the example of gender for a tactical reason: because it involves many embodied dimensions that can show the manifold nature of embodiment at work. Manhood and womanhood involve many forms of cultural mnemonics and related cultural enactments. Symbolic order ‘girl’ girls and ‘man’ men according to various cultural (and political) calls. And being a man or a woman involves many aspects of embodiment: techniques of the (engendered) bodies, gendered affects, management of desires, culturally contingent gestures, sartorial standards, standards of bodily beauty, phonetic dispositions, etc. Each of these – partaking from the bodily, the mental, and the cultural – is often charged with collective significations, and hence conveys ‘retail’ consistency to social groups – including psychological consistency; for many people will feel assured when they can see and hear that men and women are men and women proper. And in the end, these minutiae of embodiment can set in motion larger cultural choreographies, which, often rehearsed over the lifespan of the citizens, demarcate social and cultural boundaries; boundaries of gender, of sexual identity, of normality, of nationality, class, religion – of time and place.

Embodied collective memory thus involves a politics of identity, as well as anxieties over the correctness of individual identities with respect to collective expectations. But it also involves the anxieties and struggles of contesting identities. Halbwachs said that collective memory ‘is a record of resemblances’. It ‘is the group seeing from within [. . . and] provides the group a self-portrait that unfolds through time, since it is an image of the past’ (1980: 86). Embodied things, unfolding from the past unto the present, can also be records of the past that help the group see from within. And because bodily things are also things of identity, they can be sites from where cultural identities, boundaries and

consistencies are disturbed. For, again, though embodied things can be carriers of the past, they can also call forth the unfamiliar things of the future (for instance: gayness, feminism). Note as well that these bodily things often carry the imperatives of institutions: of family, church, schools, streets, etc. Institutions that, partaking from the larger symbolic order and its divisions and scales, are often in charge of coaching the incarnations of history (us), of the institutional order – and of the political order (Foucault, 1995). For the body is not only shot through with culture but also with politics and political struggle.

Back to the example of gender, that manhood or womanhood involve incarnations of the past also means that men and women can incarnate inherited social hierarchies and unfair allocations of power (Bourdieu, 2000). Bodily things can thus be traditional and efficacious, as Mauss had it, not only because they have a vital function within the larger social arrangement, but also within its divisions and hierarchies. And they are efficacious, as well, not only because they can provide groups with boundaries, as Halbwachs would say, with a sense of ‘we’ and ‘them’ – but also with a sense of ‘normality’ and ‘abnormality’, of horizontality and verticality. Social groups can thus call upon things such masculinity or femininity to enact or reassert group identities, traditions and social scales. And likewise, individuals and groups can call forth these things to contest the given order of things. Le Goff says that collective memory is an important stake ‘in the struggle for “power” among social forces’ (1992: 54) – likewise with embodied collective memory.

Note also that the struggles of embodied collective memory are not necessarily mediated by rational, conscious dialogue or dispute. For social actors can speak ‘from body to body’ (Bourdieu, 1991: 81–9, 2001: 95), so that commonalities, differences and social ranks can be understood and asserted in ante-predicative terms, through aphasic inflections, subtle gestures and movements (see also Crossley, 1997). But likewise, through these ante-predicative bodily things, social forces can bring about new and dissenting cultural stakes, as suggested, for instance, by the history of gay movements (Chauncey, 1994). Indeed, the example of gayness is paradigmatic. Implied by Chauncey’s work is that the coming out of individuals and communities involved *acting* out new dispositions, dissenting phonetics, new collective gestures, new things sartorial; it cured and decriminalized the ‘diseased’ and illegal pleasures of the past, etc. Here, new *habituses* (phonetic, kinetic, sartorial, etc.) began to acquire collective dimensions, which stood in contrast to the dominant embodied memories, their related social and cultural capitals, and their matter of course expectations.

Twisting now Anderson’s famous phrase, I argue that communities are not only imagined, but can be also experienced and enacted through the body,

through habitual and ritual practices. There is a sense, in fact, in which bodies are reified communities, and sometimes struggling communities. But as bodies reify and thus ‘remember’ communal things, they also are sites of forgetfulness. For, precisely because we embody the things of community and culture, we hence tend to forget that these ‘natural’ things in us are largely things of culture, and that they hence partake from chance and arbitrariness. Embodied memory, that is, inveigles us into forgetting the *arbitrariness* of our ‘nature’ and of our natural commonalities and distinctions. Ernest Renan said, following Hume, ‘The essence of a nation is that all the individuals have many things in common and also that they have forgotten many things’ (1982, my translation). Embodied collective memory also means that we share many things in common while having forgotten many things; for it is in our nature to forget that our nature is often an expression of culture and arbitrariness – that human ‘nature’ is largely embodied collective memory.

That bodies are ‘reified communities’ also means that they are reifications of tradition and thus, of time. *Traditium* means ‘handed down by the past’. And ‘tradition’ is an ‘inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action and behavior’ (Webster Ninth New Collegiate). This can surely be applied to bodily schemata. And in fact, forms of embodiment can be as traditional and socially binding and dividing as our commemorations of national defeats and victories, of ‘properly historical’ tradition. If we go back to the origins of the word ‘nation’ in the sense of *nationem*, which is akin to *natura*, we could argue that bodies are also reified nations – not only in that embodiment can give us a tacit and ‘natural’ historical self-portrait, but also in that naturalized (embodied) kinships can give social groups the force that holds them together or pulls them along certain historical courses. Recall that the most destructive war in history was largely set off by a notion of race that stood with one foot in nature (biology) and the other in naturalization, in an embodied collective memory.

Embodied Collective Memory and the Sociology of the Possible

Collective memory is not only about remembering (the past) or about social order and action (the present), but, critically, it is about how social groups project themselves toward the future. Similarly, embodied collective memory involves a *structure of possibilities*, which helps individuals and groups apprehend not only the past and the present – but also the possible. Mauss and his tradition have shown that the body is the first domain of technology; a technology that works more or less in synchrony with the requisites of culture and of tradition (the past). This idea has added an efficient causal account to the Hobbesian question, helping us understand what forces sustain social order. But we still have to add

efficient causality to the idea of embodiment itself: that is, what kinds of forces, external *or* internal, interact throughout the processes of embodiment? Is the body an iterative structure wherefore the past is repeated and the collective incarnated? Are the techniques of the body grafted over a *tabula rasa*, which, as it becomes grafted, itself helps out in the process of its grafting for this technology to become 'traditional and efficacious' (Mauss)? Or do these external/supra-individual forces interact with possibly conflicting internal/individual forces for embodiment to be set in motion?

To begin thinking of an analytical approach that might help us overcome any 'iterativist' biases, I suggest that, heeding Nietzsche, we first make a distinction between anatomy and physiology (1978). For Nietzsche a corpse is anatomy without physiology. And physiology is an apparatus, and the mastery of an apparatus, self-mastery and/or mastery from the outside. Here, the body is neither a blank slate, nor an iterative structure wherefore the past is inertially repeated and the collective transubstantiated. Instead, in the famous phrase by Zarathustra, the body is 'a war and a peace, and a herd and herdsman', a constant test for us, a terrain of struggle where mastery is at stake, where possibility can stand its ground against actuality. Nietzsche says that a 'healthy' body is an economy of forces where the internal world is connected to the world through give-and-take exchanges of energies. Thus, his philosophy of the possible should be of help; for, having come upon the technological hypothesis of embodiment (Mauss), Nietzsche intrudes with important questions: who or what is doing the mastering throughout the 'technologization' of the body: the internal or the external, nature or history, the individual or tradition? Under which conditions do these things exert their influence and to what extent?

Nietzsche's perspectivism with respect to the possibilities of embodiment should quickly put Freud in view, who, coming from Nietzsche in many ways, also speaks 'technologically' of a bio-psychical apparatus and its struggles for mastery (e.g. Freud, 1984). Freud should help us add efficient causality to what Durkheim said about the conflicts between pre-social bodily egotism and collective consciousness (lower pole of *homo duplex* vs. higher pole). For Freud this conflict is a *conflict* precisely insofar as the apparatus, in the last account, is ignited by radical individuality and egotistical energies; energies whose ante-predicative purpose is to counter, as much as possible to overturn, the forces of what Durkheim called collective consciousness. A Freudian perspective should help us see that the supra-individual forces – whose role is to hold 'empire . . . over consciousness . . . [often against] our most fundamental inclinations and instincts' (Durkheim, 1965: 237) – can be totally imperious only at the cost of rendering life pathological; only when the internal world collapses under the

weight of the external world. Durkheim formulated this in terms of altruistic suicide. But the Freudian point to be made is that when not pathological or suicidal these forces have to fight an inseparable force: that of pre-social egotism and subterranean individuality. Defining *homo duplex* thus, as a seat of possible conflict, should help balance any supra-individualist bias in the notion of *homo-socialis*, which emphasizes, of course, the *socialis*. This is a notion that is crucial not only to Durkheim but also to the larger objectivist and historicist tradition that we have inherited from the Durkheimians. Defining *homo duplex* as a seat of conflict should help, in turn, set the analytical bases to posit embodiment not only in objectivist and iterativist terms, but as a structure of possibilities.

Merleau-Ponty (1964) said that the only thing about the body that is not historical is its ability to reflect history, so that the embodiment of history as such is inevitable. But whereas the ‘technification’ of the body is inevitable (we have to learn to walk and talk, and we do so in collectively significant ways) – and whereas the struggle between the upper and lower pole *homo duplex* is inevitable – the ‘docilization’ of the body is not. For each of us carries a measure of radical individuality in varying states of weakness or potency. And we are thus endowed with the possibility, however weak or dangerous it might be, of breaching the superordinate demands of supra-individuality, of morality, of collective consciousness, and the demands they impose on the body. This could result in anomie and indeed in anomic suicide, or in originality and innovation. But either way, possibility stands a chance against actuality, and varying degrees of ‘docilization’ and disobedience can hence arise through the course of embodiment. These contestations can take purely individual dimensions (the solitary ‘sodomite’ who acts out, invisibly, against his historical horizon). But they can also take on social dimensions and open social possibilities (gay culture and politics). The slogan of a gay sex party in New York reads: ‘Building a sexual revolution one sexy brutha at a time’.

So the notion that embodiment is a structure of possibilities means, first, that notwithstanding the very heavy weight of social frames, the outcomes of the struggles of embodiment are not determined by external social forces alone. But, second, it also means that the value or utility that such outcomes might have for individuals and groups can vary in terms of oppressiveness or usefulness, or anomie or altruism. Perhaps the past manages to grow a strong grip upon embodiment, so that the unfair specters of tradition will thus have an incarnate presence in the body and thus become organically present in life. (With our naturalized acquiescence, of course; for it is we and our daily practices that make embodied social memories come to life.) Or perhaps, as the conservative argument says (e.g. Aristotle), embodying the past could be the most desirable

thing. For embodiment could thus carry the good virtues of the polis, so that cherished shared principles become transubstantiated in us and in the body polity, and hence vivified and transmitted, even intuitively, from generation to generation (bear in mind that virtuosity in the arts sometimes involves a mastering and indeed an embodiment of tradition). Or perhaps social actors will overturn predominant forms of embodiment ('sodomy' into 'gayness'), so that the new is thus called forth; so that their lives move unto the new and unto the possible – and unto the anxieties, risks and battles that the new often carries.

That embodiment is a structure of possibilities means, in sum, that the past may be the temporal variable that gravitates over life, for good or bad. Or that, perhaps, our inherited embodied collective memory, for good or bad, loosens its incarnate grip over social life, and so it grows to be dead (embodied) collective memory, as Halbwachs had it. If this happens, life will begin to flow from the future, from the 'Nocturnal river of hours [of tomorrow]', as Unamuno had it.

Consider two final contrasting examples. First, Bourdieu's study of the Kabyle (2001): it implies that the engendered and engendering praxes that Kabyle women enact in the present involve a tradition and a past which orients them toward certain futures; futures that are navigated through inherited feminine 'intuitions', through second natures turned 'nature' itself, through naturalized cultural compasses that tie in with the unfair invocations of tradition. By contrast, consider the 'traditional' values in the USA, which have involved big, concerted institutional maneuverings – the law, families, schools, NGOs, churches, etc., all of which have been very attentive to sexual practices and identities, to reproduction, gender roles, etc. (if only to point out that up to June 2003 oral and anal sex were a felony in 13 states in the USA, nine states prohibiting them among same-sex couples, and four making them illegal for everyone). No need to labor the idea that certain collective practices and futures – for instance, those of gay men and lesbians – were foreclosed, to an extent, by such institutional prescriptions and proscriptions. But no need to labor the idea, either, that many gay men and women have been able step outside these demands and build up new cultural heuristics, new historical possibilities, and new *habitus*es, fields, and capitals, to go back to Bourdieu. Gay people have created a culture, in fact, inclusive of thereto unknown social, cultural and political actors. And they have created historical events and traditions – traditions which can now be either embodied and 'naturally' carried on – or contested, or rendered irrelevant by new public actors.

Last Questions: Which Pasts? What Futures?

The French sociological tradition, from which much of CMS stem, has given us a toolbox for us to understand collective pasts, presents and futures. This

tradition has been taken to a ceiling by Bourdieu's phenomenological social physics, which arguably culminates itself in the warning note of symbolic violence. His theory of symbolic violence (2000, 2001) has helped us understand how the past, embodied and vivified in the present, can thus carry the most perfected form of social domination. For symbolic violence involves a naturalized expression of history; a collective embodiment of hierarchical positions, of structures of objective relationships and parallel modes of censorship; the naturalization of historical hierarchies of taste and civility, which can hence sustain related hierarchies of opportunities for social actors. Here, both the dominated and the dominating contribute to a 'natural' order that is hard to question, precisely because of its 'natural' and 'evident' organic harmony; because it emanates from everyone's *habitus*, from folk wisdom, from social affects and intuitions. Implied here is that an embodied memory makes it difficult to take an objective distance, cognitive or affective, from the objective forces that, once embodied, sustain our dispositions (see also Berger and Luckmann, 1967). Here, unfair political requisites can be performed 'intuitively' and hence silently by social actors. And even collective minutiae such as shared gestures and affects can thence help foreclose alternative futures.

I want to finish up with symbolic violence, because it is one of the main concluding points of the French tradition. And from up here, and looking back in time, I suggest that this tradition can be expanded upon. Bourdieu's framework crowns this school in many ways. But his framework is also limited and limiting from the point of view of the relation between embodiment and time; for, though he speaks of how embodied social actors relate to the past (tradition), it says little about how they relate to the future (possibility). He says of course that social actors are constructed *and* constructing. But other than speaking of 'Don Quixote effects', of 'discordances' between habitus and field and related 'misfirings' (Bourdieu, 2000: 160) he doesn't say, systematically, how and to what extent social actors are constructing; and to what extent their individuality can push off the heavy weight of supra-individuality. In truth, *habitus*, in Bourdieu, is mostly an iterative structure wherefore the past is *presented*, brought into life, and where the collective is transubstantiated, virtually without resistance from embodied individuals (similarly with Mauss). His ideas, that is, useful as they are, are limited by his resistance to the notion of resistance, of individual and collective resistances.

That Bourdieu never clarified his position with respect to Freud is unfortunate, especially in that he never said much at all about the kind of embodied resistances implied by Freud's theory of drives (which implies, again, that the Id-related forces of the drives cannot be wholly or too easily repressed). In fact, as these pre-social forces are not touched by history, they are invested by a universal

quality, which – dangerous, egotistical, and ‘vulgar’ as it can be – can not only arouse embodied resistances against the calls of super-ego, of culture, but can also place checks on the arbitrariness of the social order. Bourdieu’s stance thus makes it difficult for us to handle the problematic of embodiment pragmatically. For it is hard to see, from his point of view, embodiment as structure that can mediate between the person and history in ways that are neither iterative nor oppressive, necessarily. As we presently understand it, the notion of *habitus* makes it hard for us to study whether the embodied social actor can be a conveyor of the new, of dissent, of various possible individual and social outcomes. By contrast, I suggest that the notion of embodied collective memory, as a site of conflict and possibility, can help correct the iterativist biases of *habitus*. Embodied collective memory, in fact, can help us better see similar biases that at times limit this tradition in general.

As I cannot provide a finished framework for embodied collective memory here, I have wanted to offer a perspective, instead, and to post an invitation to an embodied sociology of the possible. Let’s follow the French, and continue after them. And let’s ask, which forms of embodied collective memory can hinder us, which ones can give us good roots into the past, and which ones can help us act and think mythopoetically, so that we can thus imagine and construct our own future, our symbols, gestures, sentiments, and pleasures?

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Jeffrey Goldfarb, Sarah Daynes, Vera Zolberg, and Karen Coleman for their comments on an earlier version of this article.

Notes

1. And by other contenders against idealist rationalism; particularly by the ‘Masters of Suspicion’: Marx’s Hegelian critique of Hegel; Nietzsche’s critique of idealism; and Freud’s Cartesian critique of Cartesian reason.

2. The word *Leiblichkeit* (corporeality, embodiment) stems from Husserl’s distinction between *Leib* and *Körper*, lived body and physicality (1999). Later, Heidegger would say, ‘[W]e don’t “have” a body, rather we “are” bodily’ (1991: 99). Later still, with Bourdieu, sociology becomes ‘embodied’ in the sense of subsuming Durkheimian objectivism and Husserlian phenomenology (e.g. 1990).

3. Anaclysis: to lean on, to stem from. For Freud, drives lean (anaclytically) on corporeal sources from which they aim at objects, including mental objects and social cathexes, which are the sublimated representatives of the sources (e.g. Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973: 29).

4. For Kant (1965: 64), time and space are ‘pure forms of sensible intuition’: ‘Time is not an empirical concept that has been derived from any experience’; and space ‘can be intuited a priori’.

5. In *Zarathustra* Nietzsche (1978: 34) says, “I” you say, and are proud of the word. But greater is that in which you do not wish to have faith – your body and its great reason: that does not say “I,” but does “I.”

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